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Raising children: Discussing and practicing modern/colonial family education in Colombia

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Abstract

This paper focuses on how a colonial logic shaped ideas and practices about childhood in the modern/colonial interplay between family members, knowledge, activities, and goods that combined difference, structural subordination, and modern adult-child relations in Colombia. Based on a local magazine directed by elite women, it refers to the cultural mechanism that merged northern and central perspectives with the regional and national modern/colonial horizon of family, public and private sex roles, children, and the broader framework of modernization between 1926 and 1940.

Keywords

Child-adult relationships, Colombia, family education, Latin America, modern woman, modern/colonial perspective

Introduction

Modern perspectives on childhood have been gaining ground in Colombia since the latter decades of the 19th century. As in other countries in Latin America, this process was not always coincident with ruling political parties and their ideologies -liberal and conservative-because two forces interacted. The first was the general modernization trend promoting discursive and social transformation in work, family, sex roles, and expert knowledge for governance. The second was the growth of representations and practices

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focused on education to achieve a productive and civilized country. Both involve a transnational, regional, and national evolution that engaged social reformers, government officials, and many thought leaders who proposed, translated, and implemented modern ideas about childhood, education, and the intersection of family and school (Castro and Restrepo 2008; Echeverry 2015; Sáenz et al. 1997).

This paper focuses on how coloniality logic shaped ideas and practices surrounding the modern notion of childhood within child-parent relationships in middle and upper-class families in Colombia. It explores texts written by the elite women who produced the women's magazine *Letras y Encajes* in Medellín between 1926 and 1940¹. It also addresses how the magazine conceived different childhoods and families connected through their knowledge of performing modern childhood experiences. The magazine reveals the differentiated pathways imagined and put into practice for elite and lower-class children and their parents. This scenario exposes the proximity of these privileged women's groups to the hegemonic, northern conception of modern childhood and how they simultaneously managed to model subordinated and disadvantaged infancies where childhood meant poor and subaltern. Their perception would influence experiences from infancy onwards for many children nationwide.

We first discuss how a modern sensibility towards children was deployed as a colonial practice and then, the way *LyE* exposes the notion of a modern woman as someone able to exercise this modern/colonial entanglement in her regard to children's social differences and education. The third part of the article focuses on the modern idea of childhood that *LyE* promoted as the core of its *family education* project. Finally, we deepen into the nuances of child rearing in the cultural context of the modern/colonial relations conceived by elite women who influenced local and national perspectives about education and child-parent relationships.

Modern sensibility towards childhood in a modern/colonial cultural context

We address from a modern/colonial perspective (Castro-Gómez y Grosfoguel 2007; Pedraza 2007; Quijano 2000, 2007) the proposal for raising children as part of family education in the magazine *Letras y Encajes* (LyE) as it appeared between 1926 and 1940. This approach allows to understand how colonial practices and subjectivities extended after independence in former colonial countries and were, simultaneously, modern (Quijano 2000). The upbringing practices discussed in this publication entangle the conservative ideology of elite women in Antioquia with a modern sensitivity towards childhood that gained ground and distinguished the requirements of middle and high-class children from those of the lower ones. From a modern/colonial angle (Castro-Gómez y Grosfoguel 2007), we first underline the role of elites as *cultural hinges* that articulate transnational perspectives about children, family, and education with local conditions. We conceive that local, national, and regional elites in Latin America can operate as vehicles, translators and switches of ideas and practices between central and subordinated countries. They can do so because they share modern, western, "enlightened" expectations, ways of life, forms of education, and a vision of development and modernization acquired in their direct or indirect contact with metropolitan centers. They play as cultural

hinges when acting from their privileged and governing positions to introduce, adapt and expand ideas, social programs or ways of living that manage to entangle social change and the reproduction of inequality and subordination. In doing so, they often underplay the local cultural, racial, and ethnic differences. Instead, as is the case of the magazine *LyE*, they pointed out the social, moral, and character questions that threatened family and children and should be faced with modern perspectives on education and social work.

Second, we consider that the debates about women's citizenship grew during those years in Colombia and Latin America because liberal reforms endorsed them. While these female writers supported liberal women's rights, they reinforced conservative values for the upbringing of children. As distinguished women promoted modern ideas about infancy, they also reproduced a social division nested in family education, parenting, and social origin. This contradiction, typical of coloniality of power, shows how elite members had sensitivity towards social difference and simultaneously fostered activities that reproduced it (Quijano 2000).

