

# ΣΟΦΙΑ—SOPHIA

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18634/sophiaj.15v.1i.904>

## A phenomenological interpretation of violence in children's everyday life

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### Article information:

Received: January 20, 2018  
Revised: July 12, 2018  
Accepted: December 15, 2018

### How to cite:

Morales, M.L. (2019). A phenomenological interpretation of violence in children's everyday life. *Sophia*. 15 (1): 73-82.

This article is a product of the thesis: 'Interpretation of the world of meaning in relation to daily violence, in children between 5 and 10 years of age of the Educational Institution Pedacito de Cielo - La Tebaida - Quindío - Colombia.

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ISSN (electronic): 2346-0806 ISSN (print): 1794-8932



## **Abstract**

This document is the result of a study carried out in 2012 with children aged between 5 and 10 years, (who are) elementary school students in an educational institution in the municipality of La Tebaida (Quindío province). Its purpose was to achieve a description of the world of meaning of the boys, in order to unveil the 'codes' with which they read everyday situations and understand conflict and violence; hence, the use of qualitative tools in order to get into their everyday lives: In-depth personal interviews, group interviews, observation and recording in notes diary, review of documents (anecdotes, family files, follow-up minutes, institutional documents, among others). This article presents some generalities on studies about violence; then, it addresses daily life as a study space. Phenomenology is used as a method. Among the conclusions, it must be pointed out that in the phenomenological discussion about the consolidation of action and interpretation schemes, this research shows that children do have such schemes, not in an embryonic stage, but structured schemes throughout their years of life, which require refinement and precision; that leaves education with enormous possibilities of proposing forms other than violence for resolving conflicts.

**Keywords:** phenomenology, everyday violence, children's way to make sense of the world, education for conflict resolution.

## Introduction

Conflict and violence are issues on which the academy has long set its sights. In Colombia, political violence has been the focus of research by nationals and foreigners alike, yet it is violence in daily life that reports the highest numbers of fatalities and non-fatalities in more than two decades. Exploring what happens in those daily scenarios in which most of the people's lives take place, how the tools to settle disputes are learned and refined, and finding out why violence is the preferred mechanism for these struggles, is an issue of the utmost relevance mainly in these times, which have put the Colombian society in front of the possibility of building or rebuilding itself in a different way: inclusive and respectful; a difficult task but one that must be undertaken and education has a preponderant role to play in this task.

## How was the research done?

The study that originates this article has as actors children between 5 and 10 years of age, because they constitute a population in the middle of a primary socialization process, which moves in daily scenarios (home, school, neighborhood) acquiring and reproducing the body of knowledge available at the time, place and groups to which it belongs. It was inspired by phenomenological reflection based on Alfred Schütz's proposals.

The data collection techniques used were: participant observation, semi-structured interviews and informal talks with teachers and parents; focus groups and semi-structured personal interviews with children; analysis of documentation such as psychosocial follow-up cards, psychological follow-up cards, external referrals, anecdotes, resumes. Proxemic and kinesic analyses were incorporated in the narration and the observational records, given their relevance to account for the patterns of interaction among the actors, because daily violence is materialized in the interaction. Hence, the research offers a description of children's world of meaning in relation to the violence that takes place in everyday settings, in particular the interpretation of the contexts of meaning with which children face life in a collective.

## Studies on violence

Violence is one of those phenomena about which, it seems, everything or almost everything is said. Evidently, the exploration of the subject allows us to find references, not only from various disciplines, with different scopes: from the most structural to those that rest on the individual rational decision, but that deal with dissimilar aspects: causes, effects, actors, interests at stake, strategies deployed, all of which give rise to typologies that translate into multiple adjectives, so that we can refer to: structural, circumstantial, symbolic, direct, economic, political, social, interpersonal, ethnic, family, gender, self-inflicted, neighborhood, collective, labor, sexual, school, psychological, physical violence, etc.

