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## **Between Work and School: life course of poor young people**

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### **ABSTRACT – Between Work and School: life course of poor young people.**

The article describes and presents data from field research carried out with young high school students in the Youth and Adult Education modality from 14 state schools in the city of Rio de Janeiro. The analyzed data are the result of three research methodologies: survey, narrative interviews and photographic devices for self-narrating. The youngsters in the research reveal that returning to school occurs as they rediscover the meaning of schooling in their projects to improve living conditions. Work and school establish mutual influences and, for these young people, they are not self-excluding situations, they overlap to constitute the experience of a working popular young person.

**Keywords: Youth. Work. School. Life Courses. Youth and Adult Education.**

### **RESUMO – Entre o Trabalho e a Escola: cursos de vida de jovens pobres.**

O artigo apresenta dados de pesquisa de campo realizada com jovens estudantes do ensino médio na modalidade EJA de 14 escolas da rede estadual na cidade do Rio de Janeiro. Os dados analisados são resultantes de três metodologias de investigação: *survey*, entrevistas narrativas e dispositivos fotográficos para a narração de si. Os jovens adultos da pesquisa revelam que o retorno à escola ocorre como redescoberta do sentido da escolarização em seus projetos de melhoria das condições de vida. Trabalho e escola estabelecem entre si influências recíprocas e, para esses jovens, não são tempos sociais que se excluem, mas que se sobrepõem para constituir a experiência própria de uma juventude popular trabalhadora.

**Palavras-chave: Jovens. Trabalho. Escola. Cursos de Vida. EJA.**

## Introduction

Investigating youth life courses means facing the challenge of understanding the ages not only as biological phases, but also as representations and fields of symbolic disputes crossed by the specificities of life in different social places. It involves understanding processes of social individualization, but also the vectors of unification of the socializing patterns of a world that has become simultaneously globalized and exclusionary; that has expanded fields of possibilities of choices in relation to the determinations of tradition, but that does not offer support and conditions for the accomplishment of these same choices for all.

The empirical basis of our reflections is in quantitative and qualitative data from the Young *Out of Series* research conducted with young students from high schools in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

Theoretical reflections on youth, individuation processes in the context of current societal changes and on course of life introduce this chapter. In the sequence we present and analyze the data of the research in the light of these references. From the collection, tabulation and survey analysis it was possible to obtain a summary scenario of schooling trajectories, the social positions occupied, the work and family experiences, among others, that give objectivity to life courses. Narratives of three young people are presented and interpreted in a search to highlight subjective dimensions of life courses.

## Biographic Challenge<sup>1</sup>

The subjectivation of poor young people occurs in situations of scarcity of material and symbolic supports. The risks of systemic social crises fall on young bodies and their communities. It is not uncommon for these same young people to be held responsible for their choices made in frameworks that combine structural inequalities, economic crises, and social and cultural constraints inherited by the cycle of family poverty. Such a scenario causes the promises of social welfare to be diluted before the objective conditions of their lives.

The singularities observed in life courses are enrolled in social regularities that are not presented in anticipation but need to be inventoried in their specific contexts of accomplishment. Despite the different possible and not more linear arrangements of transition to adulthood, there are many personal strategies of autonomization in the context of societies with high degrees of individualization of social life, greater margin of self-production autonomy - individuation - and serious contexts of insecurity and uncertainty toward the future. The youth, in view of this *biographical model* (Beck, 2010) of a risk society, need to be active subjects in the construction of socially inscribed biographies under objective conditions and producing personal constraints for the accomplishment of their choices.

It is difficult to measure the relative weights of biographical choices against the real ones, and most often scarce, "structures of op-

portunity” (Filgueira, 2001) provided by the State, the market or society. Similarly, there is no standard for the institutionalization of life courses and their regularities in the processes of social individuation. This is a continuous effort that must be undertaken by the different fields of research.

### *Singularization of life courses*

Young people prolong their youth by not finding the paths of social and economic transit to adulthood. They remain in their parents' homes by option, prolong the period of school education or do not emancipate themselves and experience the family economic dependence caused by the reduction of employment levels in the scenario of structural unemployment that has been globalized by all countries.

The supports for the youth to carry out their transitions has become tenuous, with strong disjunctions among the institutional networks. There is agreement among the authors of the studies on youth (Pais, 2001; Sposito, 2005; Reguillo, 2013; Leccardi, 2005; Bois-Reymond, 2008; Bayon; Saraví, 2019) that the course of life has become unstable and personal trajectories less predictable. The biggest challenge of research would be to determine the implications of the changes that occur in the course of this “late modernity”.