Coloniality is a pattern of power that extended after independence in Latin American nations. Before, those who became republican rulers and elites were *criollos* (creole) privilege groups. Despite the new democratic context, they often appealed to colonial racial and social classifications to characterize national populations (Quijano 2000). This ideological pattern also renewed the young nations' colonial character and established social mechanisms to reproduce differences. Family education earned importance because it involved modern ideas about childhood, motherhood, fatherhood, and the relations between family members. Their entanglement suggests the emergence of a child's ontology that implied new arrangements between family members. Along the 20th century, as Colombian governments increased their attention on family and educational issues, a social sensitivity also grew regarding the sons and daughters of subordinate groups as workers, poor, abandoned, or delinquents.

National elites, operating as cultural hinges, translated modern ideas about childhood and parenthood into local terms. As to childhood, the role of elite women increased during the first half of the 20th century as they became active in discussions about family, upbringing, and parenting. In their interest as benefactors and charity leaders, they had to grapple with social differences.

The sensitivity that accompanied colonial subjectivity recognized differences between children and motivated the elite's will to act regarding these differences, but not eliminate them. It instead chose to guarantee individual education of children thinking of them as future adults. As an ingredient of coloniality of power, this sensitivity dealt with a difference between children's characteristics, and what society was conceiving as their raising needs.

From the beginning of the 20th century, Colombian nationals attended regional and international meetings and conferences debating contemporary social issues and policies. They were active in intellectual, political, and social circuits that promoted ideas, debates, and actions concerning social change (Almeida 2006). Some of them, as government officials, subscribed to agreements that enforced laws and social interventions to introduce programs that would firmly establish modern childhood principles. Although mainly attended by men, some women also participated in this circuit as representatives of

elite groups and women's organizations advocating nonofficial social agendas. When childhood was the primary concern of the meetings, women were the majority (Scarzanella 2001). Men and women played prominent roles as leading figures in Colombia's different social, political, and academic positions that enabled them as cultural hinges, capable of disseminating modern ideas by reproducing colonial differences and sensibilities.

The modern/colonial condition implies that, after independence, a significant proportion of the child population continued to develop under colonial conditions as a constitutive trait of their families' situation and the position of subaltern social groups (Pedraza 2007). As middle-class and upper-class children raised in families increasingly interested in fulfilling a bourgeois way of life in expanding urban centers², new ideas, and practices concerning childhood and infancy spread (Oswell 2019). Members of these groups developed a sensibility that weaved together current trends in Pedagogy with a conservative and colonial perspective that tended to stigmatize and undervalue indigenous and popular comprehensions of age and growth. One cannot assert that reformers lacked interest in increasing children's access to school, nor that governments made no efforts to extend and improve formal education. Many discussions, programs, and reforms during the 19th century demonstrate this intention. However, these projects frequently underscored differences attributed to children and the families targeted in popular and social programs. These distinctions also implied disparities in contrast with the goals envisioned for children and families of middle and upper-class urban groups.³

The sensibility of elite groups in the South towards children contributed to the unequal economic and cultural conditions between central and peripheral societies. The vision that emerged in the country was not unified but variegated and highly sensitive to differences. Sex, class, race, ethnicity, geography, and morality were constant references. The effects of these elements were modifiable but not erasable. Education could transform some differences, but not all would disappear. Instead, modern/colonial children would grow and participate in social change to the extent that this dynamic allowed (Herrera 2013).

National elites approached northern elites trying to strengthen similarities and looking for their hegemonic position by targeting different local groups to focus on the modernization they would promote for their countries. From the northern perspective, they continued to be part of uncivilized and racialized countries.

Letras y Encajes (1926–1959) appeared in the Colombian city of Medellín. It included debate, expert articles, and opinions of the magazine's women owners, directors, writers, and readers concerning children's education, amongst other topics. The journal offers a singular vision of this modern/colonial perspective conceived and practiced by local elite women in a growing and developing city and province (Antioquia). It also reflects national bourgeois ideals and experiences and the ambiguous way middle and upper-class women moved along the path to emancipation as housewives, mothers, spouses, and social reformers. It is an example of the role of modern conservative-Catholic groups in developing and broadening a new sensibility towards childhood that worked as a modern/colonial hinge. This cultural mechanism merged northern and central perspectives about modern childhood with the regional and national modern/colonial horizon of family, public and private sex roles, children, and the broader framework of modernization. New

materialities and knowledge became part of this process as they played a role in defining modern ontologies for children-adult relationships (Spyrou 2019; Spyrou et al. 2019).

