

**DISFARÇA-ME QUE TE DEVORO: YOUTUBERS MIRINS, CONSUMO E SEMIFORMAÇÃO DA CRIANÇA**

**DISFRÁZAME QUE TE DEVORO: NIÑOS YOUTUBERS, CONSUMO Y SEMIFORMACIÓN DEL NIÑO**

**DISGUISE ME THAT I DEVOUR YOU: CHILDREN YOUTUBERS, CONSUMPTION AND SEMI-FORMATION OF THE CHILD**

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**RESUMO:** Este artigo objetiva problematizar o papel e o impacto da indústria cultural na formação das crianças, tomando os *youtubers* mirins como foco de análise. Para tanto, busca refletir como se configura e atua a indústria cultural, bem como reconhecer as características da cultura digital, as formas de comunicação instituídas pelos *youtubers* que estimulam o consumo e tecer reflexões sobre como isso impacta na (semi)formação das crianças. É uma reflexão de cunho teórico, a partir de autores fundamentados na teoria crítica e que discutem a infância e sua (re)configuração na contemporaneidade. Como resultados, as novas formas de viver a infância na atualidade têm sido guiadas pelos aparatos tecnológicos como terreno fértil para divulgação de publicidade disfarçada na voz de crianças, moldando seus modos de ser, pensar e consumir.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Infância. Consumo. Mídia.

**RESUMEN:** El artículo tiene como objetivo problematizar el papel y el impacto de la industria cultural en la formación el niño, considerando los niños *youtubers* como foco de análisis. Para ello, se busca comprender cómo se configura y actúa la industria cultural, así como reconocer las características de la cultura digital, sus formas de comunicación instituidas por los *youtubers* que estimulan el consumo y hacer reflexiones sobre cómo eso impacta la semi-formación de los niños. Se trata de una reflexión de carácter teórico, a partir de autores fundamentados en la teoría crítica, que discuten la infancia y su (re)configuración en la contemporaneidad. De esta forma, llegamos a la conclusión que las nuevas formas de vivir la infancia en la actualidad han sido guiadas por los aparatos tecnológicos, configurando terreno

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*fértil para la divulgación de publicidad disfrazada con la voz de un niño que dice para otros niños, moldando, sus modos de ser, pensar y consumir.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Infancia. Consumo. Medios digitales.*

**ABSTRACT:** *This article aims to problematize the role and impact of the cultural industry in the training of children, taking the children youtubers as the focus of analysis. In order to do so, it seeks to understand how the cultural industry is configured and operated, as well as to recognize the characteristics of the digital culture, the forms of communication instituted by the youtubers that stimulate consumption and provide reflections on how it impacts on the (semi) formation of children. It is a theoretical reflection, based on authors based on critical theory and discussing childhood and it's (re) configuration in contemporary times. We have come to the conclusion that the new ways of living childhood in the present day have been guided by the technological apparatuses, configuring fertile ground for advertising publicity disguised in the voice of children who speak to other children, thus shaping their ways of being, thinking and consuming.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Childhood. Consumption. Media.*

## Introduction

*Planeta das Gêmeas: 10,599,323. Julia Silva: 4,453,857. Luluca: 5,250,080. Mundo da Vivi: 5,246,004. Isaac do Vine: 6,702,611. Bela Bagunça: 9,461,838. Juliana Baltar: 8,955,419. Canal da Lelê: 4,936,141.* These are some names of Brazilian child youtubers and the number of subscribers to their channels when we started writing this article. These are children who use this platform to get in contact with other children, becoming known phenomena nationally and internationally, configuring a new way of living childhood in the digital culture of the last decades. With the help and authorization of an adult, children create a channel on YouTube and post videos, almost daily, that are watched by thousands of registered children. In a few hours the videos have hundreds of thousands of views and likes.

Children, in the current context, spend many hours of their day in front of computers, or with tablets and cell phones in their hands, a condition that has altered the ways of playing. This phenomenon, which does not go unnoticed or is unknown to most contemporary children, changes the existence, relationships, configuration of childhood and the formation of infantile subjects, introducing new forms of governance.

Faced with this scenario, the objective of this article is to problematize the role and impact of the cultural industry in the education of children, using child youtubers as the focus

of analysis. It is a reflection of theoretical nature, based on authors based on critical theory and who discuss childhood and its (re) configuration in contemporary times.

