


BEAUTY STANDARD FOR WHOM? BLACK CHILDREN COMPETE FOR THE SCENE ON INSTAGRAM

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ABSTRACT

TIC Kids Online Brasil (2023) shows that 24% of respondents reported having started their internet connection in early childhood – this proportion was 11% in 2015. This reality is reflected in research conducted since 2012 by the Cetic.br, NIC.br, CGI.br. Research shows a growing trend in internet use in early childhood. Currently, according to data from these research agencies, 95% of the population aged 9 to 17 is an internet user in the country, with the cell phone being pointed out as the main access device for 97% of users. Regarding videos and the use of social networks, 88% of the children and adolescents interviewed have access to online videos, 78% said they have WhatsApp, 66% Instagram, 63% TikTok and 41% Facebook. It should be noted that black children occupy these spaces on digital social networks, but do not appear in the ranking of the largest channels or profiles on digital social networks, according to data from the Social Blade Platform (2022), being 'made invisible'. Black children – produce and share narratives with their peers and position themselves in different ways on different themes in digital social networks, such as Instagram. They teach while they learn. But how do black children reaffirm black beauty and their curly hair? How do they oppose hegemonic standards of beauty? How do they present themselves on Instagram? In order to problematize this phenomenon, we propose as an objective to understand the productions of black children and the positive narratives about black beauty on the social network Instagram, profile 'Duda Acaiaba' (@dudaacaiaba). We used the technique of observation and selection of images, in the months of May and June 2023. The conclusions showed that black children are on the scene on social networks praising black beauty. Duda Acaiaba's profile reaffirms black beauty: curly hair, dark skin, black eyes – in (re)educational processes through communication on digital platforms in confronting racism, prejudice and discrimination in childhood and through narratives teach other children to question their reality.

Keywords: Communication, (Re)education, Black child, Black beauty, Resistance.

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INTRODUCTION

TIC Kids Online Brasil (2023) shows that 24% of respondents reported having started their internet connection in early childhood – this proportion was 11% in 2015. This reality is reflected in research conducted since 2012 by the Cetic.br, NIC.br, CGI.br. Research shows a growing trend in internet use in early childhood. Currently, according to data from these research agencies, 95% of the population aged 9 to 17 is an internet user in the country, with the cell phone being pointed out as the main access device for 97% of users. Regarding videos and the use of social networks, 88% of the children and adolescents interviewed have access to online videos, 78% said they have WhatsApp, 66% Instagram, 63% TikTok and 41% Facebook.

Among digital platforms, such as Instagram, YouTube and TikTok have grown significantly, expanding possibilities, including professional, with the use of platforms in the production of paid content. Instagram is among the three most consumed digital social networks among Brazilians (FORBES, 2023). Anyone with access to the internet can create profiles, produce videos and share their productions on these platforms. Access to digital social networks, mediated by technologies, has allowed not only adults, but also children to experiment with new forms of communication, interaction, production and sharing of content³.

It should be noted, according to Tomaz (2016), that the internet has been a space for children, even though it was not conceived for them, it is gradually occupied by them. In this space, children teach while learning about different topics through platforms such as Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, Tik Tok and others.

It should be noted that black children occupy these spaces on digital social networks, but do not appear in the ranking of the largest channels or profiles on digital social networks, according to data from the Social Blade Platform (2022), being 'made invisible'. Black children – produce and share narratives with their peers and position themselves in different ways on different themes in digital social networks, such as Instagram. They teach while they learn. *But how do black children reaffirm black beauty and their curly hair? How do they oppose hegemonic standards of beauty? How do they present themselves on Instagram?* In order to problematize this phenomenon, we propose as an objective to understand the productions and positive narratives about black beauty on the social network Instagram. The internet, according to Castells (2003), is a means of communication

³Instagram's current policy (2023) does not allow children under the age of 13 to use the said platform.

of many with many on a global scale, impacting on the modes of communication and interaction, and has engendered changes in society, affecting the daily dynamics of social, economic, cultural, and communicational relations. It is in this reality that interactions are expanded through digital social networks in which individuals establish affective bonds, share their experiences and experiences.