Bois-Reymond (2008, p. 57), in a comparative study on parenting, agency and social change among young Europeans, highlights the convergence of sociological analyzes that recognize the transformation of the standard life cycle of young people to what they called “individualized biographies”. The current young generation is confronted with social changes and suffers from the lack of models to deal with these changes. The researcher emphasizes that the youth belonging to ethnic minorities feel more strongly the mechanisms of social selection in educational systems and segmented labor markets. These youth become dependent on their families and relatives, are led to poorly paid, unsafe and irregular work in the hope of a better future. Social capital expressed in supportive relationships networks is crucial to this: the youth who have access to this resource are the ones who find the best opportunities and feel most responsible for their lives.

In turn, Bayon and Saraví (2019), analyzing the Mexican context, highlight the school experience as a class experience marked by the context of institutionalization of poverty and vulnerability that expanded as a condition of life for large sectors of the population. The authors highlight that in the hegemonic neoliberal discourse the class condition is reduced to a condition of character and effort, without relation to structural inequalities or the distribution of resources in society. That is, inequality would emerge as a result of personal choices and attributes, and inequity in the distribution of material and cultural resources would be explained as an inevitable, almost natural result of the “deficiencies” proper to certain sectors, notably the poor and disadvantaged. This debate is articulated with what Martuccelli (2010) called

the structural process of individuation in the milestones of a singularity society where the challenges of manufacturing itself as an individual are historical, socially produced, culturally represented and unequally distributed.

The youth experience situations that make them not feel actors in taking and managing their lives, especially in terms of access to the labor market and the free choice of occupation and working hours. Many young people cannot live an independent life with enough income to pay for housing.

### **Youth, Schooling and Work**

Since the world crisis of the 1970's that marked the destructuring of the world of work, or what Ulrich Beck (2010) called as a destandardization of wage labor, the markets gave interested answers to their needs to maintain the logic of maximizing profits in private benefits in the relationship between capital and labor (Carrano; Brenner, 2019). The state and the multiple social institutions, however, did not provide sufficient support to support the transits of the youth from impoverished sectors of society toward adulthood. In societies where work has become flexible, but also precarious and unprotected, in contexts of life and work in which the notion of progress and career disappear and social guarantees no longer impose themselves as an imperative of conquests of classes and workers' organizations, the field of labor insertion becomes increasingly uncertain and individualized. The intense processes of outsourcing the workforce, the decrease in the relevance of the unions and the predominance in the markets of the intermediation companies of the workforce give the tone of the fragmentation of the labor field.

The place of work in the constitution of social life and individualities is undeniable. However, it is evident that it no longer has the integrating role it assumed at other times in the history of societies, notably urban ones. The work identity is articulated with other societal dimensions, whether they are gender, race, generation or territory and culture. Some characteristics that emerge from the studies on the relationship between the youth and work indicate that these other references are manifested in the framework of the place of work weakening and professional diplomas in the constitution of the "being worker". And in this framework it is possible to point out as elements of this identity indetermination the context of informality, of the lack of protection in the field of rights, of the indetermination of the trajectories not more predictable, as it denotes the meaning of "career", the pluriactivity and the heterogeneity of activities, whether by alternation or concomitant in daily, weekly or monthly days. Added to this is the strong attraction of the spaces-time of consumption and the cultural senses of individual and collective action in leisure time in the production of juvenile subjectivities.

The youth of the popular classes undertake a hard and unprotected struggle that combines work and permanence in school. How-

ever, it must be said that in this context of increasing uncertainties and decreasing the margins of predictability of the future, the youth, even if they do not renounce school, distrust the strength of diplomas and the validity of formal school knowledge in the search for work. And, in particular, they aim for work protected not only by the existence of the signed work permission, but also that they be “fixed work” that allows them pay and sufficient free time to live life.

Faced with the imperatives of overcoming objective needs and building the field of autonomy itself, the “manufacturing of self” occurs in the field of strong economic and symbolic interdictions that tend to be aggravated when there is absence of support in the form of structural and effective public policies for the realization of the crossing among the worlds of family, school and work.