Initially, we present a discussion about the cultural industry, its educational role and its influence on the child's semi-formation, especially from the studies of Theodor Adorno and his precursors. Then, we reflect on the relationship between advertising and consumption and how it impacts the construction of children's desires for the possession of a large number of cultural artifacts. Finally, we explain some characteristics of child youtubers, their forms of communication and adherence strategies, the relationship with industries and consumption and how this act in the formation of children's subjectivities.

### **Cultural industry, education and child (semi)formation**

The concept of cultural industry was developed by Adorno and Horkheimer (1986), who discuss how in the historical context of their hegemony, the deceit of the masses is promoted, that is, the superficial formation of subjects guided by the logic of consumption that promotes a standardization of the thinking, ways of being and/in the world. Massification is discussed by the authors who reflect on the relationship between industry and culture, remembering that, many times, the subjects are aware that their desires can only be partially satisfied (or not even that) from the purchase of the products, but even so they continue to illusively consume.

The discussion undertaken by the authors highlights the fetishistic character of the products of the cultural industry and the damage it has to the formative process of human consciousness, promoting a semi-formation. The managed conscience is conducted by others, with no space for autonomous and reflected action, a condition that has especially affected children and shaped their subjectivities. According to Adorno (2010), when formation becomes semi-formation, we have an alienated spirit, a dominant form of current consciousness.

Adorno (2010), by reflecting on how culture has become a value in society, helps us to recognize how the mastery of technology and its apparatuses has been established, which promote adapted formation, which perpetuates deformity. The progressive domination, different in each age due to its content and institutions, has found digital culture today as an important means to effect its changes.

Thus, the cultural industry “[...] leads everyone who laughs together to delude themselves that they have achieved identification” (ADORNO, 2010, p. 19), spreading an

alleged freedom of choice that is not possible to exist, because it has been stunted as spontaneity decomposes, withers.

Life, modeled until its last ramifications by the principle of equivalence, is exhausted in the reproduction of itself, in the reiteration of the system, and its demands are discharged on individuals so harshly and despotically, that each of them cannot keep up stand against them as a conductor of their own life, nor incorporate them as something specific to the human condition (ADORNO, 2010, p. 24).<sup>4</sup>

The semi-formation distorts the sensory life, promoting an immediate administration and a spirit conquered by the fetish of the merchandise. In addition, it incurs superficiality, since the reception of information and images no longer obeys immanent criteria and is based on the need built by semi-culture (ADORNO, 2010).

In this process, the experiences are lived on average and the non-assimilated formative elements strengthen what the author defines as reification of conscience, that is, a condition of passivity. A fixity, an automatism, in a blind relationship with cultural products that sabotage the capacity for experience necessary for true formation. The identification promoted by the cultural industry encourages an unsuccessful relationship between subjects and products (materials, artistic, etc.), as it masks taste and promotes conformism, showing semi-formation as an alienated conscience (ADORNO, 2010).

Duarte (2003, p. 444), when reflecting on the core of Adornian theory on semi-formation, emphasizes the “[...] idea that the disadvantaged sections of the population, before they could have 'properly formed', became easily caught in the current - technologically mediated - mode of ideology, that is, the cultural industry”. In this sense, the common thread between semi-formation and the cultural industry would be authoritarianism, since the possibility of freedom is suppressed.

According to Bandeira and Oliveira (2012, p. 229), semi-formation promotes falsification of training as it leads workers to

[...] consuming the products that the cultural industry makes available to fill your free time, transforms this time into an extension of work, excluding the remnants of creative capacity and, therefore, the exercise of playful, affective and symbolic capacities that make it possible the development of a critical

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<sup>4</sup> A vida, modelada até suas últimas ramificações pelo princípio da equivalência, esgota-se na reprodução de si mesma, na reiteração do sistema, e suas exigências descarregam-se sobre os indivíduos tão dura e despoticamente, que cada um deles não pode manter-se firme contra elas como condutor de sua própria vida, nem incorporá-las como algo específico da condição humana (ADORNO, 2010, p. 24).

potential that allows the emergence of a praxis that transforms the conditions that perpetuate false life.<sup>5</sup>

The industrialization process, accentuated in the last decades, moves the machine of capitalism and has transformed the child into a main target to sustain consumption. Every day, we see new products appear, from toys to clothes, from food to school supplies, that invade children's lives, through advertising that builds desires for possession, and become part of their daily practices, whether at home, on television, on the internet, in educational institutions, in shopping malls, convincing them that such objects are necessary for insertion in society and for their personal fulfillment. As Steinberg and Kincheloe (2004) warn, a set of cultural artifacts ranging from films to books, toys to school supplies and games follow the logic of commercialization, but act pedagogically.

