

Children, ethics in caregiving and rights: the reason for the Statute of Child and Adolescent*

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Abstract

The text analyzes the association between caregiving and the right of children based on results recorded in a study carried out by an inter-institutional research, which comprised students and professors from two universities. The herein presented contributions aim at problematizing, annoying and, somehow, affecting the ways of thinking and acting in institutions committed to conquests achieved through the *Statute of Child and Adolescent*. The investigation headed towards positive caregiving practices in six municipal public institutions (two daycare centers; two pre-schools; two elementary schools) that provide from Child Education to Elementary School. The theoretical reference is based on Martin Buber, as well as on bond, trust and presence concepts; caregiving and to be taken care of. Life stories were the methodological option; this approach is traditional in sociological research fields and in education research focused on the production of knowledge that does not set the dichotomy personal vs. professional life, subject vs. object; daily life vs history. The aim of the text is to give some visibility to what was heard in interviews and workshops about the care provided by teachers and family members to children attending to the six assessed institutions. Taking care of oneself, and of others, or even of all others – mainly of children –, is a factor related to survival; it is one of the aspects rising from the herein presented research. Ethics in caregiving is mandatory so the human sphere, mankind, does not face the risk of being annihilated. Such ethics means having the presence of an adult, reciprocity, bond and encounter.

Keywords

Child education – Right of the children – Care – *Statute of Child and Adolescent*.

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Introduction: the right to be taken care of

The present text was written based on a complex context; calling it hard would be too simple, since it concerns a deep economic crisis, at global scale. Such a crisis has come along with the political instability experienced in Brazil and with the outstanding social inequality observed in our society, mainly in the very core of Covid-19 pandemic, which has been significantly affecting the health of populations worldwide, throughout the year of 2020.

Similar to the Spanish flu, which was experienced approximately 100 years ago, the current critical situation has several sides, it reaches and changes daily activities, routines, actions and relationships. Therefore, how can we keep on working? How is it possible taking care of the more vulnerable ones, such as children, at home or on the streets? These children do not have the least conditions to assure a worthy life. Or, yet, how can we take care of children living in institutions or shelters? How can we welcome them, provide them with food, protection, assistance and health? How can we act in adults, teachers, researchers, public and private institution managers' accountability? How can we implement public policies to assure that the risks they already face do not get worse?

Well, if the context and need of protecting each of these people is the reason and motivation to favor the health condition of all, it is possible saying that individuals see themselves, once more, willing to join the resistance, since we do not have medication and a vaccine scientifically proven effective to treat and stop the disease. In other words, we have been asked to keep resistant, either by telling the story of what was achieved or by recalling struggles and the conquests; or even by pointing out what was left aside, the challenges, limitations, losses and the hard times yet to come.

Approaching the *Statute of Child and Adolescent* (SCA) based on the aforementioned focus means understanding that "History is the object of a construction whose place is not the homogeneous and empty time, by a time full of "now"" (BENJAMIN, 1987, p. 229). Similar to the jump of a tiger, it is essential going back to the origins, against the barbarian condition where important fractions of the general population have been placed in, mainly children. The *Statute* led to hard work, since it joined intense political activism, as well as to academic investigations, theoretical reasoning and to practical actions taken by professionals from different knowledge and culture fields; moreover, it switched the trajectory of documents, policies and actions that have not contributed to education, to care provided to children and to their emancipation. In order to make sure that the *Statute* is not put at risk again (BAZÍLIO, 2003), it is currently mandatory to go back to the fight in order to assure the financial resources and management competence to childhood protection and care.

The aim of the text is to discuss the association between caregiving and the rights of children, based on results of a study carried out by the group of inter-institutional researchers that encompasses students and professors from two universities. The contributions of the present study are herein presented in order to problematize,

annoy and, somehow, affect the way of thinking and acting in institutions committed to SCA conquests.