### *The Youth in the Recent Brazilian Economic Cycle*

Between 2006 and 2017, the Brazilian economy suffered significant fluctuations. Between the second term of the Lula government and the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff, Brazil went through some of the years of greatest prosperity in its history, but also experienced an unprecedented crisis (Carvalho, 2018). There was an increase in income from poorer sectors and, at the same time, a decrease in unemployment rates with the maintenance of high inequality standards alongside increasing rates of violence (IBGE, 2014).

From the point of view of the juvenile segments, in the Brazilian case, the changes suffered in the educational systems are not negligible. In this context, the access to higher education in Brazil is highlighted, which begins to absorb through the expansion of the public network and by affirmative actions – social and racial quotas – a larger number of young people from the popular sectors. The increase in family income allowed many young people to move away from the labor market, especially adolescents, dedicating themselves only to studies (Menezes, 2015). The possibilities of consumption implied the acquisition of goods, among them products that guarantee access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) (mainly cellular devices), which directly impact expectations, the dissemination of information and forms of collective action.

After the year 2012, this short cycle of prosperity in Brazil comes into exhaustion. And this is expressed in the low growth rates and, from the second half of the 2010, in the rise in unemployment, which always reaches the juvenile segments more sharply. The decrease in family income is presented as a factor of greater pressure in the labor market by this group (Menezes, 2015)<sup>2</sup>.

Specifically on the level of youth occupation<sup>3</sup> – measured by the relationship between those who were working in the reference week and the total number of youths – it is observed that, between 2005 and 2014 there was some stability among those aged 25 to 29 years and be-

tween those aged 18 to 24 years, but a sharp fall in the level of occupation of youth aged 15 to 17 years (from 31.0% to 23.1%), this is in line with the movement of increase in the percentage of the latter who were only concerned with the studies. Between 2014 and 2015<sup>4</sup>, the percentage of youths occupied fell in all age groups, having reduced from 57.5% to 52.5% among the total number of youths, a more intense fall than that of the occupation level of the general population (IBGE, 2016c).

### **Held back youngsters: a research on schooling and life courses**

In 2013, we conducted *a survey* in 14 high school schools in the state public network, located in four areas of the capital of Rio de Janeiro<sup>5</sup>. 593 questionnaires were applied to young people, in a non-probabilistic sample, selected from personal criteria regarding the elements that are most representative in the population (Costa Neto, 1977, p. 45). Thus, a case study has been carried out whose data produced do not allow generalizations, but provide significant information to identify the dynamics of the profile of young students named behind the grade and that would allow them to be compared with other contexts as well as with the qualitative phase of the research (narrative interviews and photographic reflective devices)<sup>6</sup>.

Of the 593 young respondents, seven were between 15 and 17 years old, 503 between 18 and 24 years old, and 83 between 25 and 29 years old, with 61.6% of them studying in the Youth and Adult Education<sup>7</sup> modality and 36.9% in the Autonomy<sup>8</sup> Program, considered by the state school system as subjects in age-grade lag.

The survey instrument consisted of a structured, self-applicable questionnaire, with closed questions and a few open questions, totaling 85 questions. The ethical criteria, established for scientific research, were respected as well as the data confidentiality was ensured.

From the tabs and survey analyzes, some recurrent profiles of students were listed and from these were selected – among the young people who at the end of the questionnaire responded positively to the invitation to participate in a new stage of the survey with interviews – 20 young people for the second stage, qualitative, of the research. The interviews were conducted in the schools in which the young people studied, all filmed for the production of a research film (Fora..., 2018).

In addition, a third stage of the research was developed and this consisted of accompanying three of the young people interviewed in their daily lives: work, family life, leisure and free time<sup>9</sup>. Each of the three young people received a photographic camera to produce records – in photo and video – representative of their life courses. The dynamics established in the research was that the young people would return to a new meeting with researchers to talk about the images produced in the reflective device.

We present below the most general data of the profile of the young people interviewed in *the survey* and then the specificities of the course

of life of the three young people accompanied in this research process with the production of the film.

In the profile of the young people who answered the questionnaire, a gender balance was observed, 51% were men and 49% were women. Age groups are distributed between 15 and 17 years (1.2%); 18 to 24 years (84.8%) and 25 to 29 years (14%). Most of them self-declare brown (41%) and black (20%), adding 61% of black. Self-declared white are 26%, indigenous people 3% and yellow people 5%. The national average of the population is 53% of black people and 45.4% of white people.