Hegemonic expectations directed elite parents' child-rearing activities and their education of their daughters and sons. Modern ideas guided their approach to their children and groups declared as the aim of social action organized by elite women. Often, social programs were part of their charitable acts and opened the door to public and private social service governance. This approach represents an epistemological perspective that brings experiences in the North and the South closer together (Balagopalan 2019; De Castro 2020a) by considering their modern/colonial connections. Regarding modern childhoods, we stress the familiarities between hegemonic and local theories addressing childhood in the context of a modern/colonial world system. The question arises of how children embodied modern ideals in Colombia, how they appeared on the cultural horizon as subjects, and what interplay occurred between adults, children, knowledge, and the materiality of goods and activities conceived as part of this ensemble.

Comparison and similarities in a modern/colonial perspective

Adopting a modern/colonial perspective is also a way of comparing cultural and political contexts. When zooming into regional interests in modern childhood, similarities with central and metropolitan practices, theories, and representations arise at first sight; however, the colonial difference is evident within them. For this reason, the familiarity between modern childhoods is partial. In a way, they have been conceived and put into practice to achieve modern, bourgeois childhood in families living under liberal principles and Catholic morale in Latin American republics in the 19th century. As this purpose came into practice, it also made the differences between populations culturally visible. Ways of dealing with these differences did not disappear; they arose as modern utterances in an ensemble of modern/colonial relations that is a structural aspect of power relations (De Castro 2020b; Pedraza 2007; Quijano 2000; Rojas 2001).

The modern/colonial perspective implies social and cultural differences that preserve unequal access to differentiated school education, work, and general living conditions. First and foremost, it emphasizes that all agents' subjectivities remain caught in assumptions about poverty, race, gender, or ethnicity. Second, the divergence modeled in these inequalities will prevail because the gaze highlights the difference and imagines a future where those differences exist, albeit in novel forms (Escobar 1996; Quijano 2007).

The most prominent nodes of these relationships highlight how theories of modern childhood can consider the definitive role of central and local elites and their sensibility in expanding hegemonic perspectives and reproducing north/south differences. Furthermore, it draws attention to those connections where familiarity arises, exposing its partial character. Our focus is to consider how childhood became a necessary and crucial aspect of a western civilizational project in a modern/colonial way. It implies modern differentiated childhoods, parenthoods, and responsibilities for North and South, East, and West. As we direct our attention towards local elites and their role as a cultural hinge, central, hegemonic, and colonialist elites should at some point reflect and scrutinize their structural power relations in this interplay.

In Colombia, the entanglement of knowledge, agents, institutions, and populations involved in disseminating modern childhood implied sharing representations and reproducing practices steeped in coloniality. In many fields, leaders were not fully confident in the people's capacities to achieve progress and civilization as they could imagine it. In this context, this is not an article about children's lives, agency, a critique of the universality of normative Euro-American perspectives, nor an approach to the empirical "south" and the theoretical "north". Instead, it is about the display of modern childhood as an assembly of modern/colonial relations that entangles North and South in multiple layers. An interplay occurs between liberal governance, modes of consumption, local coloniality in postcolonial nations, adult-child ties, mother-father-child bonds, and the extension of a recent past into the current, "global" connections and sensibilities towards children. We point to the modern/colonial matrix that discusses the new ontologies of mother, father, children, and family with materialities, knowledge, difference, and change (Spyrou 2019).

Letras y Encajes: A magazine for modern women

The modern woman is no longer a housekeeper; she must undergo scientific training to work as a mother who places her children in the country and society.

(*LyE*, 12(159): 4184–4186, 1939)

Being and feeling feminine in a modern way encompasses subjectivity and sensibility that women and feminist studies have underlined as a salient characteristic of Latin American bourgeois women. When focusing on regional societies during the decades before declaring full women's civil rights, authors agree that domestic and maternal duties and abilities were at the forefront of femineity (Jelin, 1998; López, 2009, 2013; Luna, 2004; Mannarelli, 2018; Nari, 2005; Pereira 2008). Especially in Catholic and conservative representations, maternal feelings and care constituted a part of what modern, cultivated, and bourgeois women were not willing to abandon their fight for full citizenship.