Law, freedom and protection: facets of caregiving

The construction of a new way to look at children – the citizen children – expressed on the *Federal Constitution* (BRASIL, 1988) was only possible thanks to the strength of a social movement that got to introduce itself in the constituent process and to make itself present based on a popular amendment, which stood out for the record in the number of signatures – more than one million and two-hundred thousand signatories, from all over the country. This articulation was led by the National Child Movement and Constituent³, which introduced children in the world of human rights; it is a milestone for the principles and implementation of public policies focused on childhood (CRAIDY, 1994). According to Fernandez (1989, p. 87):

Through many paths, people from different social, professional, ethnic and race categories emerged in the center of the stage and embodied the role of agent, of master of speech. One indigenous individual, one black individual, a person with physical disability, a humble professor came out of obscurity and stood along with remarkable individuals, who were invited, due to their knowledge, or who showed up, in order to advocate for the cause of entities that are more or lesser engaged to the authentic democratic revolution.

Researchers sensitive to conditions experienced by children have adhered to the movement and became the protagonists of a dialogue set with Anise Teixeira National Institute of Studies and Research on Educations/MEC and with the main bureaus focused on promoting research and the methodological instruments to develop it. It was done not only to make it feasible outspreading the knowledge about children, produced by different scientific fields, but also to encourage new research about child education.

Barreto (1994), Tiriba (1992), Rosemberg (1994), Campos and Rosemberg (1995), Kramer (1982, 1994), Rosseti-Ferreira (1988), Rocha (1999) and Faria (1999) are some of the authors who have contributed to set the very basis of this new legal sight and recommendations for daycare and pre-school programs and policies.

In the decade the *Statute of Child and Adolescent* was enforced, Brazil had 20% of its children outside the school; nowadays, thirty years later, the rates dropped to 4.7% (UNICEF, 2019). Many forms of social mobilization have joined forces, actions, projects and governmental programs, in order to reach a more egalitarian country and to accomplish such a drop in the number of children outside the school. Extending Elementary School time to 9 years, the increase in the mandatory age for basic education from 4 to 17 years old and the education plans were public education policies that have contributed to this successful rate, which is even more significant if the number is assessed at nominal terms

3- This movement has articulated the Federal public sector, based on several ministries, and on more than 600 non-governmental organizations (ONGs).

– there are 21 million and 500 thousand children, in the age group 0-6 years, in school, in 2020. These numbers exceed the population of more than 40 European countries, among them, Portugal, Belgium, The Netherlands and Austria; and of some South American Countries, such as Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia, not mentioning countries in the other continents.

Campello *et al.* (2018) put a magnifying glass over the 5% and 20% poorest Brazilians between 2002 and 2015; they have concluded that there was significant reduction in part of the inequalities observed in the country, be them in healthcare, income, housing or in education; the country has witnessed a real inclusion process. This new scenario resulted from political decisions; therefore, “[they] take away the acceptance of a natural and inevitable blaming of inequality” (CAMPELLO *et al.*, 2018, p. 65). In any case, it is necessary going forward in the path to assure equality to children; one of the main aspects approached by several studies (ABRAMOWICZ, 2013; GOBBI, 2018) lies on the inequality derived from conditions experienced in the municipality the child was born in, places where not everyone has the same access to and quality of Child Education.

Rosemberg and Mariano (2010) carried out a literature review about the repercussions of the *International Convention on the Rights of Children in Brazil* (1989) and showed the stress in the debate on the right to freedom and protection – which is little assessed in Brazil, but common in the juridical field, such as in the *Statute of Child and Adolescent*. These authors reinforce the sense that the Convention has universal intention, although it is based on a Western bias, with emphasis on individual rights (citizenship) and on the attempt to “join the protectionist and libertarian schools, which are seen by many as antagonistic and/or inconsolable” (MARCHI; SARMENTO, 2017, p. 955). The *Convention* brings in its core either the right to protection and provision or to freedom, expression and participation. The debate is substantiated, on the one hand, by the problematization of the childhood category (in the singular) and, on the other hand, by the vulnerabilities observed in this age group. It is so, not only because of the specificities deriving from factor “age group”, but also given the structural conditions experienced by this population, which results from the socially submissive position lived in childhood. Article 227 of the *Federal Constitution*, which expressed the paradigm of the *Statute*, is emblematic within this debate:

It is the duty of the family, society and of the State to assure to the child, adolescent and youngster, with absolute priority, the right to life, healthcare, food, education, leisure, a profession, culture, dignity, respect, freedom and to live with the family and the community, they must be safe from all sorts of negligence, prejudice, exploration, violence, cruelty and oppression. (BRASIL, Art. 227, 1989).

