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## Interculturality as an expression of humanist perspective: The young students' ideas about the Conquest of America from Altan's historical graphic narratives and Julierme's History textbook

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### Abstract

This research is linked to the projects "Textbooks and how to learn and teach the history of conflicts in different spaces and times" and "Youth and the ideas of historical truth and intersubjectivity in relation to visual historical narratives". I investigate the ideas of Brazilian graduate young students about conflicts between Europeans and Indians during the conquest of America, which took place around 1492 and 1550. I produce a research instrument based on methodological criteria of qualitative research (Lessard-Hébert, Goyette y Boutin, 2005). This research tool contains open questions concerning the confrontation of two fragments in history comic books. The first historical graphic narrative, version A, called "Conquest and the colonization of America" is a chapter of the textbook organized as historical comic book "General History: History for modern school" (Castro y Zalla, 1971). The second historical graphic narrative presented in the research instrument, the version B, called "Colombo" (Altan, 1989). In conclusion, it can verify that

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Vinculación a los proyectos "Libros de texto y cómo aprender y enseñar la historia de los conflictos en diferentes espacios y tiempos" y "Los jóvenes y las ideas de la verdad histórica y la intersubjetividad en relación con las narrativas históricas visuales".

these young students understand some of the fundamental elements of these artifacts of historical culture greatly facilitate the apprehension of historical knowledge elaborated in an intersubjective and humanistic way.

### **Keywords**

Teaching History; History Education and Interculturality; Historical graphic narratives; Clashes between Indigenous and Europeans.

## **La interculturalidad como expresión de la perspectiva humanista: las ideas de los jóvenes estudiantes sobre la conquista de América desde las narrativas históricas gráficas de Altan y el libro de texto de historia de Julierme**

### **Resumen**

Esta investigación está vinculada a los proyectos “Libros de texto y cómo aprender y enseñar la historia de los conflictos en diferentes espacios y tiempos” y “Los jóvenes y las ideas de la verdad histórica y la intersubjetividad en relación con las narrativas históricas visuales”. Investigo las ideas de jóvenes estudiantes graduados brasileños sobre los conflictos entre europeos e indios durante la conquista de América, que tuvieron lugar alrededor de 1492 y 1550. Produzco un instrumento de investigación basado en criterios metodológicos de investigación cualitativa (Lessard-Hébert, Goyette y Boutin, 2005). Esta herramienta de investigación contiene preguntas abiertas sobre la confrontación de dos fragmentos en cómics de historia. La primera narrativa histórica gráfica, la versión A, llamada “Conquista y la colonización de América” es un capítulo del libro de texto organizado como cómic histórico “Historia General: Historia para la escuela moderna” (Castro y Zalla, 1971). La segunda narrativa histórica gráfica presentada en el instrumento de investigación, la versión B, es llamada “Colombo” (Altan, 1989). En conclusión, se puede verificar que estos jóvenes estudiantes comprendan algunos de los elementos fundamentales de estos artefactos de la cultura histórica que facilitan enormemente la apprehensión del conocimiento histórico elaborado de manera intersubjetiva y humanística.

### **Palabras clave**

Enseñanza de la Historia; Educación Histórica e Interculturalidad; Narrativas históricas gráficas; Conflictos entre indígenas y europeos.

## Introduction

I research the historical ideas of the students through the historical comic books from the epistemology of history. This paper is produced from the group of historian teachers attached to the Research Laboratory of History Education (LAPEDUH / UFPR) and is part of the research project *Youth and the ideas of historical truth and intersubjectivity in relation to the visual historical narratives* linked to Researcher Group History Education: Historical consciousness and visual narratives (GPEDUH/UFMT/CNPq).

This article is part of the range of investigation related to the research connected to the situated historical cognition (Schmidt, 2009, p. 22), whose principles and purposes is linked to the science of history and serve as a basis for research area History Education. This is a field of research that studies the historical ideas of the subjects in school contexts, so that is structured by empirical investigation that dialogue with the theory of historical consciousness (Rüsen 2001; 2012).

This research is also linked to the project *Textbooks and how to learn and teach the history of conflicts in different spaces and times*, involving researchers who seek to analyze issues such as the prospects of conflicts in textbooks of history, geography, sociology and philosophy; children and youngsters relations with historical ideas related to conflicts in different perspectives; teachers' ideas about historical concepts related to conflict and proposals about teaching conflicts in classroom situations.