This article is part of the research carried out in the master's degree in Communication carried out at PPGCOM-UFPI, with the theme "protagonism of black children in digital social media – a case study of the profiles of Tatielly Cachos and Duda Acaiaba on Instagram" (2023). A study that brings to the scene the positioning of black children, their narratives of confronting racism, prejudice and beauty standards with a focus on curly/curly hair, with a view to problematizing the reality in which we are immersed and influencing new consciousnesses.

METHODOLOGY

In this section, we present the theoretical-methodological contribution outlined for the realization of the research – the type, the observable, the technique and the analysis.

The research is qualitative, as it aims to understand, according to Minayo (2014), the relationships, representations, beliefs, perceptions and opinions, resulting from the interpretations that humans make of their daily experiences and experiences. In this sense, problematizing the participation of children – their relationships, interactions and communications in digital social networks, such as Instagram, is *a sine qua non* condition to understand them today.

As an observable, we chose the "profile of Duda Acaiaba" (@dudaacaiaba) on Instagram⁴, as shown in the following image:

⁴Instagram was launched in 2010. In 2012, Instagram was bought by Facebook. In 2018, the social network had more than 500 million users worldwide, with 7% of the accounts created being Brazilians (AGUIAR, 2018). Over time, new features emerge: *hashtags*, *reels*; *stories*; *Messenger*, video, shopping, search, and explore.

Image 1: Profile of "Duda Acaiaba"



Source: Instagram, 2023.

The observation of the profile took place from May to December 2023. Posts in the *feed* with a 'beauty' theme were analyzed. Duda Acaiaba is a black child with dark skin, curly/curly hair, black eyes, living in São Paulo who, in 2022, was 12 (twelve) years old. She has been on Instagram since May 2016, and in April 2017, she created a Facebook page. In 2023, she had more than 33 thousand followers on Instagram and 740 publications. Since the creation of his profile – in May 2016 until the year 2022 – he has published 668 posts on his Instagram feed. Of these, sixty-three deal directly with empowerment and black beauty.

Duda Acaiaba's profile was an open profile, that is, any user could have access without needing confirmation, and diversified with productions that dealt with: dances, jokes, advertising, moments with family and friends, theater, belly dancing, monologue, racism, representation and black identity, black beauty, etc. In it, she performed as an actress, model and dancer.

Appointed by Raça Magazine, in the October 2021 edition, as one of the most successful black children as a model, actress and dancer. Duda Acaiaba participated in the program Encontro - com Fátima Bernardes on Rede Globo television, in March 2021, in the 'papinho cabeça' segment along with other children. On the board, children are invited to speak and express their opinions about the news that had repercussions in the week in the way they understand. In addition, Duda is part of the "Pretinhas Super Powers" Project (2020), which aims to empower black children through education, health, culture and well-being.

The analysis of Duda Acaiaba's profile was through categories that, according to Bardin (2016), are rubrics or classes, which refine a group of elements under a generic title, a grouping that is carried out due to the common characteristics of these elements, being the reflection of the content they encompass, whether by words, themes, characters, event, among other factors. Therefore, we adopted the semantic categorization (thematic categories) based on the theme – "black beauty, curly/curly hair and resistance".

THE PROTAGONISM OF THE BLACK CHILD ON INSTAGRAM – CURLY/CURLY HAIR AS A SYMBOL OF RESISTANCE AND BEAUTY

It is important to highlight the space of hegemonic media in the construction of the position of subordination of the black person in society. Moura (2015) emphasizes that the Brazilian hegemonic media has always portrayed black people in a negative way, from a perspective of subordination, without the opportunity to pronounce themselves, to talk about themselves, their desires and their perspectives. Although the majority of the Brazilian population, 56%, declare themselves black (IBGE, 2022), there are tiny references of black people on television, the internet, etc.

It should be noted that the presence of black Brazilian children on digital social networks who take a stand on racial issues, building positive narratives on the subject, in which they feel empowered, resist hegemonic aesthetic standards, is recent. They narrate about "curly/curly hair, a symbol of black beauty", "skin color", etc. It is important to emphasize that "Black children not only suffer Brazilian racism from an early age, but also react to it, resist it from their singularities and possibilities" (ANDRADE, 2020, p. 64).

In a video posted on YouTube on 03.11.2015, when she was 08 (eight) years old, Carolina Monteiro, a black child, curly hair, faces racism and says "my hair is not hard, no! Do you know what is hard? It's hard to put up with ignorant people saying that my hair is hard! That's what's hard!"⁵element. They "[...] speak, take a stand, and build powerful narratives against racism and for childhoods free of prejudice for all children, black and non-black" (Andrade, 2020, p.18).