It is known that to make the right to freedom and protection concrete means going beyond daily relationships, for social institutions will give a new meaning to these words and translate them into acts, standards and ways to accept others. These acts and standards will be influenced by the place childhood occupies in society, which draws the way children are treated and, consequently, how adults will see them. Accordingly, Didonet

(2015) argues that when it comes to the right of children to be heard, SCA is bashful and expresses less than it was postulated in the *Convention on the Rights of Children*, since:

[...] it is not just the adult who speaks, be it the father, the mother, the caregiver, the tutelary advice, the judge... They are not the only ones to have a voice, an interpretation and a decision on subjects that interest children. Children also have what to say and must be heard. (DIDONET, 2015, n. p).

The argument is substantiated by pioneering studies carried out in Brazil about caregiving to children; somehow, these studies have had impact on official documents. Campos and Rosemberg (1995), Craidy (1994), Kramer (2003) Faria (1999), Montenegro (2001) and Tiriba (2005), among others, were essential to bring the topic to the reality of works performed with children in Child Education. They have articulated education and assistance, also known as right, which goes beyond the assistentialist view of guard or guardianship. Social movements, researchers and education professionals were looking for theoretical concepts to deepen political propositions and alternative practices.

Caregiving is approached in the basic texts that have guided Basic Education in Brazil, either in the *Statute of Child and Adolescent* (BRASIL, 1990) or in the *Bill of Guidelines and Bases for National Education* (BRASIL, 1996). Documents point out the impossibility of separating the act of educating from that of taking care of. In the past, Child Education was understood as specific and such a concept emerged as the very foundation of all basic education.

In the last few years, results of studies conducted based on the herein approached perspective have highlighted the challenge in breaking up with the instrumental perspective, according to which *taking care of* would be the complement of educating. These studies have contributed to the theoretical reference substantiated by the concept that *taking care of* goes beyond the instrumental dimension – giving a bath, feeding, teaching habits, taking to bed – and gets close to the ethical and human perspective, so that they have contributed to the idea of education as the connection between child and adult as a shared experience (GUIMARÃES, 2010, 2011).

Slowly, several theoretical and empirical research have been favoring the understanding about the act of *taking care of* and of *being taken care of* as something inherent to human relationships in the daily routines of education institutions (BORGES; SCRAMINGNON; CASTRO, 2016). The research that has given origin to the current study is introduced below, it is in compliance with the herein addressed approach.

The act of *taking care of* as ethics: the carried out research

The speech about the act of *taking care of* observed in legal documents is translated into practices, acts and standards within education institutions marked by the concept of child that draws how adults see children and how they deal with them. Based on the dialectic and dialogic moves observed in social relationships, the practices nurture and guide the theoretical concepts. However, the observation over interactions between adults

and children in education institutions often shine light on a context of reckless caregiving and limited dialogue that compromises the bonds and quality of relationships.

The aim of the present research was to get to know and to problematize the quality of the relationship set between children and adults in school environment – the marks left by the act of *taking care of* and of *being taken care of*. The investigation focused on the positive practices of *taking care of*, which were identified based on familiarity criteria, i.e., based on indications or suggestions made by professionals in this field. Interactions were observed in six municipal public institutions (two daycare centers; two pre-schools, two elementary schools) that provide from Child Education to Elementary School. Participants in the research were defined based on observations: professionals and family members have told stories in one-on-one and group interviews; children were heard in literature workshops.

The main criteria adopted to select the institutions were the indication of good practices, familiarity and the interest of professionals working in the selected institutions to participate in the research. Good practices were herein understood as the ones that – in daycare centers, pre-schools and elementary schools – put children in the very center of education actions and that work based on the cultural broadening perspective. However, when it comes to the familiarity criterion, it was necessary combining it to another reference, namely: IDEB⁴. Schools recording minimum index up to 7 and located in places of viable access – we took into consideration access, distance and safety – were selected for the research, since researchers needed to go to the selected institutions throughout the research time. After visiting 10 institutions, six were selected and became the very focus of the research; all of them were public municipal education facilities.