The rampant consumption of such products would tend to encourage the dissemination of standardized thoughts, delusional prejudiced practices and a fragmented consciousness practically incapable of historically relating the past to the present, so that a different future could be thought (ZUIN; ZUIN, 2017, p. 424).<sup>6</sup>

The fetishistic character of the merchandise, discussed by Adorno and Horkheimer (1986), produces a sensation of momentary pleasure, since the artifacts directed at children are soon replaced or added to them, others necessary to guarantee their functioning. Take, for example, the Barbie doll, disseminated especially to children of the female gender: in this case, it is not enough to have Barbie, Barbie's clothes, would also be a necessity to have the wardrobe to store them, the car to walk, the accessories, Barbie's boyfriend, Barbie's friends. Likewise, the Hot Wheels carts, which are among the objects present in most of the boys' plays, are associated with tracks, several of them different in length, challenges, loopings. These examples help us to understand that when the child gets possession of the doll or the strollers, he/she partially has his/her desire fulfilled, as he/she soon realizes that he/she lacks other products associated with them and presented as necessary to organize the game, the play.

This play, built on the ideal of stereotyped thinking, acts especially in the education of children, that is, playful objects such as cultural artifacts and the product of the capitalist

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<sup>5</sup> [...] consumir os produtos que a indústria cultural disponibiliza para preencher seu tempo livre, transforma este tempo em um prolongamento do trabalho, excluindo os resquícios de capacidade criativa e, portanto, do exercício das capacidades lúdicas, afetivas e simbólicas que tornam possível o desenvolvimento de um potencial crítico que permita o surgimento de uma práxis transformadora das condições que perpetuam a vida falsa.

<sup>6</sup> O consumo desenfreado de tais produtos tenderia a fomentar a disseminação dos pensamentos padronizados, das práticas preconceituosas delirantes e de uma consciência fragmentada praticamente incapaz de relacionar historicamente o passado com o presente, para que se pudesse pensar um futuro diferente (ZUIN; ZUIN, 2017, p. 424).

industry propagate, through their colors, associated scenarios and related activities, a conditioning, which is not totally conditioning given the children's subversion capacity, but it is very conforming in the children's ways of being, thinking and acting. As Adorno (2010, p. 33) writes, semi-formation does not allow for a formative experience based on concrete reality, as this “[...] is replaced by a punctual, disconnected, interchangeable and ephemeral state of knowledge, and it is known that it will be blurred in the next instant by other information”.

Zuin and Zuin (2017), when referring to the concept of semi-formation described by Adorno, highlight the hegemony of the cultural industry in today's society, calling special attention to the subjective dimension of its performance. The authors reflect on the need to consider historical mediations in the times and spaces in which they are produced, that is, the way in which semi-formation is renewed in the current society of digital culture. If, according to Adorno, the formation of a free conscience is a condition for autonomy, today we observe that the individual is tutored by others, especially by technology, which establishes the digital culture and operates new forms of governability for the subjects, their conduct, their ways of being and thinking.

Montigneaux (2003) points out that, in contemporary times, consumption models have children as their main target, with specific products and services for them. Brands must find and promote new forms of communication in order to reach this audience.

As an example, we can highlight youtubers, which have been sponsored by large industrial conglomerates and also small companies. With an informal language, these actors favor the dimension of pleasure, entertainment, disguising the products in a life in front of the screens. Thus, we understand that digital culture promotes instrumentalized knowledge, fleeting information, which escapes between the fingers, is superficial, and has contributed little to formation in the sense of promoting autonomy, the ability to think. This way of existing is found in the children of this present time. As Coelho, Costa and Mattar Neto (2018, p. 1078) record,

We are experiencing an important chapter in human history: the Digital Age. We are surrounded by technological devices (smartphones, tablets, ultrabooks, among others) and immersed in a culturally mediatized broth (SMS messages, e-mails, social media posts, among other possibilities).<sup>7</sup>

In this context, children share and promote different actions than their parents lived, as they are part of a new generation directly associated with technology. Digital natives would be

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<sup>7</sup> Vivenciamos um capítulo importante da história da humanidade: a Era do Digital. Estamos cercados por aparatos tecnológicos (*smartphones*, *tablets*, *ultrabooks*, dentre outros) e imersos em um caldo culturalmente mediatizado (mensagens SMS, *e-mails*, postagens em redes sociais, dentre outras possibilidades).



all those who grew up inserted and surrounded by information and communication technologies, including the generation of youtubers that we see proliferating on the internet (COELHO; COSTA; MATTAR NETO, 2018).