With this, I investigate the historical ideas of young graduate students from the History course from the Federal University of Mato Grosso, Cuiabá, Brazil, about conflicts between Europeans and Indigenous during the conquest of America, which took place around 1492 and 1550, when confronted by two graphic historical narratives about this historical issue. I seek to understand how these young students are temporally oriented from the dimension of human suffering of the other narrated by these artifacts of historical culture.

## The historical comic books as artifacts of historical culture of young students

The comic books are visual historical narratives that allow the investigation about how young students historically perceive, interpret, orientate and motivate in the temporal flow between the past, present and future expectations. To instigate the historical understanding of the students, these narratives enable youngsters historically construct their political, aesthetic, cognitive and ethical positions towards the challenges that they face in their life praxis (Rüsen, 2007).

Among the main historical categories researched by this investigation is the historical truth and intersubjectivity as ideas that structure a didactic function of history from the narrative while the main fundament of epistemology of history. Visual historical narratives can provide solid information about how to constitute the historical memory that structures the historical culture of a community and what is the role of intersubjectivity in this process.

How historical truth and intersubjectivity are related to, considering that these ideas are some of the structural concepts of historical thinking?

We have must keep in mind that, for young students, history, first, is objectively given, as a “quasi-objectified sediment” in the concrete conditions of the life in the form of traditions.

Thus, it is possible to say that youngsters are immersed in the present and understand their experiences as a way of practical life. This, so that the temporal sequence of chronology or linearity does not provide meaning or sense of direction at all, when these students come in contact with the artifacts of historical culture. But these devices, in its direct relationship with the young students — so without the mediation of abstract temporal sequence imposed by the contemporary school culture — produce these meanings and historical sense of temporal orientation.

One way to overcome the dominant teaching of history’s authoritarianism in school culture it would be to order the time. But I must consider how to order the temporality without using the school temporal sequence. This becomes possible when the time is temporalized — that is, when a narrative as from historical comic books gives the present a past in which young students can learn about their social praxis. The historical learning occurs when these youngsters, in a second moment, realize the difference between the experiences of the past and the present. According Rüsen (2007, p. 109), this happens when the subject in contact with the “sources of tradition”, such as the artifacts of historical culture, for instance, the historical comic books, perceive the other as a “strange” which is narrated as a character related to the past otherness. This can lead to increased “capacity for empathy” in young students and the willingness to understand the “particularity of its own historical identity”, which reveals their otherness in relation to other people, which have orientation that it has adopted or is facing in the process intersubjective consolidation of their identity.

I understand that the values are present in historical narratives within comic books that allow this self-recognition in young students. The values are those moral, political, aesthetic, cognitive and ideological elements that enable yougsters involvement with the past. It is not an abstract timeline that makes the young student involves its historical identity formation with the past of other human beings, but the ethical recognition of the difference between the values of the other in the past with the values that youngsters face in otherness present in contemporary life praxis. It is in this way that the continuity of temporal flow between past, present and future is understood by the young students.

David Carrier (2000, p. 73), following the Arthur C. Danto’s ideas (Danto, 2007, p. 342, 343), understands that the sequential narrative of comics is similar to the structure of historical consciousness. Consciousness of the present is understood as one of the moments of a continuous (not necessarily linear) temporal sequence and refers to the understanding that the future is an element of the subject’s past, and historical narrative is the structuring of the present in the flux between its future and its past. Danto (2007) states that the historical explanation is constituted by the argumentative and narrative connection of different moments. It narrate how the world turns into time. Carrier (2000, p. 14), following this idea, points out that historical graphic narratives also connect two distinct moments represented by each frame. However, his argument is constituted in the aesthetic articulation between written statements and symbolic or realistic images, which produce the possibility of narrating.

From this conception, we can see that: 1) through comic book’s theory, comic books that deal with historical themes are themselves historical graphic narratives, therefore,

aesthetically structured historical narratives (Carrier, 2000; Eisner, 1999; McCloud, 2005; 2006; Fronza, 2007, 2012); 2) according to the historians connected with the field of investigation of History Education, historical narrative is the proper construct of the expression of historical thought and the learning of historical formation (Barca, 2000; Schmidt, 2009; Rüsen, 2001, 2007, 2012). That is, the narrative is structured in the basic conception that someone tells someone a history about an experience of the past interpreted in the present, and that creates expectations of the future, as expressed in the South African comic book *Vusi goes back. A comic book about the history of South Africa* (Rüsen, 2001, p. 158).