However, the bulk of studies on violence are carried out on two levels: either at the societal level or at the level of the dispute; in the first case they ask about the forces that predispose a society to characteristic forms of violence. At the level of the dispute, they ask about the dynamics of specific, concrete incidents, their strategies and sequences (Ross, 1995). Whether at one level or another, the priority is to clarify the causes of the phenomenon<sup>1</sup>.

The findings can be grouped around the following trends:

- a. Those studies that see macro-structural factors as the decisive cause of violence.
- b. Those who understand it as a result of individuals' decisions, mediated by rational cost-benefit calculation.
- c. Others who assume it as a natural condition of human beings.
- d. Those who put psychological factors first as determinants of violence.

It seems, however, that there is a region of reality that has not been sufficiently explored, that is in the middle of the road from individual reproduction to social reproduction (Hopenhayn, 1999), a region in which

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1. It is possible to identify two academic groups among scholars of violence, according to the origin they attribute to it: Subjective factors: the behavior of individuals who, as rational actors, use violence to obtain and accumulate power for the benefit of themselves and their families, and Objective factors: the weakness of the regime and the precariousness of the State, social situations such as inequality, poverty, income inequality, institutional shortcomings and the lack of social policies. (Valencia and Cuartas, 2009). There is a third group, which considers multi-causality as the origin of violence.

episodes occur that supply the country's violence statistics with figures, and which the World Health Organization classifies as violence at the relational and community level or as interpersonal violence (WHO, 2002). A region in which daily life takes place, "an immediate environment formed by a habitual space and a time or rhythm dictated by the activities we carry out and the way we organize them" (Hopenhayn, 1999: 45), which gives coherence to life.

The everyday, then, is elevated by Hopenhayn to the degree of generator of identities, much more effective than class or membership in a nation, for it is in the everyday that strategies of life are deployed, where everyone can become objective. However, since it is in this region where most of the life of people occurs, it seems logical to think that something has to do with learning and the reproduction of violent practices, mainly when the figures speak of fatal and non-fatal violence that is increasingly associated with four scenarios that Alejo Vargas (1993) considers to be the most common ones: family, school, neighborhood and workplace.

Professor Jimeno (1997) considers that studies on violence in Colombia range from those that observe it as a product or incarnation of evil, as the fury of uncontrolled and irrational forces, to those that reduce it to its extreme actors, highlighting individual pathologies and leaving aside the cultural elements present in ordinary people. This ignores that the nuclei of meaning important for the social whole and that nourish the extreme cases can be found in the shared meaning. That is why it is necessary to insist that in order to broaden knowledge about violence one cannot renounce causal investigations, the analysis of the structures that make it possible, the determination of the interests that accompany it, and the description of the extreme and pathological cases. But it is also necessary to broaden the perspective that focuses on temporality, spatiality, corporeality, and relationality, because they show the ways in which violence is learned, incorporated, updated, and reproduced in everyday life.

### **The everyday and phenomenology**

Alfred Schütz's phenomenology and his concern with classifying, organizing and understanding the forms of relationships in the world of life (Méllich, 1993) is a valuable tool for exploring the everyday.

We must begin by saying that in Schütz the world of reality is made up of sub-worlds that he calls Finite Senses, that is, sets of experiences that are coherent with each other, that have a specific cognitive style or particular characteristics that differentiate them from the other spheres. They are not separate states of mental life, but diverse tensions of the same life, the worldly one, which is undivided. (Schütz, 2003a).

The worlds of madness, science, religion, or dreams are all finite realms of meaning, as is the world of execution or better known as the world of everyday life, which is the world of physical things, of locomotion and bodily operations, it is the one that offers resistances that demand efforts to overcome them, poses tasks, allows plans to be carried out and success or failure in the attempt to achieve the purposes.

This being the case, and if we consider that according to Schützian phenomenology the purpose of the Social Sciences is to objectively understand the subjective sense, that is, the common sense or natural attitude, the question that arises is: How can we understand the subjective sense if it is unique, individual and originated in the biographical situation of each actor? To answer this question, several issues must be mentioned.