Letras y Encajes (LyE) launched the first issue in August 1926. Its founding mothers were four educated ladies from Medellín society. Of the more than 50 magazines dedicated to women since the latter decades of the 19th century, only a handful survived more than a few years (Cuartas 2018; Londoño 1990). *LyE* was the longest-lasting Colombian women's magazine of the 20th century. When the magazine appeared, Colombia was transitioning towards liberal governments that ended the conservative hegemony, which began in 1886. From 1930 until 1945, the *Liberal Republic* promoted social and legal changes that gradually transformed ideas about childhood, education, women's rights, and family. In 1945 women were constitutionally pronounced as citizens. From 1926 to 1940, *LyE* changed its subtitle three times. From a "monthly magazine," it became an "illustrate magazine" and, in 1940, a "ladies' magazine." This decision reflects the engagement in the debates concerning women's rights, which turned the importance of rearing and family education in modern womanhood.

During these years, the country entered the trail of modernization, capitalist development, urbanization, and industrialization. The emerging middle classes had more education and employment, which improved their income. Children received attention from hygienical, pedagogical, and social programs. The main elements for modern childhoods entered the hegemonic field of practices and representations, a process that only on a few occasions considered the significant cultural and ethnic differences present in the country.

By 1925, Colombia was experiencing an intense modernization process, and the city of Medellín was amid a rapid transition to industrialization⁴. Along with migration, the emergence of the middle classes and impoverishing outstanding cultural and political events set a challenging horizon outlined by cultural industries, demand for women's rights, psychological perspectives about development, cognitive processes, and emotional relationships. In addition, consumption focused on worldly goods and services that merged with the new relations.

Nevertheless, women had no complete secondary education, nor university studies (Uribe, n.d.; López 2002). However, a group of well-off women launched the magazine with the primary purpose of supporting the construction of a maternity pavilion at the *Hospital San Vicente de Paul*. They also declared their interest in promoting women's education, domestic economy, charity activities, and work to strengthen the new role of women in a changing society.

"Modern women" was a passionate topic during these decades. Middle and upper classes Latin American women were experiencing and discussing the meaning of modern motherhood (Garner and Slattery, 2012; Vandenberg-Daves, 2014), fashion, feminism, domestic economy, and the mass education of women. Over the decades and in the background, a discussion grew concerning women's civil rights. In Colombia, three events demonstrate what was at stake: the patrimonial regime in marriage (declared in 1932), equal civil rights (achieved in 1957), and parental authority *-patria potestas-* (recognized in 1968). Regular *LyE* authors and guests addressed the convenience or inconvenience of these reforms for the *family education* project and modern women's practices, duties, and responsibilities concerning social change.

The miscellaneous content of the journal wanted to satisfy elite women's intellectual, social, artistic, and moral appetites in Medellín and Antioquia. The closest members of the journal also attended the *Centro de Estudios Femeninos* [Center for Women's Studies] an institution founded by one of them in 1929 that evolved into the *Universidad Femenina* [Women's College] or *Colegio Mayor de Cultura Femenina* [College for Women's Culture]. Women attending the center studied cultural, creative, and social and political subjects. The institution aspired to be an alternative for women to perform educated womanhood while addressing their concerns for contemporary problems without sacrificing 19th century feminine values.

From this perspective, *Family education* involved transforming relations between family members, preserving the division of labor according to sex, modernizing children's education, enlightening women's instruction with scientific and academic knowledge, and bringing women closer to social change. This new era demanded that women have a better education in scientific, domestic, and moral issues, encouraging Christian charity as

Antioquia's elite women became intertwined with promoting feminine enlightenment through texts helpful to the "señoras de la casa" [housewives].

These actions did not intend to harm family or conservative sex differences; on the contrary, based on these "natural" differences, they expected to promote women's civil rights, education, and the enforcement of modern family values within a framework of Catholic morality. Of course, not all influential women and reformers endorsed this project. However, as Colombia remained a Catholic and conservative nation during the 20th century, *LyE* offers an important glimpse at the combination of factors that would influence the social conception of change, difference, and childhood for many decades to come.

Women interested in civil rights, political change, and increasing their social participation and influence had to reconcile these aspects with their Catholic, conservative ideas. They pursued a new balance for family relationships, which were those related to children and *family education*. Increasing demands for children to become modern subjects, republican citizens, and productive members of a modern society meant that the women active in social welfare made themselves responsible for the poor, especially women and children.