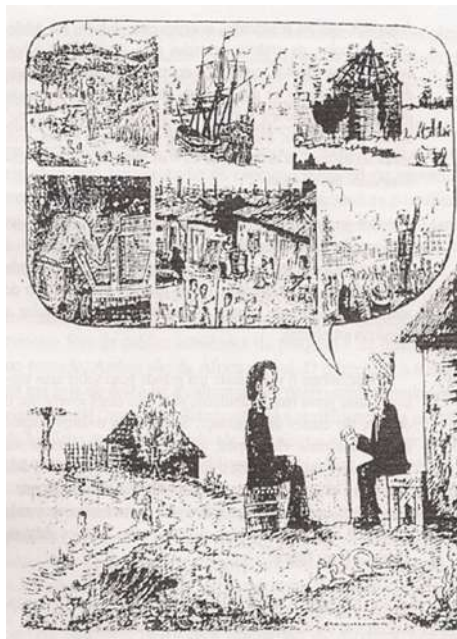


Figure 1. Comic book as a handbook for “community workers” (Prezarian Comix, E.D.A. 1981, fig. p. 2, apud Rüsen, 2001, p. 158).

From this graphic narrative I understand that the images do not speak for themselves, since they are still lifes mobilized by the historical ideas of the subjects. This comic book tells a version of South African history, from its origin to anti-apartheid resistance movements, and seeks to construct a temporal ordering of content from the basic structure of the narrative: someone tells the other person how they became what are in the present, with a view to new prospects for the future. I think it is important to read any historical comic book from the dialogues of its characters, because there are expressed ideas that problematize the shortcomings of practical life. Therefore, it is the narrative structure that defines historical comic books.

In this sense, intersubjectivity internalizes, in the students, the process of constitution of collective historical consciousness of humanity in their own biographies in relation to the other in time and space in the historical graphic narratives. The principles governing the intersubjectivity are dialogue and the ability to argue rationally, in which the subjects narrate through their historical perspectives recognizing as valid the historical perspectives of others, rebuilding a humanist multiperspectivity. Thus, the validity of the historical identity of the subject is intrinsic to equality in relation to the otherness of the other

(Rüsen, 2012, p. 88-89, 107-108). It is the intersubjectivity the principle that the category of interculturality makes sense.

Interculturality assumes the egalitarian and humanistic recognition of cultural difference that exceeds the ethnocentric understanding guided by the courtesy tolerance from the civilized to the uncivilized. Struggles for recognition are the basis of contemporary cultural conflicts. However, in the field of conflicts that the chances of intercultural communication presented by historical comic books are made real, because the cultures learn from each other and change in the mutual relationship, to intertwine, delimitate and fight to each other (Rüsen, 2014, p. 296).

### **Methodology: Research of the young students' ideas about the conquest of America**

An investigation about historical comprehension that young graduate students have about the confrontation between an Italian historical graphic narrative and a textbook chapter of history organized aesthetically and didactically as a historical comic book.

This study aims to find answers to the following research question: *How these young students are temporally oriented from the dimension of human suffering of the other when the conflicts between Europeans and Indigenous during the conquest of America are narrated by the Altan's and Julierme's historical comic books?*

From this theoretical principle, defined as target of this research a group of four students, aged 21 to 30 years old, from the third year of the History course from the Federal University of Mato Grosso in Cuiaba, Mato Grosso, Brazil. To do so, I produce a research instrument based on methodological criteria of qualitative research (Lessard-Hébert, Goyette y Boutin, 2005). The students of this public university were investigated on 20 June 2016. The referred class is composed by 11 students. However just 5 were present at the time of application of the instrument, and they not delivered until the day of I wrote this article. The names are fictitious and based on historical characters of comic books. Subsequently, on 27 June, the rest of the class received a research tool, but I yet haven't received the questionnaires. The initial purpose of this research would be to investigate the historical ideas of high school students from Mato Grosso's public school. However, since the beginning of June 2016, public schools were in strike due to the privatization of management and services of schools' attempt, by the state government, which resulted in a student occupation movement of these spaces, in addition to paralysis of state teachers.

This research tool contains direct and open questions relating to five pages of fragments to confrontation of two historical comic books that have the intention of addressing didactically from historiographical criteria, the theme about the conflict between European and Indigenous occurred during the conquest of America (1492 to 1550).