First of all, one cannot understand the subjective sense as synonymous with psychological condition, private attitudes or introspection. The Social Sciences are not interested in what actually goes on in people's minds, but in what is typically established and known in common with what subjects interpret their own and other people's actions in everyday life.

Secondly, and remembering A.N. Whitehead (1917), the Social Sciences construct objects of thought that replace the objects of thought of common sense, but those objects do not refer to singular acts of singular individuals in singular situations, hence in Schützian phenomenology the concrete action of humans, with their fears, hopes..., is not analyzed, but rather certain defined successions of activities are analyzed as types of courses of action, with their relationships between means and ends and their chains of motivations, to then construct the corresponding personal ideal types (Schütz, 2003a).

The analysis of the succession of activities discards the special or contingent elements and retains those that are repeated, that become typical and that given their repetitiveness rise as recipes that guarantee that if certain conditions, typical conditions, are present, a typical behavior can be adopted to achieve a typical result.

Thirdly, despite the fact that the organization of the social world revolves around the actor, because only with him as the center does it make sense, that is, geographical places become homes, everyday objects become meaningful as implements, men are assumed to be friends, relatives or strangers, and language becomes more than a grammatical issue, is a means of expression and understanding, only in reference to the human being as the center of the coordinates of the Here and Now (Schütz, 2003 a), in spite of all this, it is necessary to mention that a large part of the forms of common sense that make up the biographical situation are given to us culturally and historically (Natanson, 2003). Hence, when speaking of the actor, it cannot be understood as the solipsistic individual, but as the person who acts as a whole, according to elaborated and collectively learned lessons.

The socio-cultural environment (including the physical environment), in which places are occupied and social roles are played, in which moral and ideological positions are adopted, in which a place is occupied in the outer space-time, makes possible experiences that throughout existence are sedimented and typified forming a store of knowledge at hand, which in no way is a private matter of each one, it is on the contrary, and to a great extent, the result of the contact with others, transmitted and created by others and with others. Only a very small part of the knowledge of the world originates within the personal experience of each individual, most of it is of social origin (Natanson, 2003).

It is clear, then, that the subjective sense of which the Social Sciences must account is not associated with individual mental states, the object of Psychology's approach, but with collective constructions and uses that take shape in individuals and groups and which Schütz calls Typifications.

Now then, the objective understanding of the subjective sense related to the violence in daily scenarios, is a task not only pertinent but also monumental, at least from the consideration of the elements that Schütz proposes to theme the world of common sense and that are briefly presented below.

First, the in-depth review of the Courses of Violent Action through the exploration of four components: the meaning of the action, the means, the ends and the horizons of internal and external interpretation.

The first, the sense of action, in terms of motives - for, motives - because and projects that articulate both motives with a unitary sense. Thus, then, the actor defines and interprets the sense of the action in terms of motives - for, that is, according to the purpose he seeks or the state he intends to achieve. Therefore, from his point of view, this motive refers to the future. This means that the sense of the violent action, for the actor, is given by the purpose sought, by the effect he wants to achieve or the behavior he seeks to encourage.

But on the other hand there are the reasons - because they form an objective category in as much as it relates to the facts that preceded the project, to the action, it refers to the past experiences of the actor (Schütz, 1993) associated or not to the violence, to the antecedents, to the environment, to the psychic predisposition and to the systems of plans: daily and of life, specific the first ones, and that are subject to the plan of life, this one of universal character and that determines the subordinates (Schütz, 2003a).

Individual and collective life is ordered around these plans. This general system of plans is the foundation of the problematic possibilities<sup>2</sup>, that is, it plays a decisive role in the process of deliberation and selection of alternatives when it comes to choosing. But what really turns those possibilities into probabilities is the biographically determined situation, since it is the one that, according to what is directly or potentially available, transforms the open possibilities into problematic ones. (Schütz, 2003a).