In the first 15 years, the magazine exposes the foundations of this interplay. This focus changed during the subsequent decade because *LyE* developed new editorial guidelines that more critically demanded juridical equality for women and became an organ of the suffrage movement that grew during the following years (Luna 2004). Scholars who have explored this magazine find it to be a valuable source for women's studies and feminist demands in Colombia (Cuartas 2018; Londoño 1990; López 2009, 2013; Ramírez 2021; Restrepo 2011). They agree that *LyE* promoted feminist women's rights and a conservative sense of family, domestic duties, and social engagement. However, they have not scrutinized parent-child relations as the axis of the journal's modern/colonial family project.

Family education governed by modern women was twofold: as they promoted enlightened emotional and moral principles for bourgeois children's education, they acted as Catholics sensitive to the needs of poor, uncivilized, or abandoned children. Their vision of modern childhoods included all children but applied differential educational guidelines: moral and emotional rights for upper-class children that would form their character, instruction, whereas fundamental rights enforcement for subordinated modern childhoods. Both fall into the notion of infancy, as neither elite nor subordinated children were envisioned as agents or responsible actors (Oswell 2019; Thorne 2008). This ambiguity became central for future social institutions as these women, members of their families, and their social circle were part of public and private institutions that enforced a differentiated education for children as an effect of this modern/colonial sensibility.

Modern women intended to benefit society, avoiding a conflict between legitimate professional aspirations and feminine housekeeping functions. They emphasized their primacy as those responsible for home and family's physical and spiritual care. However, feminine duties did not distance them from the evolution and modernization of society. They claimed that the value of motherhood, being the primary function of women, was inalienable and an inherent part of female identity (López 2012). As intellectual and

economic elites, they studied in foreign countries, were acquainted with prominent politicians, writers, high-level public officials, and part of international circuits such as the Comisión Internacional de Mujeres [Womens' International Commission].

Male writers, politicians, *letrados* [learned], catholic priests, pedagogues, physicians, and teachers often made contributions to the magazine. Some texts were original, reprinted, or translated, but women wrote the regular sections. The standard writers and some closely related women who were part of the social circle in Medellín and other cities had active ties with women's magazines in other regional countries. There was a constant exchange of columns, interests, and ideas, and authors frequently traveled across the region. *LyE* can be said to have excelled as a local journal committed to exchanging transnational ideas, representations, and practices relating to children's education, women's growth and education, changes in the modern family, social work, domestic economy, civic influence, and feminist Catholic activities.

Children in the magazine: educating infancy

Children were present on their own in *LyE*. Pictures of elite girls and boys were standard. They were photographed during their birthday parties, in contests, or wearing costumes. Their portraits and names made up a significant part of the social activities reported in the journal. Advertising addressed children directly as consumers, and other pieces used images of boys and girls to promote domestic appliances, cleaning products, toys, or food. Many issues included a section for children's entertainment with stories, tests, puzzles, instructions for games, religious advice, riddles, and natural sciences notes.

As the magazine addressed women, questions about children were common. The primary subjects of interest were the sons and daughters—more often sons—of middle- and upper-class urban women and families, the presumed readers of the articles. In the second place, the magazine addressed disadvantaged children as beneficiaries of social work and philanthropy. Women acted as mothers in charge of education for the former. On fewer occasions, the journal tackled fathers, and sometimes both parents were addressed together as the target of advice regarding their duties. For the latter, their mothers were not the focus. Instead, the texts appealed to elite women as agents of social work and charity. Teachers, social workers, or mothers of the “needy” children would educate them; however, they all received instruction in the institutions supported by elite women.

The core of the modern relationship between adults and children involves an ontological novelty regarding children. The changes that *LyE* promoted revealed a new comprehension of children's nature. Scientific knowledge, combined with social and cultural demands, provided the foundations for *family education*. However, the journal did not conceive children and infants as agents or political actors. In this sense, this comprehension of *family education* promoted an idea of modern infancy (Oswell 2019).

The first trait of this modern anthropology was the *sensitive* nature of the child, which defined him as an open, unfinished being and always in a social and cultural world. And, therefore, educable, malleable. The child could be deeply affected by perception, experience, feelings, or the example of adults. Parents responsible for raising their offspring faced the prospect of both emotional content and sacrifice (Pedraza 2021).

Modern standards established a second feature that child-rearing and education duties demanded regarding health, morality, citizenship, emotional education, and mental performance. Given the child's sensitivity, parents themselves should undergo an education process that would guarantee their success. Enforcing this change was a salient component of *family education* and how *LyE* promoted society's progress and family wellbeing. Finally, as the editors subscribed to a Catholic and conservative project, a corresponding morality permeated all parental activity regarding their offspring.