The first graphical historical narrative, the version A, called *Conquest and the colonization of America* [Conquista e colonização da América], is a textbook chapter organized as comic books named *General History: History for modern school* [História Geral: história para a escola moderna] (Castro y Zalla, 1971) written by Brazilian historian Julierme de Abreu e Castro and drawn by the Argentine cartoonist Rodolfo Zalla.





Figure 2. Version A (Castro y Zalla, 1971, p. 237).

Julierme and Zalla's textbook is organized as historical comic book that presents a History teaching conception in which the approach is related to the practice of memorization and retention of specific information from a generic quadripartite narrative that presents itself as a total history, but a Eurocentric history. This objective teaching conception is related to an understanding of history as traditional objectivist knowledge.

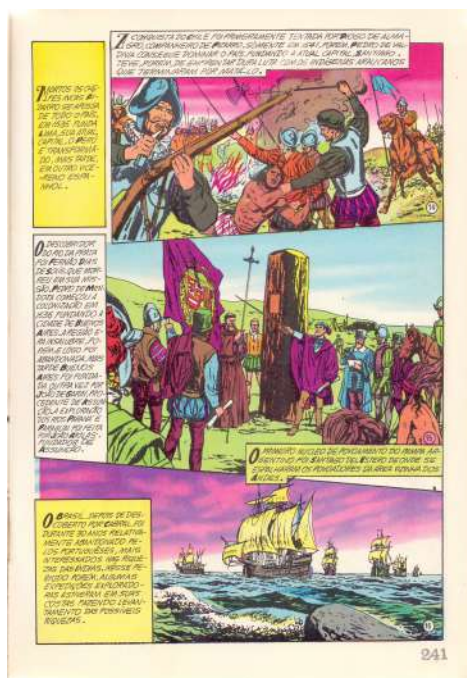


Figure 3. Version A (Castro y Zalla, 1971, p. 241).

The didactical style of the Julierme's history textbook, from the Zalla's historical comic book, has the texts in order to deviate the reader's attention in relation to thematised historical narrative, as the immobility of the images added to the excess of information



written do to value the Eurocentric conceptions about conflicts between Indigenous and Europeans during the conquest of America. This is because these Eurocentric views only recognize the actions of the conquerors.

The second graphic historical narrative presented in the research instrument, the version B, called *Colombo* (Altan, 1989), was written and drawn by the Italian cartoonist Francesco Tulio Altan, and it is a comic book that seeks the reconstruction of historical knowledge by means of a counter-narrative orientated by an iconoclastic and critical-genetic historical consciousness about conflicts between Indigenous and Europeans in the time of the conquest of America conquest.



Figure 4. Version B (Altan, 1989, p. 71).

This historical comic book tells the process of violence suffered by the Indigenous in the first cultural contacts provided by the first travels of the European explorer Christopher Columbus to the new continent. The human suffering dimension narrated by this comic book can allow young students to expansion of intersubjectivity which is the main parameter for the significant historical learning. It concerns the expansion of the ability to communicate and articulate historical memories through the formation of the identity of the subjects.

Following the criteria of Peter Lee (Lee y Ashby, 2000; Lee, 2006), these historical comic books seek to control anachronisms in relation to the subjects and situations represented the past.

From this, I present two questions aimed at direct and open answers. The first is an argumentative question of the possible differences between the versions A and B. This question was inspired by the research of Peter Lee (Lee y Ashby, 2000; Lee, 2006), Isabel Barca (2000) and Marcelo Fronza (2012) sought to detect differences in conceptions of

truth that young students observed in the two confronted historical comic books. The question to be addressed is: "Do you notice any difference between versions A and B? Which one (s)?".



Figure 5. Version B (Altan, 1989, p. 84).

The issue relate to youngsters perceive any difference between the versions was answered positively by all subjects investigated. Thus, in Table 1, the young students mobilized categories when they justified their answers from the three operations of historical consciousness (Rüsen, 2001):

Table 1.