In this study, 16.8% of the young people had family income of up to a minimum wage. And 29% had family income ranging from 1 to 2 monthly minimum wages.

In analysis by racial belonging, there were differences in average income between white and black people, 25% of black youth live with up to a minimum wage compared to 19.4% of whites who receive the same amount. Of black youth, 68% lived with up to two wages, while 56% of whites lived with the same income. The data indicate that although young people are, on average, low income, blacks are in an even worse economic situation when compared to whites.

This scenario of economic weakness, which reproduces within the family itself, and affects more strongly the young black, tends to negatively affect the availability of dedication to school life.

The research obtained critical data regarding the differences in sex, age, work and income. Among those who have never worked, 13% are men and 20% are women. The women of the research started working later and are worse paid compared to the same work done by men. More than half of the young people who work (61.5%) receive up to a minimum wage, while men who receive the same remuneration are 39%.

If, on the one hand, work is not the greatest influence for the inadequate relationship between age and schooling, on the other hand, poverty can have a strong impact on school performance. Andrews and Vries (2012) studied 5,500 Brazilian municipalities, where poverty was the explanatory variable of the lag and drop-out with an amplitude that clarifies 60% of the variation. The thesis that poverty can only be overcome through school education (Easterlin, 1981; Hanushek, 1995) is relativized by the evidence that it is not possible to improve education without overcoming poverty (Andrews; Vries, 2012, p. 844). It is in this context that it is stated that economic inequalities delimit possible horizons of action of the youth in their relationships with school and the world of work (Sposito, 2005).

Of the interviewees who reported working and studying at some point in their school trajectories, 30% abandoned school in elementary school.

In high school, the impact of having worked and studied on the category drop-out was emblematic. Of those who have worked and studied, 58.1% have never abandoned their studies; for those who have



never worked, 74.6% have never abandoned. The percentage of those who work and study is relatively proportional in the repetition and in relation to those who do not work.

However, for drop-out there are differences. Those who work and study face more difficulty staying at school. Asked about the reasons for the drop-out, 34.7% pointed out work as the main responsible.

Only 11.4% of the young people answered. Among the others, 17.8% reported seeking employment; 43.1% who have fixed employment; 10.4% who do casual job and 1.7% who were engaged in domestic tasks. Of those who worked, 47% were paid and 11.1% declared not receiving for work. Considering the daily workload, the majority number (22.5%) worked between six and 8 hours (40-44 hours per week); followed by 15.8% who worked more than 8 hours, 9.4% (4 to 6 hours), 4.4% (2 to 4 hours) and 2.2% (up to two hours).

The working conditions of people aged 15 to 29 years old, between 2005 and 2015 in Brazil, walked in the direction of what the International Labor Organization (ILO) considers decent work, at least in two of its dimensions. Regarding the monthly income of all jobs, the percentage of young people who did not earn income from 11.6% to 6.1% fell; of young people who earned up to  $\frac{1}{2}$  minimum wage from 11.7% to 8.2% and of those who received between  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 minimum wage from 24.8% to 22.7%. And the percentage of young people with more than 1 to 2 minimum wages rose, from 32.6% to 43.8%. In addition, a contingent of 13.7% of the young people stopped working more than 44 hours a week – that is, above the normal working day provided for in section XIII of Art. 7 of the Federal Constitution of Brazil of 1988 – and began working from 40 to 44 hours, a total of 50.9% of the busy young people who worked this range of hours per week in 2015 (IBGE, 2016b).

27.2% of the interviewees worked without a signed portfolio and 10.5% of them did casual jobs. This frequency highlights the problems related to informal work, underemployment and precarious occupations to which the youth with low qualifications are subjected.

The return to schooling seems to represent for the youth of EJA a unique moment of resumption of the senses of the school that feeds future dreams and projections. The experiences lived in other spaces and moments enable these young people to understand the importance of school, its codes and languages, in order to better situate themselves in society. When many of these young people begin to experience the obstacles caused by the absence of school credentials, whether in the labor market or in social life, the interruption of studies is reviewed and the re-entry becomes an alternative. Thus, the school is rediscovered as an indispensable path for better placement in the social contexts in which they live.

In correlating work and study with expectations of the future, we note, curiously, favorable influences of this simultaneity in what the youth project. It was noticed that those who have already reconciled school time with the world of work had higher expectations of expand-

ing their education, either obtaining in the medium term a university degree or even taking a vocational course. The expectations of this group to win public jobs and the stability they secure are also higher. In the share of those who have never reconciled. Work and study, a higher percentage of those who want to seek only a job and those who want to make money with their own business is perceived. This is also the group that brings together the largest portion of those who planned nothing for the future at the time of the research.