The act of hearing is the core factor to get to know participants' life stories, which allowed establishing the following specific objectives: (1) identifying the life stories of children and adults; (2) getting to know the daily interactions, and social and cultural practices emerging from the narratives of children, families and teachers' stories; and (3) drawing the approximation and distancing aspects among children, family members and teachers' narratives.

The research also aimed at collaborating to construct a critical sight over the concepts of *taking care of* others, and of oneself, as well as of relationships emerging from it, in Child Education and in Elementary School, mainly when it comes to adults' accountable for children in education institutions and in family environment. The research was an attempt to provide subsidies for public policies committed to the quality of relationships established between adults and children in education institutions, as well as to collaborate to the professional qualification of those who work with babies and children – a fact that connects all participants to the debate about the *Statute of Child and Adolescent*.

The concept of *taking care of* was herein built based on its multiple dimensions and on its approximation to the concept of dialogue suggested by Buber (1977, 2001, 2009) in his search for a sight capable of acknowledging, accepting and understanding the other, as well as of finding presence, encounter and reciprocity.

4- Basic Education Development Index, which was created in 2007 by Anísio Teixeira National Institute in Studies and Research on Education (Inep); it was elaborated to measure the quality of national learning and to set the targets for teaching improvements. Available at <http://portal.mec.gov.br/>

According to Buber (2009), the dialogue can be authentic, technical or a monologue disguised into dialogue, within the relationship with the other. People engaged to an authentic dialogue make themselves present; there is interaction with hearing the other, rather than talking nonstop. Participants are engaged to one another; they look at each other. On the other hand, the technical dialogue is “driven by the need of understanding the object” (BUBER, 2009, p. 54); participants keep the conversation in order to have an objective explanation about something. However, in the monologue disguised into dialogue, the other is not taken into consideration, the other is not acknowledged and his/her presence makes no difference, the other is “a ghost without a face” (BUBER, 2009, p. 54).

Accordingly, and based on the forms of dialogue introduced by Buber (2009), the act of *taking care of* was weighed through the dialogue bias and, consequently, based on situations observed in teachers’ practices– and of other professionals in the education field – and on the stories told by them. Research categories were listed and defined as follows: (1) *authentic care*, herein understood as interest in the other – responsivity, rather than indifference; (ii) *technical care*, willing to inform, teach, convince somebody or, simply, to transmit a message; (iii) *reckless care*, when the other is not taken into consideration, the other is not acknowledged and his/her presence is indifferent; and (iv) *recklessness disguised into care*, when the attitude seems like caregiving, but it actually hides indifference towards the other.

Some categories emerging from the interviews with teachers, family members and with the children have contributed to the discussion about *to be taken care of* as right, based on concepts expressed in the narratives of these different subjects.

Adults and children in the current research were put in the middle of the scene. In total, 34 interviews were conducted: 20 interviews with teachers; 8, with family members (grandparents, mothers and godmothers) and 6 workshops performed with children who attend Child Education and with children in the early years of Elementary School. The amplification of the family network was introduced based on children’s view; they highlighted the importance of grandmothers and godmothers during the interviews; they talked about the care they are provided with, and it pointed out the female presence in care provided to children. The female universe stands out in the actions of *taking care of* in the lives of children who attend the assessed institutions, either at school or in family environment. In order to meet the aims of the current study, we assessed the interviews conducted with four teachers, four families (three mothers and one grandmother) and with seven children.

The workshops with the children have adopted the literature as invitation for the dialogue. The option made for child literature books aimed at favoring the unit of methodological strategies adopted by several fields, since each institution presented different *caregiving* relationships. Based on such a choice, the act of *taking care of* was not just the topic of the research, but the methodological choice: literature and art have sensitized and opened the possibility for paths shared by researchers and children. It has

opened room for the gathering between subjects in the research and the space for an authentic dialogue⁵.

The items below give some visibility to what we have heard from teachers, family members and from children who attend school in the six assessed institutions. It is important noticing that the referred numbers are fictitious; after each testimony, it is shown whether it is a teacher, a family member or a child, and whether this person is bonded to a daycare center (D), pre-school (PS) or elementary school (S).

What do adults and children say?