Another component within the analysis of the courses of violent action refers to the means employed in the action, the possibility of obtaining them, their convenience and compatibility with other means, with the proposed ends and with other means and ends. The establishment of their relevance and pertinence, mainly based on the consideration that they are not isolated elements, but rather form systems, gives an account within them of the relevance and use of violent means for the achievement of multiple ends.

2. Also called probabilities, that is, possibilities of action that are available to individuals, possibilities that rival each other because they have, each one, aspects in their favor to incite a decision. The open possibilities, on the other hand, are those that have no weight, that is to say, they have no features in their favor that distinguish them from others, that is why they are all equally possible. (Schütz, 2003a, 98).

Actions, motives, ends, means, interests, projects, purposes and plans are elements that are never isolated, but form systems and as such must be addressed.

A fourth component is the horizons of interior and exterior interpretation (Schütz, 2003a), that is, the moments or elements that are incorporated into the violent action, that underlie it and that are constitutive of it (interior horizon); and on the other hand, the major phenomena that contain the violent action, that give it a framework and that form its background (exterior horizon).

Secondly, the rigorous analysis of the Biographically Determined Situation. In daily life men face situations, that is, they move in a physical and socio-cultural environment in which they occupy positions in the outer space-time, they live in a certain place (country, region, city...) and in a certain time; they have status and roles in the social system and a moral and ideological position.

The situations in which man finds himself include possibilities of future activities called purposes at hand, which are basically the things that are within effective or potential reach, that is, according to biography there are possibilities of resorting to certain tools, baggage of knowledge in certain circumstances. For example, in the case of conflict management there is a variety of resources, the extent of this diversity is related to the possibility that one has or has had of exchanging with people of different conditions, with access to information, with the exploration of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, with a multiplicity of circumstances that enrich the store of knowledge at hand.

Violence as an almost exclusive tool when it comes to settling disputes, is indicative of the precariousness of the biographical endowment of the actors. This is important if we consider that biography defines what the individual can or cannot modify, establishes the elements that affect life and the extent to which he or she can control them or not (Natanson, 2003).

These purposes at hand define which elements, among all those contained in the situation, are significant (Schütz, 2003a), that is, the purposes at hand give rise to the third issue that deserves analysis if we are to account for the world of common sense.

Thirdly, and in relation to the Action and Interpretation Schemes, there are the systems of meanings that contribute to the selective activity and to determine

which objects and which aspects of those objects are interesting in the current circumstances. These systems also determine which elements are characteristically typical and which are exclusive and individual. The first are the typifications that are fundamental to act typically in front of typical situations, in order to achieve typical effects..

All this means that if the purpose at hand and the system of meanings that correspond to it change, the context in which a given object and some aspects of it were of interest also change and other aspects or other objects emerge. In the case of violent action, it would be worthwhile to find out the processes through which responses, attitudes, and violent behaviors are typified, on what their significance is based and their incorporation into the body of knowledge, which is another element to be addressed.

The store of knowledge at hand is the product, among other things, of the sedimentation of previous experiences, of the baggage of traditions and customs, of inherited knowledge and the very constitutions of meaning (Schütz, 2003a; Schütz and Luckmann, 2001), which form an arsenal of knowledge with which life situations are faced, and which they also contribute to shaping, consolidating, refining and specifying. The collection includes not only 'recipes' to understand and control experiences, but also the guidelines to be followed when there are no recipes.

The collection is organized in habits, rules and principles that, as they have already been proven, are normally not subject to verification, except when a situation seems unsolvable (Schütz, 2003 b ). In the case of violence, it seems that its effectiveness is irrefutable; therefore, it would be appropriate to explore reactions to the conflict that show greater effectiveness or provide greater benefits, in such a way that the effectiveness of the violent reaction is questioned. This knowledge is structured in major formations: contexts of meaning and patterns of experience.