### *The life courses of Adriano, Marina and Joel<sup>10</sup>*

We present here three experiences narrated by the youngsters in biographical interviews conducted in 2014 and in daily follow-ups and photographic reflective provisions used in a research stage conducted in 2015. The responses to the applied questionnaire contributed to the formulation of customized interview scripts. We adopted the perspective of reflexive sociology (Melucci, 2005) as a theoretical and methodological assumption and, with the interviews, we sought to deepen this perspective. The customization of the interview scripts allowed to deepen knowledge about topics already superficially given to know through the answers to the questionnaires; also allowed to arrive more quickly to questions of interest due to previous knowledge of life trajectories (work, schooling, leisure, family structure, sociability).

The support of the questionnaires was not the only one to be triggered. Also the use of photographic devices (photographing what could represent the lived one) allowed to deepen the reflective perspective; the dialog between young people and researcher before their productions placed them, in the meeting with the research team, in the face of their own trajectories and the narration of their stories in the context of dialogical listening about relevant events in their lives.

Salvatore La Mendola (2009), an Italian sociologist, proposes ways to interview the process, starting from the perspective that the interview should not be treated as data collection or gathering of discourses. We share this dialogical principle of the interview and seek to build a quality relationship between interviewer and interviewee through the strategies mentioned above. This perspective undertakes a particular way of listening to and apprehension of representations and social relationships that do not give up to know the corporate frameworks of reference of the interviewees. The dialogical interview is not prescribed for everyone and in the same way. It is presented differently from person to person because it promotes the search for self-consciousness and reflection on one's own existence. There is, then, what could be called a game of centering – concerns of research – and openness – space for narrative in *the adventure* of listening to the other (Brenner; Carrano, 2019).

The search is for articulating life courses with social contexts that are, to a good extent, described in the previous sections. The following analyzes follow methodological orientation based on tradition that is

concerned to maintain the subjective and objective dimensions of the contents narrated (Alexander et al., 1987; Pais, 2005; Dubar, 1998).

For the above analysis, we rely on the dimensions of *existential proofs* and *supports*. The *proofs* are characterized as societal challenges experienced by individuals in their processes of self-production; they are socially produced, culturally represented and unevenly distributed. In turn, the *supports* can be defined as the expression of the arrangements that individuals engender between the material and symbolic resources that they can access to support themselves in their social context. The analytical dimension is that the narrated proofs suggest an actor's vision that is, for structural reasons, obliged to face these challenges. It can be said, then, that it is a personal experience of what is structural (Martuccelli, 2007; 2010).

Adriano, black, was 24 years old and lived with his mother at the time of the interview. Between childhood and adolescence, he went from Santa Teresa to Santa Cruz; he lived in the central neighborhood of the city of Rio de Janeiro until moving with part of the family to Santa Cruz, located at the extreme west. It was in that and distant neighborhood that he attended, at the time of the interview, the fourth and last high school module in the EJA modality. He worked as a bricklayer and liked the possibility of building things, "[...] it is very rewarding to have the feeling that you are building something." Santa Teresa was seen as a place of joy and many possibilities, Santa Cruz meant, for the young, isolation and limitation of cultural possibilities, of displacement and access to the city and its opportunities. He was not aware of the identity of his father and was raised by the mother who worked as a maid for most of her life. He was the fourth of a family of seven siblings. Out of need to help support the house began to work at the age of 7 with the older brothers. Because he disliked the situation, he fled home for the first time at 9 years old, moving to live on the street. He had several returns and new escapes from home. He said he could not stand the weight of reconciling study and work in such precarious living conditions at home; he also said he found freedom on the street. Still in early childhood education he found in manual and arts works forms of expression of his sensitivity that, according to him, proved to be antidote to the world of child labor and the feeling of abandonment expressed as being the 4th of 7 children: "it is very difficult for a mother to pay attention to everyone having 7 children." When young, he found in drawing his most consistent artistic expression. All his graphics carry his initials that, according to him, would be a way to highlight his identity. He worked in various functions and types of work, always linked to the provision of services (seller, doorman, bagger) and informal work and on the street (candy seller). It was in the construction that he felt fulfilled. He completed elementary school when he was already 19 years old, a school trajectory lived between fail and abandonment. He did a technical course of mason while also doing high school and it was when he learned to design buildings. At about 11 years old, he was a boy taken by shyness, which made it difficult for him to work as a salesman

on the street. It was when he had his first experience in construction. He repeatedly lived the experience of being placed in a place of lesser value and was slow to understand that they were expressions of racism, this perverse and striking trait of Brazilian society. He said that he had different positions, which gave him better condition to defend himself from the symbolic violence of racism, after understanding the crossings of racism in his life.