By taking into account that the narrative is not punctual nor linear, and that recalling is also the art of “telling again”, it is possible saying that the interviews were based on a conversation-style. They focused on building and rebuilding meanings, rather than on addressing questions aimed at having precise answers for straight questions. Either in the interviews with the children or adults, the ethical issue stood out. The interviews brought along memories about situations that have demanded respect and the attitude of researchers to be coherent with the aims and references of the study. It is important having in mind that the research encompasses situations related to the act of *taking care of* and *to be taken care of*, as well as to respect to interviewees’ singularities, as well as to children and adults’ narratives.

The theoretical-methodological reference is based on Buber and on the concepts of bond, trust and presence (*to take care of* and *to be taken care of*). Life stories were the methodological option, which is a traditional approach in research in the sociological field and in research in education focused on the production of knowledge that does not dichotomize personal and professional life, subject and object, and daily routines and history.

What do teachers’ say?

Interviews with, and observations over, professionals were organized into categories: authentic care (subcategory *to take care of oneself* and *to take care of as a function*); *technical care*; *reckless care*; *recklessness disguised into caregiving*.

Authentic care was expressed as *to take care of oneself* and as *to take care of as a function*.

To take care of oneself emerged as related to different aspects.

Oh, I think I take care of myself, I allow myself to eat something tasty (laughter), [...] when I have some time free to myself, to sometimes sleep late, when I want to stay home doing nothing. I think that it means taking care of myself [...] when I go to the beauty salon. We take care of ourselves in different ways. There are stricter ways to do it, borer [...] such as eating habits. Sometimes, I don’t want to eat properly, but I know that this is good for me. When I’m stressed

5- All methodological strategies strictly followed the ethical procedures established for scientific research. Subjects and institutions’ anonymity was ensured.

and I eat a chocolate candy, it also means taking care of myself. (Naiara, D teacher, Interview, Nov. 2017).

The teacher associates criteria that determine whether someone is taking care of oneself, and suggests that the act of *taking care of* does not always mean doing the right thing, but taking actions that promote well-being, fulfil a personal need (satisfy a desire, self-esteem) or that are bond to spirituality, as mentioned by another teacher.

I practice martial arts that accelerate and stop, and there is another one that, Tai Chi, calms me down, you know... and the spirituality. I think that the way I have adopted to develop my spirituality ends up qualifying me as a person and contributes a lot in this sense to see the other from a certain way, from a certain place. (Tomás, PS teacher, Interview, Aug. 2017).

A question is addressed in here: Is it necessary to be well with oneself in order to take care of others? Both testimonies recall Buber (2011, p.38), when he says: “starting with oneself, but not ending with oneself: from oneself, but not having oneself as the end in itself”. This statement points towards a movement, to an engagement whose fate is not clear. Accordingly, it is necessary reaching self-contemplation, awareness, and thinking about the “self”. It is important looking at oneself, finding oneself its own way, cultivate loneliness, but does not finish with oneself, rather than that, keep the relationship with the other, with the community. The condition to engage to the dialogue means finding oneself, but the oneself is in relationships.

Such a *taking care of oneself* opens itself to another subcategory, namely: *the act of taking care of as hearing to others*, which is the starting point of self-giving, wholeness and reciprocity, as it can be seen in the testimony below, that addresses hearing and welcoming.

Today I gave a child a bath. There are children who want to tell about the mother, the aunt, who went to the party, at the time I am here trying to rush a bit with time. But at the same time, I have to respect it, the child is requesting for that moment; because during the bath you have a series of wonderful things. (Rosa, D teacher, Interview, Nov. 2017).

Therefore, the act of *taking care of* is an exercise of welcoming others in their needs and possibilities; it is found in daily life routines in which the interest for the other overcomes the futility of the moment and opens room for relationships to be established. By talking about time, children are one’s opportunity to give its best; a teacher says: “Giving the best of oneself, paying attention to the other, seeing how you can somehow improve a skill of that child in the moment you are with her/him, you have a moment, a very short period-of-time with her/him”. (Antônia. S teacher, Interview, Oct/2017).