Adding to the children active in digital social networks, Duda Acaiaba, in a post on her Instagram profile, in 2020⁶, declares: "my hair is not bombril, it is good and makes me

⁵Video posted on Youtube and available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1d0JxGTGOg>. Accessed in: 11/06/2023.

⁶Available on Instagram at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CAip1H8BUIs/>; https://www.instagram.com/p/B_f_srPFdv5/. Accessed on: November 06, 2023.

shine! Black empowerment! My hair looks like a nest, it does look like a nest of self-love! My hair is not fashion, it's struggle, it's resistance! Black Empowerment!"

Below, we present images, captions and comments from "Duda Acaiaba's" profile on Instagram about "beauty":

Image 2 - Hair is not just fashion, it's acceptance and identity



Source: Instagram, 2023.⁷

Image 2 (posted on 26.05.2021), obtained 131 likes and 18 comments by 26.05.2023, with the following captions:

Hair is not just fashion, it is acceptance and identity. Since the 70s, the black movement in Brazil has been fighting for the appreciation and respect of people who display their black power (curly hair) to society, without fear of criticism and transcending the field of beauty, serving as a tool for acceptance and cultural identity.

Credits and gratitude to the @stiloblack salon (located in Cidade Tiradentes) that believes in me and takes care of my hair, helping me to value and promote my Black Power!

In the post, Duda Acaiaba tags several profiles of black child models and magazines aimed at the black audience, in addition to the 'Pretinhas Super Power Project' and also uses several hashtags for greater engagement:

#sonhos #modelo #public #felicidade #realizacoes #publi #atormirim #ciclistasp #empoderada #cabeloblackpower #negra #dancarina #ballet #dancadoventre #hiphop #jazz #rugby #ginasticaartistica #pesquisadeelenco #elencodigital #elian #globoplay #globo.

⁷Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CPVo9m5hc7D/>

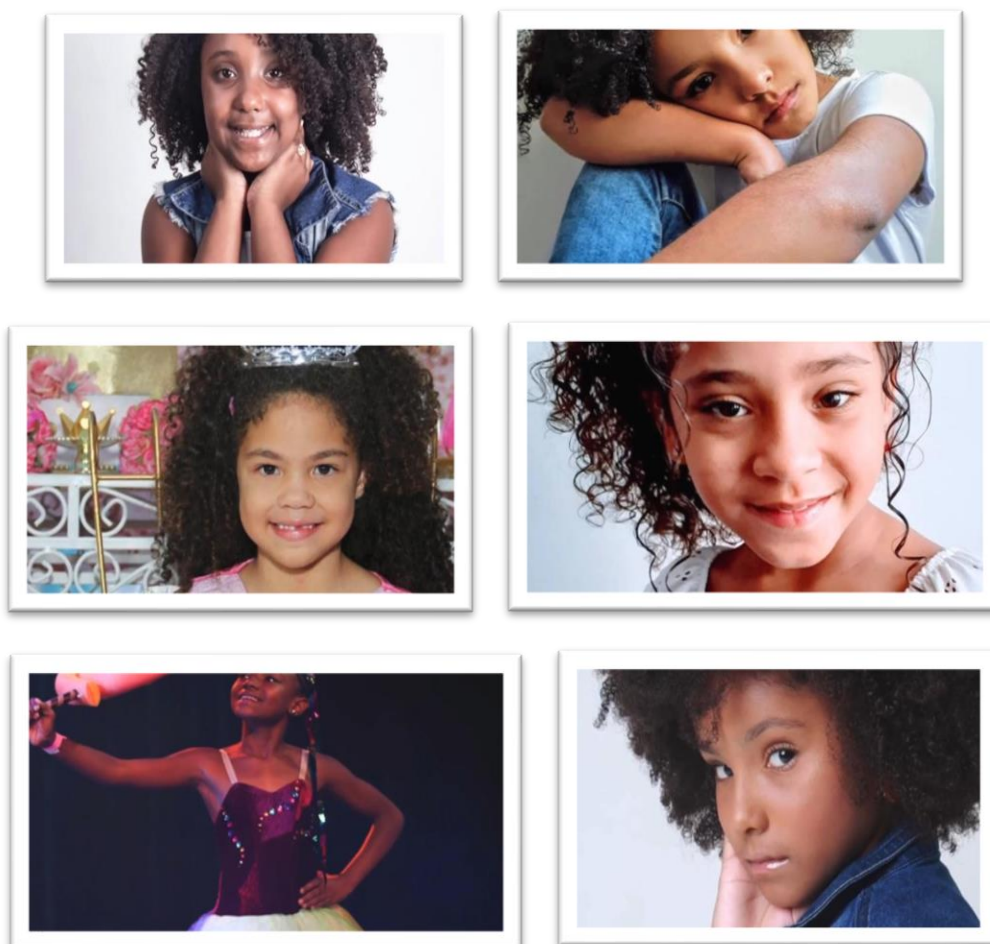
She makes a point of highlighting and praising the beauty of her curly hair. In the image, it shows only her face and hair – "She presents herself smiling, touching her hair in order to give it a highlight". This makes us infer his joy with his hair and his beauty. In the post, she marks the professional profile of the beauty salon, includes the address of the establishment and thanks her for helping her take care of her hair, informing the place of hair care for black people.

