RESISTANCE POLICIES BY THE ENCHANTMENT: PLAYING IN POPULAR CULTURE[1]

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ABSTRACT. Historically, developmental psychology has emphasized playing in childhood; however, we believe that playing is an ontological activity that extends throughout life. In the present article, we discuss playing in the context of popular culture by studying adults who call themselves *brincantes* (players). By these means, we investigate the construction of meaning and the constitution of players, using the cultural-historical perspective as our theoretical basis. We also appeal to Mikhail Bakhtin's studies on popular culture, discussing playing as an activity located in between art and life. Moreover, we highlight and reflect on narratives of players, focusing on the strength of popular culture as a politics of resistance through a peculiar logic: enchantment. We finally emphasize the political need to reconfigure the notions of playing that still prevail, with more sensitive eyes towards popular expressions and the very human constitution.
Keywords: Cultural-historical psychology; playing; popular culture.

POLÍTICAS DE RESISTÊNCIA PELO ENCANTAR: O BRINCAR NA CULTURA POPULAR

RESUMO. Historicamente, a psicologia do desenvolvimento tem privilegiado o brincar na infância, contudo temos advogado que o brincar é uma atividade ontológica que se estende ao longo de toda a vida. Assim, no presente artigo, discutimos a brincadeira no contexto da cultura popular, tendo como recorte sujeitos adultos que se autodenominam brincantes. Por essa via, investigamos a construção de sentidos na e da constituição dos/as brincantes à luz da psicologia histórico-cultural, proposta por Lev Vigotski. Recorremos, também, aos estudos de Mikhail Bakhtin acerca da cultura popular, discutindo o brincar como uma atividade situada no entrever entre arte e vida. Ademais, evidenciamos e refletimos sobre algumas narrativas de brincantes, focalizando o caráter de resistência da cultura popular por uma lógica peculiar: a do encantamento. Enfatizamos, por fim, a necessidade política de reconfiguração das noções ainda vigentes sobre o brincar, a partir de um olhar mais sensível às expressões populares e à própria constituição humana.
Palavras-chave: Psicologia histórico-cultural; brincar; cultura popular.

POLÍTICAS DE RESISTENCIA POR EL ENCANTAMIENTO: JUGANDO EN LA CULTURA POPULAR

RESUMEN. Históricamente, la psicología del desarrollo ha hecho hincapié el juego en la infancia, sin embargo, creemos que el juego es una actividad ontológica que se extiende a lo largo de la vida. En el presente artículo, se discute el juego en el contexto de la cultura popular, con adultos que se hacen llamar *brincantes* (jugadores). De esta manera, se investiga la construcción de sentido y la constitución de los jugadores a la luz de la psicología histórico-cultural. Apelamos también a los estudios de la cultura popular de Mijaíl Bajtín, discutiendo el juego como una actividad situada en la visión entre el arte y la vida. Por otra parte, destacamos y discutimos sobre algunas narraciones de los jugadores, centrándose en la fuerza de carácter de la cultura popular como resistencia por una lógica peculiar: el encantamiento. Destacamos, por último, la necesidad política de reconfiguración de las nociones aún prevalecientes respecto al juego, desde un ojo más sensible a las expresiones populares y la constitución del ser humano.

Introduction

The idea that 'playing is for children' has been incorporated into our daily living. In the field of developmental psychology, studies about playing have been privileging this activity in childhood (Piaget, 1962; Silva, Costa, & Abreu, 2015; Vigotski, 1930/2009; Wallon, 1941/2007). Historically, several researches about playfulness (involving games and playing) focus on children. However, there are studies pointing out the importance of playing after this stage, as it is the case of the psychoanalyst Winnicott's investigations, who, "based on his pediatric work with children, advocates the thesis that it is necessary to study playing as a phenomenon that occurs both with the child and the adult in different ways" (Pedroza, 2005, p. 64). However, these researches addressing playing beyond childhood are few compared with the number of studies that have this stage as a theme – even Winnicott started from observations of the children's clinic.

For Vigotski (1930/2009), playing is the construction of "a new reality, one that conforms to his [the child's] own needs and desires." (p. 17). From this cultural-historical perspective, playing in childhood is a social practice that involves a mix of pleasure and displeasure, standing on the threshold between need and desire (Silva et al, 2015). It is also through this ludic activity that inventive and symbolic formations are enabled, "the little ones play teachers, mothers and fathers, sons and daughters,... and while supporting themselves on reality (by means of rules and generalizations of roles), they also perform inventive transformations in the symbolic plane" (Silva et al., 2015, p. 117).