The contexts of meaning, that is, the configurations of meaning or meanings already constituted and with which people read the specific situations. These are the meanings already created in more elementary acts of attention, each of which is a synthesis of experiences that, while given separately, are converted into a unified object by monothetical attention (Schütz, 1993). This is what the study that gives rise to the present article dealt with.

The experience schemes. Those configurations of meaning or synthetic meaningful configurations of experiences already found, are the guidelines for the ordering of experiences (about which usually no one asks, unless faced with a special problem) and they conform the repository of knowledge that man, in a natural attitude, has available and that contemplates knowledge about physical things, congeners, social groups, artifacts, about internal experiences, products of mental activity and of the will and ethical rules and practices (Schütz, 1993), that contribute to making violent practices viable or not. The effect of these significant configurations is that the experience of the individuals appears coherent, which does not mean that all the schemes are homogeneous.

Finally, the schemes of interpretation, that is, the present and available configurations of meaning that adopt the form of 'what one knows', organized in categories that allow each experience to be located in different realms of meaning: either in the logical formulation, or in the realm of the emotions, or of the Here and Now, or of the operations of problem solving, or of reason and will (Schütz, 1993). Each field with a different logic, with different problems and priorities in which the actors move permanently and constitute their total world.

All of the above is a common-sense approach to the world that, in the case of violence in everyday settings, provides relevant information about the underlying meanings that people have given to practices, elements, ways of explaining the world, relationships between individuals and groups, etc. But the delimitation of a region of this common sense world, in order to address it in depth and propose a reconstruction of the meaning given by people to these elements, so that they shed light on how to understand everyday violence, is a requirement of scientific work, which, aware that it cannot know everything about everything, must capture parts of the phenomena, but trying not to lose sight of the broad framework. The reason for this cutback in reality is as follows.

### **Why since school?**

If there has been talk so far of addressing violence in everyday settings, why were school children the protagonists of the study? Because educational institutions are spaces in which the multiple problems of the social collective are combined, where practices and ways of being and doing are learned and recreated,

and which become ways of thinking and conceiving the world, it can be accepted that violence has a very important niche of expression and recreation there.

Therefore, tackling daily violence by moving from there to the other scenarios (the home and the neighborhood) and doing so guided by Schützian phenomenology, provides, not only a vision in perspective that for Social Work is of great relevance, but a vision from the subjective senses of those involved, which is not very common.

On the other hand, as the typifying structures are under construction in children, it is understood that their way of reading the world is different from that of adults, and while the latter's vision is the hegemonic one, not only in social science but in the design of the procedures with which conflicts are dealt with, the work focused on the description of the children's world of meaning, with the purpose of revealing the 'codes' with which they read everyday situations and understand conflict and violence.

Mentioned the generalities about the studies on violence, why the field of the daily thing deserves a more complete approach and the elements that the phenomenology contributes to see from another perspective the daily violence, some of the findings can be mentioned.

### **What was found?**

- a. If there is a tendency at home to use offensive words or physical punishment as a form of more or less regular treatment, and given the effectiveness that these tools have and demonstrate in the eyes of children, they do not hesitate to use them in any other setting as well.

The high effectiveness is evidenced not only by the fact that those who use them almost always achieve what they set out to do, but also by the fact that they are accused before the authorities (the teacher or the coordinator) and may well go unpunished, because the body to which the complaint is made is so overwhelmed by the number of requests it receives that it cannot deal with them all, or because the sanction received is less than the benefit obtained or the satisfaction of having beaten them all. These victories translate into recognition by her peers, which transcends the limits of the course.

- b. Violence is always a possibility, available, at hand and effective. It should be noted that if

children have not been trained in alternative ways to violence to deal with their own and others' aggressiveness, it is difficult for them to spontaneously explore these paths.