Marina, white, was 21 years old at the time of the interview and lived with her partner and her 5-year-old son in a house rented in a slum community in the downtown area of Rio de Janeiro. She worked during the day in a formal job with an officially recognized job and studied at night in the penultimate module of EJA (high school). Her partner stayed with her son so she could study. She was expelled from the house where she lived with her father, mother and two sisters, at the age of 14, because her father rejected her dating. She lived with an aunt in Jacarepaguá, a neighborhood far from the center of the city, in precarious conditions, in a wooden house that allowed free movement of insects and rodents and flooded under heavy rains. She started working at night on a trailer selling hot dogs to collaborate financially with the expenses at her aunt's house. On the day she decided to stop studying she said that: "[...] the rent was late and I was very tired working overtime. I decided to increase my workload and stop studying. The school was going to help me, but in the future, at that moment I needed the work." She was physically assaulted by her father on multiple occasions, between returns and exits from the nuclear family house. The lack of reaction of the mother to the violence of her father left Marina very upset. At one point, around the age of 15, she understood that only a pregnancy could definitely take her out of living with the violent father. She became pregnant with her boyfriend with whom she went to live in a small rented room in Jacarepaguá. However, she suffered domestic violence, also by her partner. The son was born when she was 16 years old and already lived alone, worked to support him and her mother helped her clandestinely, without the father knowing. Not being able to rely on public policies to support motherhood and income generation and without the family network support, she could not resume her studies. She worked as a janitor and waitress until she received a job offer in a naval communication company, a moment of inflection in her life. The work encouraged her to study, to speak correctly, to learn and to seek to know things that she had never imagined existed. From this job she formulated new plans: to complete basic education (still attending elementary school) and to get to university, whose studies were stimulated by her employers. She took the National High School Examination (ENEM) but was not approved. On one of the days of the test she lived the nervousness of almost being late due to waiting for the arrival of the sister who would stay with her son. In addition to little family support, she said that the school had not given sufficient conditions to successfully face the test and that it, by its own means, had not been able to be sufficiently prepared. Over the time of her participation in the research Marina has shown that she has

always had alternative plans for herself. She bought, with public funding, an apartment in a building still under construction outside of a slum area, intended to take a course of flight commissioner and sought to grow professionally in the company by taking the chances and the opportunities offered. With the camera provided by the research team, she photographed several doors of houses where she lived and places where she worked. She talked about the emotion of when she was for the first time before the door of her current work, which represents much in the sense of overcoming the so many mishaps already faced in her life.

Joel, black, was 27 at the time of the interview. Divorced, father of a 2-year-old girl who lived with her mother. As a child, he was beaten a lot by his alcoholic mother and since he was 9 he reconciled work and study. He migrated alone from the northeast of the country to Rio de Janeiro at the age of 16 to live with an aunt. He worked unloading goods, making gear, as a mason assistant among other informal activities. It was as a mason assistant that he met the couple with whom he worked for the last 10 years as a seller in a glass jar store. The couple welcomed him at home when, after the work was finished, they realized that the young man had nowhere to go or where to work. The young man helped take care of the couple's son and the trade kept in the city center. He considers that the work on the street was worth zero and the work as a seller in store is worth 10, thus improving a lot of life, even if he lived with a minimum income wage. His photographs recorded the daughter, who considers his greatest victory until this moment of life, the teacher who considers the one who most encouraged him to follow in his studies and complete high school despite the difficulty reconciling study and work and his leisure objects that he calls "childhood of now" – enjoys soccer and paintball. He won in justice the right of visitation to the daughter who had been prevented by the mother. His father was murdered when he was still being conceived and states that his father's missing produces the dimension of being a good father for his daughter. He said that "the best school is not this one here, where I am studying EJA, but it is beyond the world. Beyond the street, which teaches you everything".