Concerning playing *make-believe* specifically, Silva et al. (2015) points out that "the analogy between playing [for children] and theater ... is quite opportune" (p. 120). In ludic actions children take on different roles, *play being somebody else*. When *experiencing otherness* by playing, children constitute their own subjectivity, based on ethical and aesthetic experiences made possible by their body, in their relationship with other bodies (Magiolino, 2015). The body, in turn, "keeps memories, is sensitive, impregnated with signs and senses, [is] a semiotic material open to the world, to the other ..." (Magiolino, 2015, p. 149).

This *aesthetic experience* – of living otherness in one's own body – is essential to human development and refers mainly to the *dramatic* root of our own constitution (Smolka, 2009). In this context, the concept of *drama*, approached by Vigotski (1929/2000), goes beyond the artistic or literary definition, more common, and enters the psychological notion of human development, "the dynamic of the personality is drama" (p 35). For Delari Junior (2011), however, *drama* has different senses in the Vygotskian approach. By focusing the dimension of drama in child playing we can understand it mainly as the possibility of experiencing the place of the other (Smolka, 2009). It is a game of social roles that happens through the decentralization of oneself (Góes, 2000).

Smolka (2009) also states that at the root of drama we find playing, and vice versa. In this sense, we understand that if *drama* is the dynamic of human personality and at its root is playing, playing is then a form of expression and human constitution that not only encompasses childhood. In this way, we can argue that playing is an *ontological need* that extends throughout our journey in life (Moreira, 2015). This argument dialogues profoundly with propositions discussed in a recent Brazilian documentary, *Tarja branca: a revolução que faltava* [White stripe: the missing revolution], directed by Rhoden (2014). In the movie, which makes a consistent criticism of the importance of playing in contemporaneity, many people (famous and anonymous) give their contributions on the matter. Among them, we emphasize the words of the psychoanalyst Ricardo Goldenberg, the ethnomusicologist Alberto Ikeda and the teachers Maria Amélia Pereira and Lydia Hortello.

According to Goldenberg, in the current capitalist context – of production, profit and overwork –, playing began to be seen as an *idle* activity and, therefore, *not serious* and *childish*. The *business* world (denial of idleness), in turn, would be some sort of emblem of individuals seriously engaged in the current dynamic of labor. The psychoanalyst opposes himself to such a perspective and emphasizes that playing, at its root, is an extremely serious activity because the very concept of *seriousness* is in fact linked to the notion of taking things to the bitter end, being focused: "This is serious! And that is what children do" while playing. Ikeda, in turn, argues that, in the adult universe, what we find is much more an alleged seriousness, very harmful to human health.

Such perspectives allow us to understand that playing as children – that is, with all due seriousness that children attribute to their games – is a human and deeply complex need. Thus, to stop playing is to violate the ability for a subject "to be wholly"," as teacher Pereira states. Similarly, for the educator Hortello, "not playing means diminishing yourself". However, we see that these acts of decrease (or violence) in playing are nowadays quite exercised in favor of the operation of a hegemonic social logic, so to speak, that supports the current capitalist system.

However, precisely because playing constitutes the very human experience (in an ontological dimension), despite all attempts to annihilate its roots – especially with the beginning of adult life –, we can find people who keep playing or resist by playing after childhood. This playing, in Brazil, is seen, for instance, in a number of artistic manifestations of the so-called *popular culture*. In this case, playing becomes some sort of craft, the craft of a *brincante* – Portuguese word specifically used to describe a person who participates in folk or popular parties (hereafter referred to as player).

Who are the players?

It is to the *seahorse*, the *mamulengo,* the *bumba meu boi*, the *reisado*, among other Brazilian popular manifestations, that players devote their lives, putting every year their games on the streets – now also on stages, in playhouses etc. The term player is defined by "... the very expression way of people who belong to this universe [popular culture] for calling themselves players and using expressions like 'let's play Seahorse'" (Lewinsohn, 2008, p. 26).

In this context, *playing* differs substantially from concepts like *performing* and *debuting* (Barroso, 2007). In this way, players invite the public to *play along*, not to watch them.

Thus, we see that the boundary between players and the public vanishes and the very distinction between *who is* and *who is not* a player becomes extremely fragile because, in a way, everybody becomes a player while playing. However, there are individuals who take playing as a kind of profession or craft. In general, we can define them as popular artists (*mamulengueiros*, clowns, among others), who belong therefore to the wide universe of popular culture.