These ingredients –children's sensitivity and openness, modern standards for their development, and Catholic guidance– informed women's role as mothers and agents of social and charity action. It meant they perceived their own and poor and needy children as the recipients of their Christian virtuosity in the form of goodness, patience, love, ability, and tactfulness.

During these years children's nature was recognized as full of curiosity, observation, a sense of justice, activity, and imitation. Therefore, family education should result in good, healthy, and joyful children. However, this was not easy as other menaces and situations threatened this dynamic. Well-off children were challenged by nervousity, fear, shyness, lousy temperedness, cruelty, laziness, lies, anger, greed, and sibling conflict. Excessive noise, impunctuality, and difficulties managing money could undermine the character-forming aspects of this project. For this reason, education was thought to introduce order, rationality, obedience, moderation, and calm into children's lives.

These difficulties arose from the cultural context. Angela Villa del Toro, one of the founders of *LyE*, published in 1940 the book *Infancy: The Porch of Life*. The journal reproduced the prologue exposing the kind of problems that parents like herself were facing:

We live in a time of complex action for parents. Even though the intellectual diffusion in infantile pedagogy is pervasive, and modern parents are better prepared for their education and the psychological understanding of their children, this century is complex, and complex fails to achieve environmental stability. On the one hand, we find the constructive force of wanting to obtain a better moral and mental development of the child, a subversive and destructive power. On the other hand, cheap and obscene novels are published parallel to good literature. In the cinema, the educational film, world events, epics, and historical biographies unfold simultaneously as the sentimental and banal theme. (*LyE*, 14 (163): 4390–4391, 1940)

The excess of artifice in modern life worked against real human needs. Education should focus on religious, moral, and emotional children's rights for elite families. The contemporary emphasis on learning and social questions puts at risk the spiritual development of children. In 1935 the journal translated a reaction to the Declaration on the Rights of the Child. It claimed children's right to religious education:

The formation of our Western civilization has three homes...: Athens, Rome, and Jerusalem (...). It would attack the child's right to religious instruction, not to develop it religiously. ... we will not infringe upon the child's freedom if we dedicate ourselves essentially to showing

him the value of faith, more with the example of our life than with our teachings. It is impossible to imagine the responsibility that assumes the one who deprives a child of all religious education: the consequences would be disastrous: they have already been seen in Russia. (*LyE*, 9 (110):1733–1734)

Subscribing to Christian morality had a lasting effect because Colombia remained a catholic, roman, and apostolic nation whose Constitution was devoted to Catholicism and firmly grounded public education in religion. The connection between the moral ground and the ideal of the modern woman enforced a clear divide between practical and symbolic gender tasks. Consequently, boys and girls should follow separate paths in education.

Religious education ran parallel to moral and emotional education, requiring parental action since relations and interaction were the cues for success. Parents' actions should follow modern, scientific, and expert knowledge, primarily pedagogical, psychological, and hygienical. They should plan, organize, and supervise, following guidelines that differentiate fathers from mothers' duties. If Latin American fathers wanted to be "modern," they must, as their sons, be educable in line with foreign perspectives and theories. (*LyE*, 9(105): 1580–1582, 1935). Their primary goal was to shape the will of their sons and daughters. Their success would result in building character and good conduct.

Due to the sensitivity of the child's soul and heart, fathers should control their words and gestures and avoid scolding or any kind of physical or emotional punishment. Children should enjoy a joyful life and their father's love so that tears should not fall (*LyE*, 3(30): 18, 1929). For their good feelings to flourish, children should experience shame and empathy (*LyE*, (3)32: 533–534, 1929). Therefore, modern fathers should control their authority and observe their child's emotional and moral learning.

If parents could control themselves, they could educate their children's *character*, make them happy, and adjust their emotional experiences and expressions. Critical guidelines for the education of the character were to gain the confidence of children (*LyE*, (3)36: 599, 1929) and avoid violent reactions. Central to *family education* was the re-orientation of the father's authority so that prohibitions and restrictions would not drown initiative and activity.