### *The Common Burden of Working and Studying*

The need to work still in childhood or adolescence is a challenge persistent for the youth Brazilian poor youth. According to the PNAD continuous 2016, Brazil had 1.8 million children and adolescents aged between 5 and 17 years working, in a population of 40.1 million in this age group (IBGE, 2016b). The condition of apprentice ensures the possibility of starting in the world of work from the age of 14. Employment, at this age, according to Brazilian legislation, must be given in non-dangerous formal jobs, but most are not in these conditions.

Adriano faced such a challenge at the age of 7 in the company of the older siblings. Joel at 9, alone. Marina faced such a challenge alone at night work at the age of 14. For the first, the work aimed to help in household expenses and for the second also meant help in domestic

expenses, but additionally, suspension of physical violence suffered by his mother; for Marina, the goal was to earn a living for herself with autonomy even by cohabiting the aunt's house and then living alone and with a child.

For Adriano the work as a bricklayer, even precarious – without stability, temporary, without a registered job and the labor rights arising – assured him a “creative” identity; the possibility of building something is highly valued by him: power, by his own hands, to build his home. But the relationships and working conditions are not favorable to him. So also with Joel, very precarious working conditions in civil construction and, for him, without the creative dimension it had for Adriano. For Adriano, earning little for the work that he highly values is disappointing, facing up with employers who delay payments or do not pay the agreed amounts is outrageous.

Marina achieved a job that ensured her stability, social mobility, gain of cultural, social and economic capital. She says she was amazed at the opportunity of work since only very qualified people worked there and she still attended elementary school and spoke making many mistakes in Portuguese. But she faced the challenge of learning at work, through it and on its behalf.

The three left the formal studies still in elementary school and these trajectories express a prominent condition in the quantitative data of the research: 35% of all respondents had abandoned their studies in elementary school by experiencing the concomitant study and work. The national schooling data of the Brazilian population indicate that, in 2019, 46.6% of the population aged 25 years or over was concentrated in the levels of education until complete elementary school or equivalent (IBGE, 2019). It is known that the abandonment of school is a more determining factor in the non-completion of basic schooling than the fails. The return to school undertaken by these young people that we highlight denotes the effort to seek to overcome the structural constraints that lead to abandonment and the importance of public policy of EJA in the school offer that allows the re-entry of the behind the grade individuals.

Investigating the senses of return to school in the lives of young people of EJA, Costa (2011) points out that the re-entry is identified with the commitment to reconfigure life projects and dreams postponed by adverse circumstances. The resumption of schooling gains a new meaning for those who are experiencing it for the second, third or more times. Thus, it can be said that the return relates to the meanings that young people attribute to their schooling process and that are related to future projections and reformulations of life projects.

The responses obtained in the *survey* reinforce how the articulation between studies and work remains a difficult task to be performed, especially to poor young people for whom work means survival and not just training for life as it occurs among middle-class youth and economic elites. However, the meanings of such a relationship in the experi-



ence of young people need to be problematized. A significant part of the subjects investigated see this conciliation not necessarily as negative. Among the respondents, 17.3% said that this conciliation enabled personal growth and 2.3% responded that they were only able to return to studies because they were working.

Corseuil and Franca (2020) analyzing the insertion of young people in the labor market in two moments of crisis – the economic downturn of the 2015/2016 and the one produced in the context of COVID in 2020 – perceive a significant difference in the ways in which young people were absorbed by the labor market. In the first situation, unemployment absorbed more young people, in the second, it was inactivity the mark of the dynamics of their presence in the labor market. The deteriorations caused by the pandemic related to social isolation and the drastic reduction of economic activity leading to the closure of jobs, resulted in a significant drop in the proportion of young people employed from 48.6% in the first quarter of 2020, to 41.4% in the following quarter. That is, in just one quarter the rate of youth occupation in Brazil fell by 7.2 p.p. The authors highlight that this fall was more pronounced than the 5.8 p.p. reduction recorded among the first quarters from 2015 to 2017. The leaving of young people from the dynamic employment-unemployment toward inactivity was unprecedented in the period covered by continuous PNAD<sup>11</sup>, marked by an increase of 8 p.p. of inactive young people compared to the period before the COVID-19 pandemic. Young women were most affected, with an increase of 9.2 p.p. of inactivity in the second quarter of 2020 compared to the second quarter of 2019 (IBGE, 2019).