The French researcher Chartier (1995) starts his article on the notion of *popular culture* stating that the latter is an erudite category. In fact, the term was first categorized by academic researchers and not by the individuals themselves who, according to such researchers, belonged to popular culture (Brandão, 2009; Chartier, 1995). Actually, the concept of popular culture is still far from being clearly defined by the human sciences, because the definitions and differences about what *popular* and its alleged opposite *erudite* mean are tenuous (Arantes, 2006).

However, in a complex attempt to understand the historical origins of the concept in question, Chartier (1995) elucidates that by 1200, in Western Europe, manifestations of theological, scientific and philosophical order isolated the erudite culture from folk traditions, censoring practices that began to be regarded as superstitious or heterodox, and constituting an object placed at a distance, which was seductive and fearful, the culture of the humble (Chartier, 1995). From this conjuncture, there were serious socioeconomic disruptions that distinguished the official, formal and *erudite* context (education, reading, religion and science) from the alternative, informal and *popular* context (of the illiterate, superstitious, fearful, seductive, sinful and humble). In this way, we see that popular culture, from its origins, encompasses social conflicts or class struggles.

In other studies (Arantes, 2006; Brandão, 2009; Fernandes, 1989), which investigate the development of the concept as of the nineteenth century, we also find this conflicting dimension of social struggles. Scholars such as Arantes (2006) and Fernandes (1989), for instance, address this question by means of a discussion on the *exoticization* and *romanticization* of popular culture. According to Fernandes (1989), the exotic and romantic notions derive from the positivism and evolutionism emerging mainly in the social sciences, being reinforced by folkloristic studies.

As a project of the European bourgeoisie, these conceptions presented a linear and gradual perception of cultural development according to which some small groups possessed a *superior culture*, while most people belonged to an *inferior culture* or were even regarded as having *no* culture, *un*cultured (Arantes, 2006). At this conjuncture, popular culture was approached: a) as something *alien*

and poor (exotic), was given an underprivileged place in the social game of hierarchization and; b) as an *autonomous and self-sufficient system* (romanticist view), with social complexity (Arantes, 2006). In a way, these two perspectives walk together and feed each other.

In Brazil, the term *popular culture* was first disseminated (in the nineteenth-twentieth centuries) by intellectual folklorists, anthropologists, sociologists, educators and artists: on one hand, representing non-modernity (typical of the hinterlands, regional) and, on the other hand, representing the future of the country (Abreu, 2003). However, in the early 1960s this concept was re-signified by Brazilian Popular Culture Movements [*Movimentos de Cultura Popular*] (MCPs), which had Paulo Freire as one of its greatest representatives. Although they were muffled by the military dictatorship, the MPCs introduced a different meaning for the term; first, because it ceased to be used only by alleged cultural elite to gain strength among groups of oppressed workers; second, because popular culture became a *political* expression in the struggle of the masses (Brandão, 2009).

During this period, the concept was given a dimension centered on contradictions of class struggles and on the Marxism-inspired notion of labor. Popular culture then became a form of *resistance* against an alleged current social order (Brandão, 2009). Thus, the term also began to comprehend a denunciative dimension of this order (Gullar, 1983). In such a socio-political conjuncture, new concepts were developed, such as *popular education* and *popular educator*. However, the big difference was that these concepts came from the *speech* (expressions) of individuals themselves, who began to call themselves *popular educators*, thus belonging to the broader universe of the MPCs. In this context, "education establishes a dialectical relationship with culture" (Freire, 1983, p. 113), opposing to the "assistentialism" offered by the State.

From this contextualization, we see that the term player seems to draw itself close to the MCPs, precisely for suggesting a path of re-signification, appropriation and self-nomination. From this perspective, it is no longer just *another* (scholar, erudite men or ruler) who determines who is a player (or what popular culture is), but mainly *I* (individual) who calls himself/herself a player or popular artist.

However, *being a player* is still a socially devalued and complex walk against the flow, which resists to the current model of profit and mass production for the masses. Thus, we ask ourselves: what makes players choose this lifestyle? What are the senses of playing in the context of popular culture? What does being a players mean? After all, *what are the productions of senses of/in the constitution of players*?

Next, we present some theoretical contributions that help us reflect on such points. They are divided into two axes: a) playing, resistance and struggle in the players' acts, and b) games and popular festivities: Mikhail Bakhtin's contributions.

a) Games, resistance and struggle in the players' acts

The discussion on the concept of popular culture and its development from the MCPs brings us to the argument that *being a player* also involves a *political action* and, among other characteristics, playing is a constant act of resistance and struggle, as we have pointed. This is because manifestations coming from the popular universe orbit around a logic that does not only differ but diverge from the hegemonic system since its historical roots (Moreira, 2015).