The pedagogical art of the father will consist of finding the right word that makes docile the goodwill and the energies of the son [...]. The father's authority will suffer a terrible blow [...] if the child feels that his educators seek sympathy and affection rather than training, he will deny him respect and obedience; if selfishness dominates the father, he will rebel against him [...]. The ideal pedagogical treatment will consist of redoubling the firmness that directs the will of the young, with a mixture of tenderness, which will win their hearts. Obedience will be easy, and filial affection will remain alive by this double combination. (*LyE*, 9(107): 1666–7, 1935)

Despite these words directed to fathers, modern women's work was to gain full vigilance and general comprehension of educational endeavors. For the *LyE* editors, the

significant achievement of femininity was defending women's rights as part of their entitlement to complete control over the domestic domain.

The decalogue of children's rights (1938) synthesized the horizon of bourgeois children's education at home and how it involved the responsibility of parents and the future of the homeland. The child has the right to clean air, simplicity, and modesty. Parents should not overload him with ornaments like traveling hardware or inflate his candid spirit with clumsy praise about his appearance and person. He has the right to be economical, to practice the virtue of saving. The child should not receive all that he wants to buy. He is also entitled to tenderness, but parents must be emphatic when enforcing their orders, without cruelty in punishment, the fierceness of expression, or violent words. Finally, the child has the right to the truth, be courageous, and receive good examples. (*LyE*, 10(138): 2900–2901, 1938)

Child rearing in coloniality: the bourgeois family, and its social responsibility

Sensibility towards childhood increased as the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1924) was divulged. However, the modern/colonial character firmly established the acceptance of children's nature. The moral and emotional modulation of rights for middle- and upper-classes children and the encouragement of responsibility towards subordinates' education (Balagopalan 2019) contrasted with the enforcement of the Declaration that became the guide that *family education* followed for subordinate children.

Two broader concerns shaped the way Colombian elites approached educating subordinate modern children. First, the fear of race degeneration became an unavoidable frame of reference for social projects until 1940. Different views about eugenics influenced how Latin American nations perceived their present and future as “civilized” countries during these years. In 1930, Mrs. Quevedo de Cock stated at the *Salón de la Unión de Damas Católicas* [Hall of Catholic Ladies Union]:

By approaching the lower classes and trying to favor and instruct them, the upper classes do as much for themselves as for their beneficiaries. Only an active education will lead our young and intelligent people to the advantages of other civilizations and races. In the formation of the individual, heredity, environment, and education converge. (*LyE*, (4) 46: 743–745, 1930)

Women adapted the *family education* project to complex situations where rights, Catholicism, conservative ideologies, and their responsibility towards lower classes intersected. “Modern pedagogy had to act between material and ideal conditions for children to develop normally in material and spiritual matters. But needed families encounter pitfalls. How can they do it? The child will go to the street and fall into crime. There are also diseases: tuberculosis. And child labor. It is necessary to build love so that childhood is the foundation of society”. (*LyE*, (4)50: 6, 10–12, 1930)

The AGDA (Asociación General de Mujeres Colombianas para la Acción Cultural) [General Association of Colombian Women for Cultural Action] was an organization that

demonstrates the relationship between elites and subordinated groups. The prominent Minister of Education, Luis López de Mesa, endorsed the association and wrote in the journal about *Las madrinan escolares* [The school godmothers], a program seeking to strengthen the education of farmers children. He called on elite women to support the children of rural schools as he saw them as a source of “renewal” of the race and vulnerable to the dangers of poor nutrition, disease, and ignorance. He asked able women to become “godmothers” of schools and communicate with teachers and students to inform them of their moral, cultural, and material problems: “... the intelligent initiative of a woman who has a mother’s heart and devotion to Colombia can overcome deficiencies and draw surprising realities out of nowhere ...” (*LyE*, 10(128): 2376–2380, 1937)

Women’s associations and charity groups developed a sense of responsibility towards these children and their families. By attending to this moral duty, elite women embodied feminine and Christian “... virtues such as sweetness, sacrifice, modesty, diplomacy, nobility, dedication, and spirituality” (Giraldo 2007, 116). Sometimes, the magazine described social institutions in France, Belgium, and Italy that members of the board or Colombian travelers visited. In the same vein, *LyE* reported on *Las escuelas populares* [Popular Schools], the work of the Catholic priest Miguel Giraldo. He had founded more than 26 suburban schools with the support of a group of *señoras* [ladies] and *señoritas* [young ladies] from Antioquia’s society. They expected readers to engage in the project where poor *señoritas* had the chance to attend the *Escuela Modelo*, [The Model School], and the city’s most disadvantaged children received attention. This charity aimed to bring the school to the children and to their homes instead of taking the children to school: “It is a home school made up of the teacher, her family, and the children. They teach 6 hours alternately to boys and girls. It adapts to the needs of the worker” (*LyE*, 8(98): 1470, 1934).