Difference between the versions

Mental operations	Mobilizing categories
Historical experience	Facts about different territories
	Great figures (heroes)
	Everyday situations
	Relationships
	Encounters
	Etnocentrism
	Cultural differences
Historical interpretation	Realistic aesthetic past comparison
	Aesthetic past comparison
Historical orientation	Relationship with interculturality

### Historical experience

The mental operation of historical experience was explained by all youngsters investigated. We can mention, among the experiences of the past cited by these subjects, the facts concerning the various narrated territories in version A, the deconstruction of the heroes and the everyday dimension introduced by version B. Also they reported the importance of relationships, encounters between Indigenous and Europeans, and that these past experiences are presented in different versions in comic books either in a Eurocentric way, either from cultural differences. It is important to note that these historical experiences were clearly mobilized by the mental operations of the historical interpretation predominantly for aesthetic dimension of historical culture (Rüsen, 2009) and historical orientation from the principle of interculturality (Rüsen, 2014).

### Historical interpretation

The way to generate historical significance through the mental operation of historical interpretation was explicitly approached by three young students from the following categories:

#### Realistic aesthetic past comparison

A student mobilized this category articulating aesthetic and realistic elements of historical interpretation.

*“Yes. Version A is a more expository approach regarding the facts about different territories and, in version B, a friendlier look for humor, not clinging to names of major figures, but trying to show ‘realistic’ facts of everyday life.” (Marjane - 21 years old - Cuiabá).*

Marjane, to understand that the version A proposes to address more expository way past experiences about the various territories, included the traditional realist aesthetic proposal by the chapter *The conquest and colonization of America* written by Julierme de Abreu e Castro and designed by Rodolfo Zalla. The way that this didactic narrative exposes the past experiences is by presentation of various types of conquest and colonization that Europeans held in America in the form of a traditional objectivistic knowledge (Barca, 2000).

However, Marjane also understood that the version B, from aesthetic dimension of humor, delegitimize the stories of the great heroes of the American conquest (*“do not clinging to the great figures names”*) for the sake of historical signification of past experiences more realistic orientated the practical lives of subjects. She understands that the Altan’s historical comic book *Colombo* is a counter-narrative guided in a historical critical consciousness in relation to traditional historical interpretations of the period (Rüsen, 2014).

#### Aesthetic past comparison

This category was mobilized by two students when asked about the differences between the two historical comic books.

*“Yes. There is a difference in literary style, design style and how relationships are presented.” (Manolo - 30 years old - Cuiabá).*

*"Yes. One is more serious and the other is a caricature of the encounter."* (Miguel - 25 years old - Cuiabá).

Manolo response refers to how human relations occurred during the conquest of America have three levels about aesthetic interpretation. The first is the literary style of both comic books; the second in the drawing style; and the third is the form of interpretation of past experiences. This student realize the didactic style version of Julierme and iconoclastic style counter-narrative version created by Altan.

Already Miguel also note that the aesthetic dimension influences the way of interpretation of the past, considering the version A as serious one and the version B as a caricature of the history of the encounter between Europeans and Indigenous. These students understand that the aesthetic dimension of historical culture mobilizes different forms of interpretation of the past reality. Young subjects realize that it is possible to interpret the in historical, the aesthetic of the forms of presentation (Rüsen, 2009).

### **The historical orientation**

The way that youngsters orientate the temporal sense was revealed in one of the answers of the students from the following category:

### **Relationship with interculturality**

The category related to interculturality was mobilized the form of orientation perceived by an young student.

*"Yes. [In version] A, the insistence on Eurocentrism, and the other [version B] addresses more cultural differences"* (Jacob - 22 years old - Cuiabá).

Interculturality, by Jacob, is expressed in different forms of orientation expressed by historical comic books. In the version A, the Julierme's didactic chapter, the student realizes the predominance of ethnocentric relations of graphic narrative. What is interressante is that in comparison with the Altan's version B, he understands the cultural differences are the reading keys to grasp the encounter between Indigenous and Europeans in America and so recognizes the historical perspectives of others as valid reconstruction of a humanist multiperspectividade (Rüsen, 2012).

The second argumentative question search to understand the historical ideas that these students operate when confronted when the principle of interculturality. The question was based on the new humanism theory linked to the concepts of intersubjectivity and interculturality (Rüsen, 2014; 2015). I seek to understand whether the youngsters graduates of Cuiabá understand or not if the conflicts are linked to intercultural communication. So the question is: *"Considering the versions A and B narratives, how you understand that should be the relationship with the Indigenous in Brazil and America? Why?"*

The question about how youngsters understand that should be the relationship with the Indigenous in Brazil and America, from the narratives of Julierme Castro (version A) and Altan (version B) led to data reduction from the Table 2, which expresses how these subjects mobilized categories when justified their answers from the two principles for the Rüsen's new humanism (Rüsen, 2012; 2014):

Table 2 .