This divergence resulted (and still results) in a profound devaluation of popular knowledge and practices. Currently, with regard to popular aesthetic manifestations, the anthropologist Carvalho (2005) warns us about the "spectacularization" of popular culture. According to the author, spectacularization consists of actions that insert popular manifestations in compact times and spaces pre-determined by *another* agent, an alien who only values and allows manifestations in his spaces when such manifestations are reconfigured and restricted (Carvalho, 2005). In another research, Carvalho (2010) also emphasizes that beside the spectacularization of popular cultures in Latin America there is also the "cannibalization" of the very same cultures:

> Both terms [cannibalization and spectacularization] attempt to express the perception and awareness that popular cultures are being exposed to a growing and continuous movement of invasion, expropriation and predation, basically connected to the voracity of entertainment and

tourism industries and to the cooptation of popular artists on the part of populist regional politicians (Carvalho, 2010, p. 41).

Still on the spectacularization of popular culture, we find an opportune example in the *Maracatu Rural: A Magia do Canavial* catalog [Rural *Maracatu*: The Magic of Carnival]. In it, the authors Vicente and Vicente (2013) report the difficulty faced by *maracatu* artists, for instance. To turn the game into reality, men and women spend nights embroidering, go to haberdasheries and put things on the cuff, get money for the bus, even though most of them do not have great purchase power. After all this hard work involving a mix of "rushing, shouting, worry, vibration, pride, love, passion and anxiety ..., the mayor ... ignores all this and pays a measly 100 bucks for the presentation" to the whole group (p. 2). This example evidences that the *other* agent (the mayor) does not know or ignore the game in its complexity and pays according to his/her ignorance, turning the game into a *performance* and spectacularizing it.

Another enthralling example of the devaluation of popular art is found in the musical work by Herbert Lucena (2011), entitled *Do not ever ask me to give you for free all that I have to sell*. In this work, which brings a number of partnerships with masters and players, Lucena presents songs that make a criticism of the current condition of popular artists in Brazil. Thus, in the first track of the album the song lyrics warn:

> I was born to sing *coco* and *ciranda*, and *forró* that please many people. But on the radios I do not play day and night; it seems that this cartel is the leader. Choosing who grows and who does not walk. But I will not give up on my construction, nor will I surrender to those who do not drink my brandy. Do not ever ask me to give you for free all that I have to sell. Do not ever ask me to give you for free all that I have to live! (Lucena, 2011, track 1)

In the excerpt, we notice that Lucena criticizes the cultural and artistic *market*, which chooses "who grows and who does not walk", claiming for the appreciation of his work. The artist also emphasizes the lack of recognition of his "construction" (or profession) by those who "do not drink my [his] brandy".

From the examples we emphasize that popular culture for centuries has remained on the sidelines of a hegemonic socio-political conjuncture that does not understand it and does not value it in its complexity. Contradictorily, despite this situation, playing persists, innovates and continues to encourage people to become players. In this scenario, we identify something valuable, which is beyond marketing relations of buying and selling, the other side of the coin: as vibration, pride and passion (Vicente & Vicente, 2013). Thus, in an attempt to understand the aspects that lead players to opt for this way of living, we will resort to Bakhtin's studies (1965/2008) on popular aesthetic expressions.

b) Games and popular festivities: Mikhail Bakhtin's contributions

Despite not having used the term *playing* (or *games*), Bakhtin (1965/2008) developed a major study of (aesthetic) popular culture in *The Work of François Rabelais and Popular Culture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*. In interpretative developments, we understand that the popular aesthetic manifestations discussed by the author – especially festivities in public places (such as Carnival) – are expressions of this dimension of playing we are currently investigating.

The notion of popular culture for the Russian researcher was quite mistaken in his time; the *popular comic culture* was especially misinterpreted, if not disregarded, by many experts in this theme. Opposing to such chain of researchers, the author understood popular culture as a rich and dynamic universe, emphasizing – based on the literary work by François Rabelais [1494-1553] – laughter and humor as essential dimensions of this context:

> A boundless world of humorous forms and manifestations opposed the official and serious tone of medieval ecclesiastical and feudal culture. In spite of their variety, folk festivities of the carnival type, the comic rites and cults, the clowns and fools, giants, dwarfs, and jugglers, the vast and manifold literature of parody-all these forms have one style in common: they belong to one culture of folk carnival humor (Bakhtin, 1965/2008, p. 3).

For the author, there was a unity of style in popular manifestations, given precisely by the comicality common to these expressions. In addition, the festivities in public places used to be held (and we note that many still do) in parallel to an official world. This parallelism is explained based on the concept of *second world* or *second life*: "Thus carnival is the people's second life, organized on the basis of laughter. It is a festive life. Festivity is a peculiar quality of all comic rituals and spectacles of the Middle Ages" (Bakhtin, 1965/2008, p. 7).