- c. Death, injury and deprivation of liberty are consequences that are within the possibilities, they are always present as an option; they have become naturalized not only for those for whom violence is their way of life and relationship with others, but for those who have it as an alternative at hand, therefore when any of these consequences arrive, it is simply assumed with more or less anger or sadness, but it never surprises.
- d. In childhood we learn that honor, its defense or restoration, is a matter that cannot be left to chance, because it is of the first order, without honor the rest is not possible or has no importance.

For the youngest children, up to about seven years of age, honor is not a concern. For older children, however, the view is similar to that of adults, and since there is usually not a wide range of means available to achieve and maintain honor, violence has a privileged place. Among other things because honor is not related to qualities like *bonhomie*, for example, it has to do with the permanent disposition of each one to "get himself killed" rather than allowing others to believe him a coward.

- e. Playing, especially when there is physical unfolding, has a double connotation: it is a ritual to channel and conjure up aggressiveness, but it is also a projection of children's aspirations or expectations, which is why in play children are omnipotent, extremely skillful sportsmen or women, or capable of ordering and recreating reality as they please.

Fantastic characters also appear in the games, heroes or powerful beings who have the ability to give and take away wealth, beauty, physical abilities, bring people who are far away, are able to bring order and impart justice. The games are transformed according to the age and the perspectives of the children, that's why as they grow up they are less concerned with the demonstration of strength or agility, and more with making possible loving encounters or the interchange with pairs that have similar hobbies and interests.

- f. Relationships between boys and girls reproduce everyday generalizations, for example, that women are not beaten and that it is frowned upon for a boy to assault a girl. But the expression with which some men refer to this, shows disagreement or displeasure for having to comply with that demand, which by the way is transgressed with some frequency.

This disagreement is accompanied by the idea that women are individuals who should be under the guardianship of a man, who cannot orient themselves, who require the accompaniment of others to act correctly, who cannot make decisions.

- g. Regarding men, there are also ideas of collective dominance: that they are rude, brusque, that they demand fidelity from women that they are incapable of giving and that they tell lies easily. This means that male-female relationships are conceived by boys as a battlefield, in which strategies must be deployed to avoid the damage they may do, and to withstand their capricious behavior.

This happens with boys from 8 years old onwards, the younger ones do not need to deploy strategies like the ones mentioned, the male-female bonds are unsuspected, in fact they can coexist without bonding.

- h. That children are inferior beings, annoying, that bring displeasure and problems and limit the ability to maneuver, is what can be read in the words and behaviors that adult caregivers exhibit in front of children.

Increasingly, parents conclude that their work or personal aspirations are hindered on behalf of the children, and they resolve the situation on many occasions by delegating to others the obligation to care for and train them, either temporarily or permanently. They may then undertake economic projects or new marital relationships, sometimes with the addition of the children (the number of reconstituted families is increasing rapidly in this region), but they may also take them away from them and leave them in the care of other relatives.<sup>3</sup> After all, it is only in the hands of adults to make these decisions.

3. In Quindío, as a coffee region, there is a kind of diffusion of the day laborer mentality, dispossessed, that does not belong to any territory, that does not possess a greater amount of goods and therefore does not feel tied, not even to the children. The process of secularization characteristic of periods of economic modernization has also contributed to this sense of dispossession and uprooting. What is dramatic is that when this modernization is truncated in the region, the subjection of the population to religious principles is no longer possible, but neither is it possible to civil principles.



The secondary role assigned to children, based on the inferiority that adults see in them, contrasts with the responsibilities they have to themselves, to their siblings, to the order at home, to the family's economic income, etc. This inferiority is perceived by children mainly after 8 or 9 years of age, this is associated with physical punishment and disobliging expressions, so that for many the home is not synonymous with protection or security, it is a place they would like to get out of quickly, but they can't. Hence, they are stingy in talking about their home and avoid specific questions about their family members.