Zuin and Zuin (2017, p. 427) explain that the addiction to consumption produced by visual stimuli promotes “[...] profound changes both in the development of lasting mental representations and in the sensorimotor perception that provides the necessary ballast for development such representations”.

In this logic, if we take the case of child youtubers, the number of videos and likes on the channels strengthens the logic that ‘being’ means ‘being perceived’. In this way, the screens become ubiquitous, whether in family, leisure or educational contexts. Children have stopped playing with each other to watch videos of children playing, opening toy packages, presenting their routines, among others.

The universalization of the screen made through the computer and its most varied forms - notebooks, tablets, desktop computers, among others - fostered the production of both physical and psychological consequences that were not fully identified, given the fact that they are still being experienced. But one of them stands out in the face of the continuous flow and consumption of images and sounds that clash with the scope of capturing the attention of its consumers: the consumption addiction of audiovisual shocks. If, a few years ago, people had contact with audiovisual shocks only once a week, when they frequented movie theaters, and if such an experience changed radically with the massification of television, since contact with screens became if daily, already in society in digital culture, the consumption of such shocks becomes uninterrupted (ZUIN; ZUIN, 2017, p. 428).<sup>8</sup>

As the authors record, there is no rest in the stimuli, if before it was television, which step by step has been occupying people's time, with the computer and, especially, cell phones and tablets, this attention is contested without interruption, either for work reasons, or in moments of pleasure. The impact of social networks on the ways of life, on the subjects' time, has promoted significant changes in relationships and has directly impacted even on the physical and mental health of individuals.

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<sup>8</sup> A universalização da tela feita por meio do computador e suas mais variadas formas – *notebooks, tablets*, computadores de mesa, entre outras – fomentou a produção de consequências tanto físicas quanto psicológicas que não foram identificadas em toda a sua plenitude, haja vista o fato de que estão sendo ainda vivenciadas. Mas uma delas se destaca diante do fluxo e do consumo contínuos de imagens e sons que se digladiam com o escopo de capturar a atenção de seus consumidores: o vício de consumo dos choques audiovisuais. Se, há alguns anos atrás, as pessoas tinham contato com os choques audiovisuais apenas uma vez por semana, quando frequentavam as salas de cinema, e se tal experiência mudou radicalmente com a massificação da televisão, uma vez que o contato com as telas tornou-se diário, já na sociedade na cultura digital, o consumo de tais choques se torna ininterrupto (ZUIN; ZUIN, 2017, p. 428).

The portability of pocket computers - which allow the user to communicate online through the use of social networks, be located and locate any space, access any information, watch videos and TV programs, access social networks, among other functions - makes it unbearable not to have such a device, which generates a feeling of anguish typical of the state of addicts who are deprived of drugs and develop withdrawal syndrome (ZUIN; ZUIN, 2017, p. 429).<sup>9</sup>

From these discussions, we can say that in the daily lives of children this addiction is also felt, sometimes to a greater extent, since with parents inserted in the world of work they stay long periods alone. The internet, whether accessed via tablet, cell phone or other device, captures the attention of children, educates them, acting on their formation in a superficial and fetishized way.

The concentration is modified and decreased, constantly bombarded with new stimuli through products that are presented as novelty, latest releases, with more and more accessories than those that preceded them. With a quick game of images and sounds that overlap, the videos posted on YouTube channels attract the attention of users, especially children, who are seduced by the colors, lights and scenery that present the new products.

Bombarded by information and news, in scenarios that seem to be the home of youtubers (but that are very well constructed and thought out), children start to wish that life, those objects, as a way to be part of this world so beautiful and interesting to their children. eyes.