From this perspective, public festivities allowed for another dimension of human experience completely contrary to the official, ordinary life. But it is interesting to see that in the period studied by Bakhtin (transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance) the majority of the population was experiencing both an official and an unofficial condition. Some popular festivities, for instance, had a so great relevance that they could last three months (Bakhtin, 1965/2008).

During these long celebrations of comic nature, *party*, *art* and *life* mingled deeply: "... the basic carnival nucleus of this culture is by no means a purely artistic form nor a spectacle" (Bakhtin, 1965/2008, p. 6). Thus, popular aesthetic expressions permeated a fine line between *life* and *art*. In them the *stage* and the *audience* were deconstructed, power relations were horizontalized, spatial boundaries were nullified, entering for a time "the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality, and abundance" (Bakhtin, 1965/2008, p. 8).

Moreover, these festivities spanned a familiar form of relationship and communication, with dynamic, active and mutable expressions. The *carnival communication* was free and enabled more frank interactions between people, which, in the official context of life, would never happen. In carnival "People were, so to speak, reborn for new, purely human relations." (Bakhtin, 1965/2008, p. 9). This second life, for the author, was deeply concrete, corporal. It thus had its own form: the *grotesque aesthetic*.

For the researcher, the true nature or essence of the grotesque "is precisely to present a contradictory and double-faced fullness of life. Negation and destruction (death of the old) are included as an *essential* phase, inseparable from *affirmation*, from the birth of something new and better" (Bakhtin, 1965/2008, p. 54). The grotesque aesthetic therefore takes on the dual condition of human experience, in which *serious* and *comic* aspects of the world coexist, and "abuse is followed by praise; they are two aspects of one world" (Bakhtin, 1965/2008, p. 172), aggregating the apparent distinct poles of life. In this aesthetic view, the body is complex, ideal and abstract, at the same time it is basic and material; its *biological* dimension (eating, drinking, urinating etc.) is as important as the *cosmic* one (spiritual, ritualistic).

The author claims that the *grotesque body* triumphs in *exuberance* and *abundance*. This aesthetics, observed in the Rabelaisian work, encompasses exaggerated images of the body, in which "The interior symbolism of all these exaggerations ... was that of growth, fertility, of a brimming-over abundance" (Bakhtin, 1965/2008, p. 55). Grotesque images oppose themselves to the *individual* and selfish body of the bourgeoisie, constituting a *collective* and indivisible body. It is also a *body* that contemplates life, death, the earth, the stars, animals, plants etc. In it, the flesh (matter in a broader sense) possesses a fruitful and regenerative force and is always an incomplete flesh, eternally created, *re*created and creator:

> Actually the grotesque liberates man from all the forms of inhuman necessity that direct the prevailing concept of the world. This concept is uncrowned by the grotesque and reduced to the relative and the limited ... The principle of laughter and the carnival spirit on which grotesque is based destroys this limited seriousness and all pretense of an extratemporal meaning and unconditional value of necessity. It frees human consciousness, thought, and imagination for new potentialities. (Bakhtin, 1965/2008, p. 43).

Bakhtin (1965/2008) states that the distortion or incomprehension of popular culture in modernity resulted from the vulgarization of this aesthetic, which popular festivities used to voice. We see that such aesthetics, ambivalent and incomplete, remains misunderstood by social, selfish and fragmented canons, because the grotesque nature is in itself *anti-canonical* (Bakhtin, 1965/2008). However, we believe that its roots – or its essence – are still present in our times, because they are reinvented

precisely at the common grounds of human, ontological experience itself. As Bakhtin (1965/2008) elucidates, the *grotesque aesthetic* releases man from the forms of inhuman necessity; it is therefore a humanization way.

Current popular games still seem to contain traces of this aesthetic; in them we also see that playing is extended not only to childhood, it becomes an adult's craft. In this context, we identify that, through playing, the resistance and denunciation character of popular culture, deeply investigated in the human sciences, also takes on a peculiar dimension: enchantment, as we discuss below in data analysis.

Methodology

Over the second half of 2014 we developed a field research in which we sought to investigate the production of senses in and of the constitution of players. Here, it is worth elucidating, we approach the concept of *sense* based on the Vygotskian work not only as a dimension of the meaning of words – and its intrinsic relationship with conceptual appropriation –, but emphasizing its articulation within the sphere of the psychology of art, aesthetic emotions.