*Our relationship with the indigenous in Brazil and America*

<b>Mental operations</b>	<b>Mobilizing categories</b>
<b>Historical experience</b>	<i>Past and present relations</i>
<b>Interculturality</b>	<i>Exploitative relations</i>
	<i>Acknowledgement or respect relations</i>

### Historical experience

The way how the contingency of the past is expressed by historical experience has been expressed from a category:

#### Past and present relations

A young student expressed the principle of historical experience when asked about how it should be the relations with the Indigenous in Brazil and America.

*“They must be analyzed and understood from a vision of the period and interpose these relationships with the present” (Jacob - 22 years old - Cuiabá).*

The historical experience is a humanist principle that allows us to understand the difference between the before and after from the historical contingency. Jacob relations with the Indigenous should be seen in its experiential perspective, as should be understood through the perspective of the period, and highlighted this difference in time, confront the historical contextualization of the present. The historical contingency expresses an understanding of the dimension of human suffering, which is discussed in the following category (Rüsen, 2012).

### Interculturality

The principle of interculturality as empathic understanding related to the other is presented in two categories:

#### Exploitative relations

Two youngsters expressed this idea connected to the relations of exploitation's category in relations with the Indigenous in Brazil and America.

*"A relationship of exploitation. Because the Indigenous were exploited and exterminated"* (Miguel - 25 years old - Cuiabá).

*"The relationship shown in version A stands for direct confrontation, domination and slavery immediately, and pressure from the settlers. In version B, there is a more 'relaxed' approach both by the Indigenous and the Portuguese themselves"* (Marjane - 21 years old - Cuiabá).

Miguel marked the relations between Europeans and Brazilians and Indigenous as exploitative relationships through domination and the extermination of these subjects. Also Marjane understand the comic books offer great potential for human conflicts and dispositions. The dimension of the human suffering is the element that marks the relationships between Indigenous and Europeans. For her, in *The conquest and colonization of America*, by Julierme Castro and Rodolfo Zalla, the direct confrontation, domination and slavery are ethnocentric forms of domination of Indigenous. In Altan's version, *Colombo*, she points to a more "relaxed" view about the relations between Indigenous and the Portuguese. For her, struggles for recognition support contemporary cultural conflicts (Rüsen, 2014).

### **Acknowledgement or respect relations**

A student expressed through this category to understand the recognition between subjects as the basis of relations with the Indigenous.

*"Relations with the Indigenous should be the most common possible, because they are people like us, the no-Indigenous, respecting the cultural diversity of each one."* (Manolo - 30 years old - Cuiabá).

For Manolo relations with Indigenous must be common because the governing understanding of this students is the principle of humanity and reciprocity between subjects. This is because, for him, the Indigenous "are people like us", that lead to the recognition by different perspectives has relative to other. In this sense, Manolo understands that intersubjectivity internalizes, in the students, the principle of humanity in their own biographies in relation to the other in time and space (Rüsen, 2012). He understand as possible the chances of intercultural communication because cultures learn from each other and change in the mutual relationship, to intertwine, delimitate and fight to each other. (Rüsen, 2014, p. 296).

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

In conclusion, it is possible verify that these young students understand from the narrative confrontation these historical interpretations by comic books, some of the key elements of



these artifacts of historical culture, as the humor and narrative structure, for example, greatly facilitate the acquisition of knowledge historical elaborated in an intersubjective and humanistic way.

It is still not possible to present any solid result of investigations carried out by history students in Mato Grosso. But one conclusion is already possible: students in training at the university realize that the multiplicity of past experiences can be internalized through the testimonies provided by the evidence built from sources such as comic books, series, movies, songs that relate to subjects involved. Therefore, they realized that the operation of historical experience mobilizes the self-aknowledge which is the historical identity of youngsters.

It was found that the mental operations of historical consciousness (historical experience, interpretation, orientation and motivation) express rather different ways of approach to multiperspectivity of historical experiences, the controversy of the interpretations and the plurality of forms of sense of orientation in time are intersubjective and intercultural relationships in the process of historical development of mankind in which the teaching initiation is closely linked. And that goes for the teacher training process. This historical consciousness allows, yes, to construct humanist and intersubjective criteria that provide principles for the formation of a historical identity based on interculturality, ie, the mutual recognition of differences governed by an egalitarian otherness.

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