Thus, it becomes practically unbearable to concentrate for a long time on reading a certain text, as the body and mind as if they crave for continuous access to new audiovisual information, which must be immediately consumed through the links that are constantly exchanged. And it is precisely this constant exchange that makes users unable to take the time to reflect more deeply on a given topic, which could stimulate the production of lasting mental representations and, therefore, new concepts. This is how semi-forming is revitalized in the society of digital culture, as it is in this society, in which it is possible to remember everything through the uninterrupted access to any information, that new forms of forgetfulness are engendered (ZUIN; ZUIN, 2017, p. 431).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> A portabilidade dos computadores de bolso – que permitem ao usuário se comunicar *on-line* por meio do uso das redes sociais, ser localizado e localizar qualquer espaço, acessar quaisquer informações, assistir a vídeos e programas de TV, acessar redes sociais, entre outras funções – faz com que seja insuportável não estar com tal aparelho, o que gera uma sensação de angústia típica do estado dos viciados que são privados de drogas e desenvolvem a síndrome de abstinência (ZUIN; ZUIN, 2017, p. 429).

<sup>10</sup> Desse modo, torna-se praticamente insuportável se concentrar por muito tempo na leitura de um determinado texto, pois o corpo e a mente como que imploram pelo acesso contínuo a novas informações audiovisuais, que precisam ser imediatamente consumidas por meio dos *links* que são constantemente trocados. E é exatamente essa troca constante que faz com que os usuários não consigam ter o tempo necessário para refletir de forma mais aprofundada sobre determinado tópico, o que poderia estimular a produção de representações mentais duradouras e, portanto, de novos conceitos. Eis a forma como a semiformação é revitalizada na sociedade da cultura digital, pois é nesta sociedade, na qual é possível lembrar-se de tudo por meio do acesso ininterrupto de quaisquer informações, que novas formas de esquecimento são engendradas (ZUIN; ZUIN, 2017, p. 431).



Although this whole game has an entertainment effect, it ends up preventing reflection on what is being seen and heard. Furthermore, the authors point out that the ability to concentrate, so necessary for the production of concepts, “[...] tends to metamorphose into a kind of dispersed concentration, completely accustomed to the new unforgivable perpetual gifts of the current semi-formative process” (ZUIN; ZUIN, 2017, p. 434).

Without rest and surrounded by this atmosphere, consumption among children is greatly boosted by advertising.

### **Advertising and consumption: building desires in children**

Reflecting on the relationship between childhood and consumption in contemporary times is both a complex and necessary task and brings with it a range of elements present in the daily lives of children that are often overlooked. Complex, in the sense that it requires a thorough reading of the strategies put into practice by industry and the media, recognizing that both consumption and childhood are fields of the exercise of power. Necessary, because it has passed through childhood and its formation so forcefully that it is almost impossible to escape the logic of the market.

When reporting the transition from a solid to a fluid social arrangement, Bauman (2001) highlights that we live in a context marked by ephemerality, in which mechanisms have been developed that trigger stimuli for the acquisition of material goods and services that become increasingly disposable.

This condition, according to Castoriadis (2004), has caused social, political, cultural, epistemological and axiological changes, hindering the development of critical sense. Thus, an accommodated and inert society is configured, in which human beings have lost their critical and interrogative capacity, tending to consume in an uncontrolled way.

According to Momo (2012), the logic of the globalization of the commodity is being transferred to the social daily life and has acted for both adults and children. Boys and girls are seen as potential consumers and as the driving force behind consumer activity within the family.

Contemporary culture is full of the effects of the joint action of companies and media whose main objective is the establishment and conservation of consumption habits in the population. In this sense, Barber (2009) points out that there is a concern with an 'induced childhood ethos', which acts on children, influencing them and creating in them the desire to consume. At the heart of this relationship is capitalism, which in recent decades has had a strong

influence on this generational category, making this audience one of the most interesting targets in segmented marketing.

With the reconfiguration of the family structure at the end of the middle ages, children who were previously under the care of mothers are now under the responsibility of third parties and attend other spaces, such as schools. In this context, they were distanced from family life, creating parents' guilt. The pressure and demand for the short time spent with the children led the parents to try to make up for their absence through objects such as clothes, accessories and toys. The logic of consumption, with this objective, reestablishes in adults the feeling of well-being, of compensation, of accomplishment. The consumption model that decades ago focused on the adult consumer quickly reached children, who started to have an important place in the family, including guiding choices and giving their opinions in the decisions of domestic purchases (SCHOR, 2009).

The expansion of the capitalist economic system and the consolidation of its hegemony established a process of colonization of childhood, which came to be challenged by the logic of the market. According to Dornelles (2005), the production of goods aimed at this audience expanded widely since the 1980s, when society started to focus on child consumption and convert children into consumers. In the logic of the market, childhood takes on a new meaning.