According to Namura (2003), art (as a set of aesthetic signs) is intended to cause emotions in people. In this way, *aesthetic emotion* is understood by Vigotski (1925/1999) as an attempt to elucidate "some psychological laws of the effect of art on man" (p. 23). This dimension is critical for us, for comprehending precisely the conception of sense linked to aesthetic emotions caused by the *artistic experience*. Following this argumentative line, the author emphasizes the importance of understanding sense in its ontological root specifically with regard to the psychology proposed by Vigotski. In this understanding, the author stresses that the *aesthetic* appears, in Vigotski, Marx and Lukács, as an essential dimension of human experiences: "of constitution of the subject, subjectivity and, therefore, the sense itself" (p. 24). It is exactly this rescuing of the ontological bases of the *sense* that we address, because, as we have argued, playing, at any stage of life, is an emancipatory activity that reconstitutes the social being that we are.

Ethical aspects of the research: consistency between theory and practice

Because we are conducting a research established in the dialogue between the *psychology of art* and *art* itself (as a specific field of human knowledge), some *ethical* issues about the *identification of the participants* had to be reformulated, because in the majority of researches about developmental psychology the identification of participating subjects/objects is omitted in order to safeguard their integrity (physical and moral). However, our investigations opposed to it, in this regard, and chose to *identify its participants* (with their due authorization and with the consideration and approval by the ethics committee of the Human Sciences of the University of Brasília, under the terms of Resolution 466/2012 of the Brazilian National Health Council).

This is because we understand that the points analyzed do not jeopardize the physical, mental and moral integrity of the participants. Moreover, the matter of *authorship* in art and popular culture is a relevant aspect, and omitting the identification of the research participants would result in the *omission of authorship itself*, which would also be an inconsistence between theoretical discussion and methodology.

The field: narrative interview as method

To ensure the investigative consistency of the theoretical principles pointed out so far, we decided to structure the field work by conducting narrative interviews (NIs) with three adult players (Tico, Lu and Lipe – aged over 18 years old), members of the group *Seu Estrelo e o Fuá do Terreiro* [Mr. Estrelo and the Mess at the *Terreiro*[3]] (Brasília, DF)[4]. The interviews lasted two hours on average and were video-

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[3] Place where Afro-Brazilian religions are practiced.

recorded, transcribed and then analyzed. From the material generated, we managed to identify, among other things, the relationship between struggle and enchantment as constitutive aspects of playing and players.

The option for the narrative interview (NI) stems from the fact this method differs from other forms of interview, especially for its *non-directive* character, as opposed to question-answer formats. Composed of informant (narrator) and researcher (listener), the NI requires from the researcher the challenge of awakening/instigating narratives in his/her informant (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2002). These narratives can pervade the narrator's impressions of *reality* as well as *fantasy* and should comprehend a sequential structure composed of beginning, middle and end. For the researchers Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2002), the NI is indicated in researches that combine life stories and specific social contexts.

Additionally, we assume that, even though there is a distinction between the researcher and the informant, during the interview such a distinction is rather tenuous and has a *dialogical* character. According to Oliveira (2012), "narrativizing the experience is more than enunciating social texts in first person; it always involves the addition of a subjective sense to the plot of discourses" (Oliveira, 2012, p. 370). A sense which integrates the experiences of the narrator and of (with) the listener (and vice versa).

For Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2002), the NI is specifically aimed at addressing *the narrator's language*, a fact that requires the researcher to be careful with and appropriate the other's language in the reformulation of his/her own language. For this to occur effectively, every NI demands, before its occurrence, a deep interaction with the subjects interviewed, an immersion into the research field.

Thereby, we carried out, before the NIs, a first investigative step to *approach* the field, throughout the first half of 2013, for a weekly monitoring of trials (totaling fifteen meetings and two scenic presentations). In this phase, we used field diaries and video recordings as tools for further analysis. Furthermore, the objectives of the work were made clear to the group, and authorization was requested from participants for the conduction of the research. Thus, we managed to outline a deepened contextualization of the field, preparing the NIs more thoroughly.

In fact, the NI requires a concern about building data with the other(s), *giving a voice* to the other(s) while we incorporate these *voices in themselves and by themselves*. However, this is not only about an *incorporation of voices* of the *other* by *the researcher*. "... there is a subject who speaks and produces texts as much as the researcher who studies him/her does." (Amorim, 2004, p. 16). In this sense, we assume that every research bears the authorial dimension of the researcher, who decides about what will be evidenced or silenced, concerning the *other*, according to his/her goals, indicating necessarily a *political dimension* (or political project) of interpretation of the world (Moreira, 2015).