These data indicate a greater distance of young people from the labor market in the pandemic period when compared to the previous period of recession (2015-2017). “This motivates concerns about the possibility of a longer period of leaving from the labor market, which, in turn, may jeopardize his or her future professional career” (Corseuil; Franca, 2020, p. 100).

In the same perspective of understanding the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people, Silva and Vaz (2020) carried out study on young people who do not work and do not also study from continuous PNAD data. The researchers point out that the legacy of the health crisis can last for decades and, corroborating the results of other studies, emphasize that gender, race and income inequalities mark the trajectories of young people in school and in the world of work increasing the percentages of those who neither study nor work, the so-called neither-nor.

Being a woman, especially with children; being poor; being black; having low education; and living in households with more children, or someone who demands care significantly increases the chances of a young person becoming neither-nor for a short or long period of his or her life (Silva; Vaz, 2020, p. 106).

From data from the Juventudes Research in Brazil, Peregrino and Prata (2021) show the burden of the sexual division of labor in the phenomenon of school dropout. In general, young men leave school for the need to work and women to assume early responsibilities in the domestic and care field.

## Conclusion

The narrative material of the young participants of the research allowed to know objective elements and subjective dimensions of their experiences. The notion of life course with which we work allowed the establishment of interfaces between social positions expressed in objective points and demarcations of biographical trajectories and narrative material of individuals who reveal subjective dimensions of their experiences. The demographic frameworks of schooling, work and income combined with the primary survey data of our research demarcate both the social positions occupied by Brazilian youth and the common tests faced in the space-time of youth. The experiences narrated by Adriano, Joel and Marina singularize these objective positions, and are biographies that explain contexts. Such narratives do not intend to represent population sets. They are, first of all, reference points to understand the agency's place in relation to social constraints.

If, on the one hand, combining study and work is one of the generational traits that show the experience of living the time of youth in poverty situation in Brazil, on the other hand, the experiencing work relationships can contribute to young people realize the meanings of schooling for economic and social mobility.

For these popular young people, the worlds of work and school are not exclusive. They can even present themselves as overlapping projects (Sposito, 2008). Work and school are spaces and social times that articulate to produce expectations and make life projects viable.

The participation of young people in paid work activities should not be understood only as a result of adverse socioeconomic situations that produce the search for livelihoods. The need that leads them to work concomitantly with school time is combined with mediations related to the search for independence and autonomy. Economic and material independence and symbolic autonomy before their parents and family members. This without neglecting the value that popular families see at work as an educational medium and also activity that disciplines the character and establishes limits for the surplus of youth free time<sup>12</sup>.

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## Notes

- 1 This article has as its starting point a work presented and discussed in GT 03 – Social Movements, Subjects and Educational Processes during the 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of Anped. See Brenner and Carrano (2019).
- 2 The economic crisis worsened at the beginning of the Dilma government in 2015, and deepened with what was called a parliamentary legal coup that resulted in the impeachment of the president without proof of a crime of responsibility. The inauguration of Vice-President, Michel Temer, opens the doors for the resumption of the neoliberal agenda in Brazil. This is marked by privatizations of public companies, cuts in public spending for 20 years and approval of labor reform law that cut rights, promoted layoffs and stimulus for precarious and underpaid hiring.
- 3 The Youth Statute (Law 12.852/2013) considers young people aged 15 to 29 years old. According to the National Household Sample Survey (PNAD), 2015 the Brazilian population is 204.9 million people, 23.6% of which are comprised of youths.
- 4 Data from 2014/2015 are presented here as this is the reference year of analysis of the questionnaires applied in the research
- 5 The division of the city by zones was a way to maintain proportional criteria of the sample among the neighborhood analysis units.
- 6 Here is a methodological synthesis published in more detail in Carrano, Marinho and Oliveira, 2015.
- 7 Youth and Adult Education (EJA) is a modality that seeks to ensure the right to education to those who did not have access to school or could not remain in the so-called *right age*. To attend high school in the EJA modality you must be at least 18 years old.
- 8 Program of acceleration of schooling aimed at young people of regular age of high school attendance (15 to 18 years) but outside the expected age-grade.
- 9 At this stage of the research, everyone had already completed high school in the EJA modality.
- 10 The names have been changed in order to ensure the confidentiality of the information.
- 11 Continuous PNAD was adopted experimentally in 2011 and permanently in 2012.
- 12 The research from which this article originated was funded by FAPERJ and supported by CNPq.

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