The construction of the desire for possession in the child is the result of the engendering of a set of knowledge produced that were implanted as regimes of truth. Sciences such as Psychology, Medicine and Pedagogy, among others, started to study children, their development, their fields of interest, and their knowledge was used by large corporations, be it toy companies, entertainment industry or media conglomerates. Media and companies have come to know children and put into practice ways to control them, to act on their tastes, to speak to them directly and also mediated (DORNELLES, 2005).

The large number of artifacts aimed at children attracts children, through a seductive approach based on playfulness and fun. Advertising appeals are present everywhere, at school, in parks, in restaurants, in shopping malls, building desires and moving the consumer machine. Ceaselessly, children are challenged by advertisements for toys, food, beauty products, accessories, school supplies, electronics, all very attractive and 'thought for them'.

With the advancement of technology, we have childhood online, connected to cell phones, computers, tablets, video games, experiencing the digital culture through games, YouTube channels and social networks. For Dornelles (2005, p. 81), "[...] cyber-childhood is part of cultural pedagogies that contribute to engender children in a variety of social spaces, including and not limited to the school space".

Lira and Nascimento (2015) record that modern society, of control and disciplinarization, associated with their devices the stimulus to consumption, expanding the administration spaces of the school and factory subjects to the shopping mall spaces.

Although consumption is a widespread phenomenon among all social classes, Dornelles (2005, p. 90) records that the social group in which the child is inserted will determine how he will consume:

The belonging of each child in different groups, or in a specific group, induces his actions and behaviors, including those of consumption. This causes the child to identify himself with the groups in which he is included, by an inclusion policy. Such an inclusion policy produces the excluded, which does not mean being beyond or out of inclusion, but rather belonging to another group: the excluded from the market, consumption, plays, websites, computer rooms, games, etc.<sup>11</sup>

The consumption of children from the excluded group is often made by the margins, running both for access to pirated products, replicas of objects that cheapen the price, and also by the gaze, admiring the desired toy in store windows, stopping to watch the advertisements in front of the always-on televisions, when leafing through the magazines flooded with advertising, as well as watching other children play.

Through different means, the media and advertising find ways and mechanisms to convince, in an impactful and comprehensive way to children from different social classes. Children are won over by colors, drawings, movements, scenarios, by the set of elements that the possession of objects would bring (DORNELLES, 2005).

The cultural industry seeks to exercise power in children, whose objective is to act on tastes and preferences, standardizing behaviors, canceling participation and different ways of thinking. The impacts of consumption have been felt massively in children's bodies and minds, since advertisements and media devices seek to “[...] colonize children's consciences by imposing false ideologies and inculcating materialistic values that children seem especially unable to resist” (BUCKINGHAM, 2007, p. 210).

In this context, the concept of semi-formation proposed by Adorno (2010), finds a lot of address, since the ability to reflect is removed from the subjects. When consuming images,

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<sup>11</sup> A pertença de cada criança em diferentes grupos, ou num grupo específico, induz suas ações e comportamentos, inclusive os de consumo. Isto faz, com que a criança se identifique com os grupos nos quais é incluída, por uma política de inclusão. Tal política de inclusão produz os excluídos, o que não significa estar além ou fora da inclusão, mas, sim, pertencer a um outro grupo: o dos excluídos do mercado, do consumo, dos jogos, dos *sites*, dos quartos informatizados, dos *games*, etc.

products, ideas, it is impregnated with the spirit of conformism and feeds an alienated conscience.

Advertising and the media, as cultural pedagogies, have influenced the education of children. Alana (2016) mentions that the media apparatus has acted intensively on the development of children. This performance has adultized childhood by offering activities not appropriate for its age group. Thus, it is common nowadays for children involved in conversation circles to discuss the clothes and shoes they wear, the products they have and the desire for future purchases.

Schor (2009) emphasizes that this constant desire of children for shopping has contributed to depression, anxiety and low child self-esteem, as they often want certain products, but are unable to acquire them, or even live with other children who have the toy, the clothes and the accessories they have a desire to own.

Studies carried out by the American Academy of Pediatrics (ALANA, 2016) point to a correlation between the media and advertising and the increase in children with behavioral problems. Specialists who provide services in this space emphasize that these disorders are associated with television channels and the Internet, which have deposited on children a range of productions that encourage eroticization and violence. Alana (2016) considers that the images of sexuality presented in children's ads have contributed to an early sexual behavior in children, robbing them of energies that could be used in playing and pretending.