According to Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2002), the NI also privileges the construction of plots that cover micro and macro aspects of events narrated in the story:

> It is through the plot that individual units (or smaller stories within the big story) in the narrative acquire meaning. Therefore a narrative is not just a listing of events, but an attempt to link them both in **time** and in **meaning**. (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2002, p. 92).

Therefore, the plot, elucidated through narratives, would be a small (micro) cell of a much broader (macro) context of popular artistic creations, which helps us think about the production of senses in/of the constitution of players. Thus, the NI can also be considered a "micro" study – the production of subjective senses – of a "macro" aspect of human psyche – imagination and creation (Moreira, 2015).

Regarding the analysis of NIs, we therefore discuss the transcribed data based on the production of sense derived from a discursive analysis, which emphasizes the socio-ideological dimension (Bakhtin, 2006) of the narratives – for being semiotic material. As a category of analysis of different approaches of studies, the discourse analysis advocates the notion that language is not simply a neutral means of

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4 With eleven years of existence, the group is involved with a number of *popular* artistic activities (play, music, dance, literature etc.) in the Central West region, configuring a rich, dynamic and coherent scenario for the conduction of our research. However, due to all this diversity, we draw an outline that is more specific and feasible to the limits of this study, investigating only the popular artists participating in plays.

reflecting or describing the world but instead a conviction of the central importance of discourse in constructing social life (Gill, 2002).

Therefore, the discourse analysis involves the guiding principle that the recognition of our way of understanding the world is conditioned by the specific history and culture in which we are inserted (Gill, 2002). In this way, it is interesting to mention the contributions of Hildebrand-Nilshon, Motzkau and Papadopoulos (2001) as well, who analyze the conception of subjectification in psychology not only through *uttered discourses*, but through *discourses that are silenced* in the current capitalist context, of neoliberal inspiration. It is precisely in these silenced discourses that we identify most agents of the so-called popular culture and, therefore, our players. In this perverse social dynamic, we highlight the political dimension of our research by seeking to evidence this frequent *silencing* and making it *being heard* (Moreira, 2015).

Results and Data Analysis: Playing as an Enchanted Battling

In the analysis of the NIs we see that playing takes on, for players, a political character of resistance and struggle, which is defined by a peculiar logic: enchantment by playing. From this perspective, resistance in popular culture is not linked to isolation, but to attitudes that "*drill*" *by enchantment "the Big Thing"* or "the machine that swallows men", expressions which our players use to refer to the alienating capitalist system. However, drilling this machine is not a simple task, as Tico comments; this is part of a continuous and hard work on the part of players:

> [...] because this stuff [the system] is swallowing you all the time and you see it is swallowing you, and then you say: "cool… how I can use these weapons? Suddenly, without people noticing!" But noticing too… Drilling here and there… Suddenly someone in there notices too and helps in the process! You have to drill, in a way or another, this thing, right?! Then the job [of the player] happens in this sense too, right?! That's what I say, it's not a game you discover and say "wow, cool! So that's it, and now we'll create here a community and isolate ourselves". No! But like, you know: how do we enter this [the system]? How do we drill it?

In this way, the player says that resisting "does not mean spending your life in the hands of the system" but seeking to transform it. To do so, he argues that it is necessary to understand "its weapons", since it is also a "war". Tico continues:

> [...] You're going to war!… The relation is like… For me is a little like this transformation [of the system], you know?!… And then, inside this [this transformation], I need to be in the world! I need to understand it and I need to take these weapons from it for a while so I can also use these weapons and fight against it, you know?! So… How do I enter this structure without losing myself in it?

Not letting oneself get lost in the "Big Thing" is, however, a conflicting mission and, in Vygotskian terms, dramatic. On this, Vigotski (1929/2000) argues that psychology needs to be understood as drama, because by taking different and contradictory social stances we face crises that reveal forms which, at times, cause conflicts between our thinking, acting and feeling; a reality that does not spare our players.

We therefore experience tension and confrontation. Delari Junior (2013) argues that life is a struggle dramatically articulated with our choices (voluntary or not). For Magiolino and Silva (in press), "... in the drama of personality we are always involved in an internal struggle, shock. We stand ... in different ways depending on the needs underlying the space and time scope in which we are located". That is, our positions are related to concrete conditions of existence. In this argumentative line, the players problematize their own social role in a capitalist society: how not to get lost in the relations established between labor and capital?

In this sense, Lu said being a player is both "*a condition*" and "*a construction*" that, among other aspects, requires one to sustain himself/herself financially. She narrates that in the current logic of the socio-political system she needed to transform her job countless times, her "*most precious energy, for the transformation of the world*" into a product. The player reports that it is difficult "*to keep this player status... This lightness, this connection, within the Big Thing logic! Because ... it transforms you into a product! It puts you in a marketing logic*".