The spirit of the social and charity activities sustained over several years focused on the children of Medellín and Antioquia. Actions were twofold: child-rearing and moral education of the children of the middle and upper classes of Antioquia, that is, the children of the magazine’s editors and readers. For elite children, the idea was to shape their character and prepare them as citizens educated and cared for by the emerging experts in childhood knowledge without neglecting their Christian education. On the other hand, the magazine supported social projects for poor and orphaned children as considered in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. For the orphaned, destitute, and abandoned children of Antioquia, *LyE* envisioned a civilization of children through Christian charity.

In Colombia, the concern and sensitivity towards children’s rights grew parallel with feminist discussions of the early 20th century. Children’s knowledge and rights were the “logical steps in a more inclusive view of culture and society” (Bluebond and Korbin, 2007, 242). However, as happened with women’s rights, during the 1930s, the definition of children’s rights obeyed a moral more than a liberal vision.

Conclusions

During the 1930s and 1940s, *LyE* revealed a contradictory vision of the role of modern elite women who promoted conservative and Catholic values, civil women’s rights, and a

modern/colonial concept of a *family education* project that conceived and reproduced colonial differences in the form of inequality, and subordination between social groups. From the perspective of the Colombian and Latin American ensemble of modern/colonial relations and structural factors underpinning the world system's power relations, this case allows us to understand that modern childhoods were part of the broader social changes that regional Republics began in the 19th century. During the last decades of the 19th century and the first ones of the 20th, some women's magazines made part of broader social projects. As thinkers, writers, educators, and social reformers, these publications allowed women to inform and influence culture and society. As members of social elites and in constant contact with international organizations and transnational ideas about family, parenting, education, social work, and childhood, they founded magazines that were decisive stages for communication and debate and provide us access to their interests and disputes.

For childhood and family studies, women's magazines are a valuable source to approach the multilayered perspectives, actions, and roles that women and other social actors were playing in the project of transforming parenting and childhood. Albeit a singular, local journal, *LyE* shows how it successfully spread principles to build a modern subjectivity that made part of a new cultural horizon for children, families, mothers, and fathers in middle and high-class urban groups. The complex interplay between family members, knowledge, activities, and goods that combine difference, structural subordination, and modern adult-child relations is one of the possibilities to be explored in women's magazines.

Modern childhoods, mainly infancy, emerged as modern families, relations, and subjectivities emerged. These aspects are partially connected to central and hegemonic representations and experiences because elites worked as *cultural hinges* to combine local projects, legal systems, and experiences with the North. Considering this cultural mechanism as part of the modern/colonial assembly reduces the North/South divide that ignores relations and interdependence between modern childhoods. Thinking about the transformation and characteristics of children's upbringing in the modern/colonial world system also highlights how national elites promote values and practices that reproduce colonial difference as a daily fact that makes the coloniality of power something concrete. We have discussed how a new ontological conception of children won place entangled with modern ways of parenting that emerged in Colombia as part of modern/colonial childhood perspectives

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Notes

1. *Letras y Encajes. Revista mensual* (1926–1959). Directoras: Sofía Ospina de Navarro, Alicia M. de Echavarría, Ángela Villa de Toro y Teresa Santamaría. Medellín.
2. In 1918, Colombia had 5.855.777 inhabitants and Medellín, 79.146. Ten years later, the national population summed 7.851.110 and Medellín hosted 120.044 inhabitants. By 1938 Colombia's population grew to 8.701.816 and Medellín had 143.952 inhabitants. Medellín was the third biggest city in the country, and the province of Antioquia the most crowded in the country with 1.188.587 inhabitants (Contraloría General 1940).
3. For the 1930's middle and upper classes are not easy to define in Colombia. Fresneda (2017) finds that by 1938 industrial workers represented 10% and employees 6% of the labor force. Small petty bourgeoisie, and independent non-agricultural workers together with directors, comprised 15%. Professionals and technicians were less than 1% of the employees.
4. At the end of the 19th century, Medellín began a process of industrialization, urban transformation, and growth in public services and transport sectors. By the second and third decades of the 20th century it had grown into an important industrial city. Textile, food, beverage, footwear, printing, and building material industries supplied internal and external market. By 1920 about eighty companies were already open. This growth along with the increase of the coffee economy developed Medellín into a national and regional migration recipient.

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