Through the comments, we found that followers positively evaluate Duda Acaiaba's positions and praise her hair:

It was awesome 🥰💖; She rocked Black Power; Powerful Black; More than beautiful princess hair; How beautiful, the hair is wonderful.

Black people have always fought, and continue to fight, against the ills of racism, stigmas and stereotypes embedded in the structure of Brazilian society. A sophisticated mechanism in which black people are subjected, even today, to various forms of violence. Therefore, Chimamanda (2017) points out, we need to teach children, especially black children, about the identity of the black person, the importance of being proud of what they are, of their history, of the beauty of their skin, of their hair and of the ability to resist the negative images that try to subordinate the black population.

Image 3 - Respect my Black. I use it how I want



Source: Instagram, 2023.⁸

Image 3 (posted on 30.06.2020), are screenshots of the video, obtained 159 views, 59 likes and 02 comments until 18.05.2023, with the following captions:

Stop saying that dry, frizzy hair is ugly. Which is for me to tie my hair. I tie it up, lock it up, release it the way I want and no one has anything to do with it. Hold your prejudice and my beauty will pass.

The video is about a film starring Duda and 05 (five) black children from the 'Pretinhas Super Power Project' (#pretinhassuperpower), is interspersed with photos and texts, with the following captions:

Respect my black! Black Super Power. Six girls of different ages! the capoeirista, the athlete and dancer (Duda), the Tik Tok dancer, the queen of the house, the gymnast and the dancer, challenge stereotypes and how they are empowered. My black is like a queen.

⁸Print of the video lasting 1 minute and 39 seconds. Available at: https://www.instagram.com/p/CCDvzA_hEy5/.

Duda Acaiaba marks the 'Pretinhas Super Power Project', several profiles of black child models and some modeling agencies. The children presented in the video are black children and make a point of showing that they are "empowered and beautiful".

As well as the profile presented by Duda Acaiaba, and his productions on Instagram, Andrade (2020) identified the presence of black children on several Facebook pages, in which virtual communities disseminated and shared en masse videos of black children who exposed anti-racist narratives and, therefore, gained space and notoriety, resonating their voices.

Imagem 4 - @dudaacaiaba



Source: Instagram, 2023.⁹

Image 4, carousel with two photos in different positions (posted on 29.08.2021), had 172 likes and 17 comments by 18.05.2023, with the following captions:

Beauty standard is you feel good, be beautiful in soul and heart too. Editorial Red Velvet.

In the post, Duda Acaiaba tags several professional profiles responsible for the photographic work, as well as some hashtags:

#editorialredvelvet #cruelladevil #criatividade #autenticidade #glamour
#ensaiofotografico #cruella #ensaiocriativo #minimodelo #modelokids
#editorialinfantil #fashion #moda #photoshoot #estudiofotografico #cyhfotos
#studio104.