The food industry has also used an explosion of advertisements about foods developed especially to conquer children's palates. In addition to offering married sales, placing toys as 'gifts', we observe growing investments in spaces that combine children's food and leisure, with menus and kids' spaces. On supermarket shelves, low-nutritious, but very caloric food options are available to children, with the presence of characters from films and cartoons on product packaging (DOMINICO; LIRA, 2017).

The most current advertising strategy has been to present products through other children on YouTube, the so-called child youtubers. In a disguised and naturalized way, they are carriers of a discourse that usually includes 'showing' to followers and spectators - other children - the novelties in launches, especially toys and school supplies.

### **Child youtubers and childhood (con)formation**

Montigneaux (2003), when discussing brands, their discourse and ways of relating, highlights that the characters in films and cartoons bring brands closer to children, facilitating exchanges and optimizing performances. In recent years, this task has been shared with child youtubers, who publish videos of varied content, many of them presenting and promoting products and brands, indirectly and in disguise, without regulation.

YouTube is a platform for sharing movies and videos from the company Google, hosting a wide variety of materials, mostly homemade, but which has been refining in its presentation more and more. The creation of a channel makes it easy for video producers to accommodate their material in one place, facilitating access through subscriptions. Thus, when accessing a video, the 'suggestion' for the person to subscribe to the channel already appears below, which will issue notices whenever a new video is put into circulation. This is the case of the youtubers mentioned at the beginning of this text. As Coelho, Costa and Mattar Neto (2018, p. 1081) record, with “[...] the internet, there was a transformation in the ways of creation, both ethically and aesthetically”.

In addition, the technology operates new forms of surveillance and access control for individuals, as child subjects subscribed to youtubers' channels receive notifications whenever new videos are posted. The audible and visual signals call attention to the screen, establish a continuous and uninterrupted communication network that questions the subjects and guides their way of life and ways of thinking, in a superficial and semi-cultured manner, as Adorno (2010) warned.

There are many pleasurable sensations derived from the constant consumption of audiovisual shocks that take the form of optical shooting. Physiologically, the feelings of pleasure arising from this type of consumption can be seen in the gawking looks of children, who simply stop doing anything if they are presented with screens whose multicolored images sparkle intensely, at the same time that they change at a dizzying speed (ZUIN; ZUIN, 2017, p. 428).<sup>12</sup>

The possibility of making a set of videos public daily puts these children in a privileged and disputed place by the industry, which expands its advertising channels. We can say that child youtubers are currently the newest characters to publicize the brands, since they present the products, guide the logos, disseminate news, being used effectively in the service of companies. In this process, we see the semi-formation made explicit:

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<sup>12</sup> São muitas as sensações prazerosas derivadas do consumo incessante de choques audiovisuais que assumem a forma do tiro ótico. Fisiologicamente, as sensações de prazer advindas desse tipo de consumo podem ser observadas nos olhares embasbacados das crianças, que simplesmente param de fazer qualquer coisa caso lhes sejam apresentadas as telas cujas imagens multicoloridas cintilam intensamente, ao mesmo tempo em que mudam numa velocidade estonteante (ZUIN; ZUIN, 2017, p. 428).

The semi-cultured individual is one who always shows himself to be well informed, alongside everything that is supposed to happen, but in a superficial and uncritical way, without ever being able to relate the facts to each other in order to produce a critical opinion on the issues in question (BANDEIRA; OLIVEIRA, 2012, p. 230).<sup>13</sup>

Child youtubers, in this context, institute fashions, highlight certain products, highlight launches, shaping play, ways of dressing, food tastes, that is, the ways of children of today. With the ability to cool down, images and uninterrupted sounds invade minds that have their capacity for critical reflection sabotaged.

In view of the continuous supply of audiovisual shocks, which are able to capture the attention of those who consume them for an instant, there is hardly the time necessary to reflect on what is being consumed, given that new links 'clamor' for them to be immediately accessed. It is in this context that the means of concentration of attention produces its own decomposition. As soon as it is focused on an audiovisual shock, attention falls apart in the form of distractions, which take place in the continuous and mind-boggling rhythm of exchanging images and sounds (ZUIN; ZUIN, 2017, p. 429).<sup>14</sup>

In the contemporary social setting, where access to the internet and electronic devices has been a constant in our daily lives, child youtubers are part of children's lives in an uncontrolled way, as they 'invade' their homes, change their routines and talk to the child daily. This, involved in the beauty and perfection of life and daily life presented by youtubers, promptly requires the possession of the objects seen on the screens, without reflecting whether they are in fact necessary or fun.