These forms of relationship, mediated by physical or psychological violence or by omission, are almost unanimously held in the interest of defending the principle of authority, the authority embodied in the adult who generates economic income. These forms of relationship are learned and strengthened in the memory, so that they are transformed into action schemes (models or guidelines to behave) and interpretation (models to understand the actions of others), which children transfer to all the scenarios in which they move, the school and the neighborhood among them.

That is why they use pejorative words to refer to other people, depending on their behavior, disputes or perception of them; they silence others when they are talking, raise their voices and do not hear others; they take the word of others just as at home their word is silenced and branded as silly and useless. They impose, by means of physical force or fear, their will on others as at home the will of the great ones is imposed.

## Conclusions

From all this, it follows that the formation of children is a process of very high emotional charge<sup>4</sup> in which parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, godparents and other relatives play a major role.

The character of victims, perpetrators, observers, mediators, participants or whatever the children assume in the face of aggression, has its origin in many forms of relationships learned at home and reinforced by those established in the kindergarten, neighborhood, church, etc.

4. In Berger and Luckmann's words, the process of introducing the individual into society, or primary socialization, "involves more than purely cognitive learning, it takes place in circumstances of enormous emotional charge ... and there is reason to believe that without this emotional attachment to other signifiers, the learning process would be difficult, if not impossible" (Berger and Luckmann, 2003:165).

Meanwhile, the school, although a socializing agent as well, is limited by multiple factors: time children spend in the institution, number of children per class, contradiction between what is taught at school and what is learned at home, uncertainty that is generally resolved in favor of the latter. In addition, the relative "incomprehension" of the children's world by adults.

Contexts of meaning such as those described in the previous section are the product of a body of knowledge that for five, seven, ten years children have been building up, in which they bring together traditions and customs, knowledge learned from their own and other people's experiences, incorporated according to the physical and socio-cultural environment in which they live and according to the position and roles they play.

However, this collection is 'managed' according to the purposes at hand and the corresponding systems of significance, that the biographical situation allows them, therefore, a very important front of work and intervention is to expand, diversify the range of alternatives and activities within direct or potential reach, so that a greater number of these become probabilities (problematic possibilities).

This could generate a snowball effect, in the sense that the access to a variety of probabilities transforms the role played and the status occupied by the children, which would put in front of them different purposes at hand with systems of meanings that give room to a greater variety of objects and aspects of those objects, which rising to the quality of interesting and relevant, enrich the collection and thus the major formations: contexts of meaning and schemes of experience and interpretation.

In relation to the latter, from an early age children form a collection of knowledge by hand, occupy places and play roles within the environment in which they move, direct their action according to schemes of experience and interpretation pre-reflective, developed and taught by others, which is collected that the world of child meaning has the same structure that Schützian phenomenology proposes for the adult world; the categories around which the everyday world can be organized to give a rigorous account of it are the same (they do not mutate or appear over time), what happens is that they are enriched and filled with content by the experiences

Contrary to what may be thought, children play an active role in consolidating the schemes of experience and interpretation, the body of knowledge at hand and the contexts of meaning.

More than recipients of patterns, procedures and meanings, they interact with their caregivers by bringing into play their personality and temperament conditions and cultural, family and social characteristics. In this way they develop scripts about sets of events they frequently face and stereotypes about personalities and characters (Gardner, 1993). "Children appreciate phenomena and relationships encountered for the first time on the basis of understandings that have already evolved, the new understandings... are not the product of repetitive memory, imitation, divination... involve chains of inferences" (Gardner, 1993: 108).

For Social Work, which in Colombia has barely incorporated the formal educational system, basic and secondary education, as a scenario for professional performance, and for the professions that deal directly or indirectly with the formation of children, what has been said here is perhaps a vein of research, but also of intervention, so that social workers and teachers give themselves the task of providing the necessary experiences to increase the stock, enrich the biographies, diversify the means and ends and broaden the perspectives of the children's planning systems. What is proposed, in the end, is a break from below, from individuals and their interrelations, from the inertia of acting violently.

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