

Melaninic Discrimination among Primary School Children

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Abstract : To our knowledge, dark skinned children are often victims of discrimination from adults and society, but few studies specifically focus on skin color discrimination on children coming from the same children. Even today, the 'color blind children' ideology is widespread among adults, teachers, and educators and maybe also among scholars, which seem really careful about study expressions of racism in childhood. This social and cultural belief let people think that all the children, because of their age and their brief experience in the world, are disinterested in skin color. Sometimes adults think that children are even incapable of perceiving skin colors and that it could be dangerous to talk about melaninic differences with them because they finally could notice this difference, producing prejudices and racism. Psychology and neurology research projects are showing for many years that even the newborns are already capable of perceiving skin color and ethnic differences by the age of 3 months. Starting from this theoretical framework we conducted a research project to understand if and how primary school children talk about skin colors, picking up any stereotypes or prejudices. Choosing to use the focus group as a methodology to stimulate the group dimension and interaction, several stories about skin color discrimination's episodes within their classroom or school have emerged. Using the photo elicitation technique we chose to stimulate talk about the research object, which is the skin color, asking the children what was 'the first two things that come into your mind' when they look the photographs presented during the focus group, which represented dark and light skinned women and men. So, this paper will present some of these stories about episodes of discrimination with an escalation grade of proximity related to the discriminatory act. It will be presented a story of discrimination happened within the school, in an after-school daycare, in the classroom and even episode of discrimination that children tell during the focus groups in the presence of the discriminated child. If it is true that the Declaration of the Right of the Child state that every child should be discrimination free, it's also true that every adult should protect children from every form of discrimination. How, as adults, can we defend children against discrimination if we cannot admit that even children are potential discrimination's actors? Without awareness, we risk to devalue these episodes, implicitly confident that the only way to fight against discrimination is to keep her quiet. The right not to be discriminated goes through the right to talk about its own experiences of discrimination and the right to perceive the unfairness of the constant depreciation about skin color or any element of physical diversity. Intercultural education could act as spokesperson for this mission in the belief that difference and plurality could really become elements of potential enrichment for humanity, starting from children.

Keywords : colorism, experiences of discrimination, primary school children, skin color discrimination

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