⁹Available in https://www.instagram.com/p/CVoi17_MIDI/

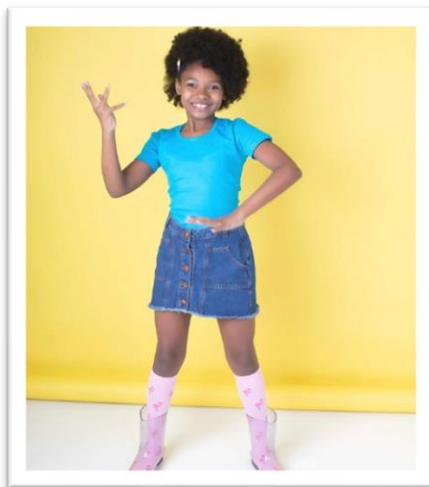
The information in the post emphasizes that the photos are part of a photographic work in which Duda Acaiaba appears with a "casual look, colored shoes and glasses on a colorful background", and reaffirms that "beauty is feeling good and smiling".

Society has built discourses that label curly hair as "bad hair", a facet of racism that leaves deep marks in the lives of black people and that arises in childhood, causing great damage to children's self-esteem. To them, the discourse that beauty is associated with whiteness is reproduced (Soares, 2018).

The question is, then, are the media and social networks spaces for participation (or exclusion)? Of visibility (or invisibility)? Of acceptance (or rejection)? Do they tend to produce and reproduce hegemonic discourses and standards of beauty that privilege a certain class or race? Queiroz (2013) emphasizes, in a research carried out in 2011 and 2012, with children from 09 to 13 years of age, using as a technique the selection of images on the internet by the children – of a person/woman who "would like to be and would not like to be" and "beautiful and not beautiful". Regarding the people/women they "would like to be and beautiful", the children mostly chose celebrities, rich and famous, white, blonde, thin, etc. In relation to people/women who "would not like to be and not beautiful", they mostly chose black women, curly hair, fat hair, etc.

Therefore, it is essential to educate children from an anti-racist perspective, because according to Miranda (2011) the affirmation of black identity is a potentially positive element that aims at a subjective reconstruction that is indispensable for a discourse of beauty with aesthetic traits typical of Afro-descendants.

Imagem 5 - @dudaacaiaba



Source: Instagram, 2023.¹⁰

Image 5 (posted on 05.11.2021), obtained 131 likes and 08 comments until 20.05.2023, with the following captions:

*Less standard
More freedom.
To be
Whoever you want to be!
Black Empowerment!
Pretinhas Super Powers Project.*

As in the other posts, Duda tags the profile of several black child models and several hashtags aimed at curly hair, makeup and skin care. The photograph shows the entire body of Duda Acaiaba who presents himself in a "smiling way". His position focuses on confronting beauty standards, calls for more freedom to be whoever he wants, for a more democratic place that respects differences.

In all posts, Duda Acaiaba makes reference to the 'Pretinhas Super Power Project', aimed at empowering black girls that values and contributes to the creation of the identity and self-esteem of the black person.

From this perspective, access to the internet can contribute to the breaking of discursive hegemony, as it allows subjects, such as black children, to occupy media spaces, connect with other subjects. Thus, digital social networks contribute to the exposure of discourses and increase people's power of communication, in addition to maintaining the social ties established in the *online/offline space* (RECUERO, 2009).

¹⁰ Disponível em <https://www.instagram.com/p/CHNwMctBDmr/>

CONCLUSION

Navigating the courageous resistance of children in media spaces, such as Duda Acaiaba's Instagram profile, brings significant memories of the experiences of these researchers as black children – the anguish, the disappointments, the encouragements, the fragilities – and the importance to her, Duda Acaiaba, when she acts and guides her beauty... the 'beauty of a black girl, with dark skin... As well as for so many other black children, and other people, when she stars and speaks of the beauty and strength of curly/curly hair as a symbol of resistance.

The scene says that there are:

- (Re)educational processes through communication on digital platforms;
- Confronting racism, prejudice and discrimination in childhood through narratives that teach other children to question their reality;
- Strategies of visibility and speeches of black children;
- Opposition to hegemonic aesthetic standards – white, blue eyes, blond hair, and facing racism, prejudice and racial discrimination of which they are victims;
- (Re)affirmation of narratives of black beauty, especially curly/curly hair, empowerment and self-esteem of the black child.
- Recognition of the hairstyle (type of hairstyle) and ethnic-racial belonging, of African roots, as well as reaction, resistance and denunciation against racism.

Digital social networks are spaces in which children produce and reproduce ways of being – an expression of the sociocultural, economic, and political dynamics in which they are immersed.

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