Lipe, in turn, argues that being a player has made him, to a certain extent, a *stronger* being and less *dependent* of the system:

> You get stronger, so to speak… Because then, since you need to act on your own, to take initiative and make things happen, you depend less on the system! Because then you can… You are capable of showing your work yourself, doing your research, performing, building your own materials, and building up your own career, right?! You feel capable! You can do it and you just do it! You feel accomplished; you get rid of a lot of diseases, right?

Despite this apparently lower dependence of the system, we reinforce that players are not detached from it. That is, they do not live in their own universe and isolated in the world. As the narratives evidence, they play with the "Big Thing" and, somehow, incorporate it in order to produce a relationship of resistance established by means of what they define as enchantment:

> TICO: I think that it [popular culture] has this power of enchanting, right?! Which I think is really crazy for you to understand… which is about you giving back by enchantment! I think that's it, and it's a very generous thing in popular culture.
> RESEARCHER: Do you mean giving back to the system? Giving back by enchantment?
> TICO: Yeah! It's about you wanting to break the system, but by enchantment, you know?! I think that this is also another teaching from popular culture, you know?! An absurdly creative fury, like… Because it is just oppression all the time and, when you give things back, you don't do so by oppressing, right?! You're oppressed all the time, but when you give things back you don't want to be an oppressor, like… You appeal to enchantment! You play with the oppressor, actually. The oppressor, he's part of the game too, you know? You, as the oppressed one, look at the oppressor, you know?! But you give things back by enchantment, right?! It's about giving back by enchantment, but this giving back is a war, right?! You're actually going to war!

He continues:

> that's funny, because there's this thing, the Big Thing that swallows you but that deep inside is a creature too! And it has feelings, too, you now?! It has all this thing [he opens his arms], the Creature! … I think that it oppresses, like, us, but I feel sorry for whoever this oppressor is. I feel sorry for these oppressors too, you know?! They are as lost as… They feel superior… So, shame on whoever does this, whoever has this power, you know?! I feel sorry because in this sense he's a loser already for me, you know?! And how do I fight against this?! Like… It's more about enchanting this figure! Not wanting to take over power so you are the oppressor, you know?!

Thus, the players open their ways by resisting, drilling and enchanting the "Big Thing", sometimes also being swallowed by its marketing logic. In this process of enchantment and struggles, toys and games, there is also a "*feeling stronger*", as Lipe narrates. This power of enchantment is not; however, a numbing power that paralyzes or "*isolates*" players from the rest of society, but a "*battling*" that involves a profound subjective transformation which necessarily encompasses the aesthetic dimension, guiding their political actions in the world.

In this way, we see that playing, in this context of the adult player, interweaves a deep sense of resistance with a capitalist social model, orbiting around a logic *against the flow*. In this peculiar logic of politics of resistance by enchantment, playing with the other (*oppressor*) is a fundamental aspect that differs, for instance, from forms of resistance through social isolation or armed conflicts.

For the aesthetic/artistic experience of playing, the enchantment state is achieved with theatrical scenes that provoke smiles, looks, dances, collective singing, and multicolor images, deeply carnal and present. Such a state allows drilling the system, involving the *oppressor* in the game, "*he is also part of the game*", as Tico says. It is therefore about a symbolic *war* where the aesthetic experience produces senses that nourish and radically transform the human concrete experience (whether one is oppressed or the oppressor). Playing, common to everybody, *re*makes the being, humanizing him/her.

Final Considerations

In this article, we sought to discuss playing as an ontological need that goes beyond childhood. Thus, we focused on such activity from the perspective of adult subjects who call themselves players. In Brazil, players compose part of the diverse universe of popular culture, which is some sort of craft located in between life and art.

We discussed, in this way, the constitution of these subjects, focusing on the senses that nourish their experiences (aesthetic) as players, indicating sensitive and alternative ways of conceiving playing and development in an interface with popular culture itself. Through the players we are invited to *re*orient ourselves by means of a humanizing logic that considers the ontological sense of the aesthetic experience. In short: *making* oneself human is *making* oneself a player too.

With that said, we aimed to contribute to further reflections on the concrete conditions of development in contemporaneity, leading to recreations of the current society project. We therefore problematized tensions between playing in popular culture and the logic of the capitalist system. Herein, we advocated that *resistance* is a defining characteristic of a player's act of playing, which is configured by a singular logic: enchantment. Thus, in this context, playing is some sort of *enchanted battling*.

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