The mind-boggling pace of distractions that continually alternate, as our eyes are attracted by audiovisual stimuli exposed by omnipresent screens, seems to be causing the ability to concentrate to be radically transformed, in such a way that dispersion becomes part of its constitution (ZUIN; ZUIN, 2017, p. 430).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> O indivíduo semiculto é aquele que demonstra estar sempre bem informado, a par de tudo o que supostamente acontece, porém de uma forma superficial e acrítica, sem nunca conseguir relacionar os fatos entre si de forma a produzir uma opinião crítica sobre os assuntos em questão (BANDEIRA; OLIVEIRA, 2012, p. 230).

<sup>14</sup> Frente à oferta contínua de choques audiovisuais, que conseguem capturar por instantes a atenção dos que os consomem, dificilmente há o tempo necessário para que se reflita sobre o que está sendo consumido, haja vista que novos *links* 'clamam' para que sejam imediatamente acessados. É nesse contexto que o meio de concentração da atenção produz sua própria decomposição. Pois, assim que é focada num choque audiovisual, a atenção se despedaça na forma de distrações, que se sucedem no ritmo contínuo e alucinante das trocas de imagens e sons (ZUIN; ZUIN, 2017, p. 429).

<sup>15</sup> O ritmo alucinante das distrações que continuamente se alternam, na medida em que nossos olhares são atraídos por estímulos audiovisuais expostos por telas omnipresentes, parece estar fazendo com que a própria capacidade de concentração seja radicalmente transformada, de tal modo que a dispersão torna-se parte de sua constituição (ZUIN; ZUIN, 2017, p. 430).



The ethical and legal implications of covert advertising need to be considered, since there are impacts on the behavior of child consumers, seen as a more vulnerable group under the rules of communication. Since products are presented without identifying sponsors and advertising is not carried on their own editorial space, the appeal has a strong impact on the decision-making power of consumers, and invisible advertising can be classified as abusive and misleading.

The content of the videos posted on the channels is usually associated with a set of products, be it beauty, fun, school, among others. Youtubers are considered digital influencers, since content creators direct and format ways of being, dressing, advising their followers and trying products, services, visiting places, among other indications (MARÔPO; SAMPAIO; MIRANDA, 2018). Digital influencers profit from the videos posted, which come out of amateurism and come to professionalization, partly fostered by the harassment of companies in the interest of promoting products.

The authors also highlight how this phenomenon has (re) defined children's identities, especially of girls, who live a childhood marked by gender normativity. Thus, the media in their various configurations function as amplifiers of advice and slogans; at the same time that the child youtubers invest in their celebrization they (co)modify the experiences of other children, that is, they themselves become brands. Thus, being a youtuber can become a regular and profitable activity, through the use of strategies that leverage the audience, with specific content and planned narrative that includes irreverence and closeness with the target audience.

In this perspective, Dalethese (2017) points out that when consuming images and video content, children become, in addition to being users, broadcasters and disseminators of images and information, as they watch, enjoy, comment and share.

When using children as spokespeople for their products, companies institute invisible or disguised advertising. The videos, although they seem focused on entertainment, carry messages that addressing to other children ends up (re)configuring childhood, impacting on the constitution of children's subjectivities (MELO, 2018).

## **Final considerations**

The reconfiguration of the experience of childhood in contemporary times, especially through technology, requires that we focus more carefully on the phenomena that affect children and affect the formation of their identities.

The performance of the child youtubers deserves to be studied, in view of their strategies of contact with the child audience and, especially, due to the association that the content of their videos and channels make with large companies that produce artifacts aimed at children.

Captured by electronic devices and the content transmitted by them, children rarely invite friends to play in their homes, or go out to parks, as their 'new way of playing' is to watch others playing. This reconfiguration of both social relationships and formation has an impact on children's subjectivities, as children are more lonely, although bombarded with calls on the screens (Hey guys!, Good morning, guys!), more sedentary (the screen promotes immobility) and dependents of these devices.

Supported by Adorno (2010), we seek to critique semi-formation as it appears in the context of digital culture. The author warned about the power that extra-pedagogical reality has over people, about the impossibility of opposing this system, which does not mean being blind to its implications. In this sense, it is important to assume the position of those who strive to look more closely at these subjects, the content they convey and the experiences they provide, in the sense of criticizing towards a more autonomous formation. The possibility of resistance in this scenario is due to the need for critical self-reflection regarding semi-formation.

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