The process of listening to the teachers has also pointed out that the act of *taking care of as a function*, in terms of presence, is typical of professional-activity performance in a responsible and responsive way. *Authentic care* does not exclude the *technical care*, but rather amplifies it, since it is seen as part of teachers’ *competence*, it is a knowledge to be built by the teacher and with the children. *Technical care* is part of the *authentic*

care when it is understood as *competence* of the teacher. The following narrative points out the self-knowledge necessary to accomplish professional practices with children, by respecting their singularity.

Let's assume: it is happening there, chaos came visiting us, so, it rose voice. From the time there was the impact, then here comes the care. Because it is never a change in my mood. I cannot feel angry or proud, or anything [...] The child comes and starts measuring forces with me; if I am taken by anything similar to anger, if I start feeling like the child, it does not make sense for me to hear as a teacher. (Tomás, PS teacher, Interview, Aug. 2017).

The teacher refers to emotions he feels in daily routines with children. He acknowledges the feelings that take him day-after-day, he makes them legitimate, but he also reports that he cannot be impulsive and let himself be driven by it. He mentions that scenes like this one are common and that adults have to control their impulses and to act from the adult's position, from the Teacher's position. Losing the mind is not part of teachers' *competence*. Losing the mind means being in a different place. Resistance emerges in the act of *taking care of as a function*, of *taking care of as an act*. I think and do, I act. According to Buber (1977, p. 56), relationship is "word as act with the establishing within the being".

I cannot experience or describe the way it comes to me. I can only up-date it. [...] and to be subjected to the objectivity criterion, the form is not really "there"; however, what is more present than it? I am in an authentic relationship with it; because it acts in me as I act in it. (BUBER, 1977, p. 56).

The word "act" brings along an implication over the other; however, it is expressed as the accountability for life, as highlighted by Pena (2019). *Taking care of* demands attention to the other. This move means being present, means seeing the other before you; it is the education act committed to the other and it contributes to human formation.

What do family members say?

The act of taking care of, more than the basic, such as just taking to school, just giving a bath, just feeding, and just taking care of material things. Taking care of is more than that, it is tenderness and attention. Children need attention and care, more presence than presents. (Ana, PS mother, Interview. Sept. 2018)

The act of *taking care of* as presence. In his words, "it is more necessary presence than presents". The act of *taking care of*, which does not concern only material things, such as bath, food, but providing attention and tenderness. The act of *taking care of* as something bond to human relationships, to acknowledging the other's humanity, the oneself humanity in the other and the need for the other.

The act of *taking care of* as an ethical action on a daily basis; as respect to the space of the other. The act of *taking care of* as non-invasiveness over the space of the other; such as attention given to the time of the other, as reciprocity. The act of *taking care of* as a way of being, standing and acting in the world. The act of *taking care of* meaning presence, a way of looking, a place for sensitiveness. The act of *taking care of* within an act of affection, such as a place to exist in, as encounter.

It is essential having a network of support for presence to be possible and to resist to demands of daily routines that are linked to accomplishing tasks and to surveillance over children. How is it possible combining adults' need to work, to so many tasks in and outside the house - which demand time - and to the care given to children?

Nowadays [...] I leave her at school at 07:30 am, I go to work and come back at 08:00. But if I don't do it...As you said, each story is a story. If I don't do it, I cannot do other things for her [...]. *This care must be shared with other people.* Even with the older one, who takes to the English class. The day, for example, when she stays for review lessons in the afternoon. Sometimes, the school calls and tells me to go pick her up because there will be no review lesson. We say "Joana, for God sake, go to the school". Then, nowadays, caregiving in the house is a responsibility of all. (Iara, S mother. Interview. Oct. 2018, emphasis added).

Family support is mentioned in many testimonies. Father, grandfather, uncle, godmother, siblings... How many can count on such a proximity these days? Challenges mobilize strategies and resource; however, the geographic distance is not a barrier. "There was always someone around", says Daniele. And she goes on:

It is just as I have said, family has good relationship. We are three women, then, *all children being born we embrace*, my son is not just mine, he is mine and my sisters'. (Daniele, PS mother. Interview. Sept. 2018; Emphasis added).

As an alternative to fulfil the needs of *technical care*, the family support network implies trust, relationships of belonging, must approximate generations within the family, and extrapolate the *technical* factor. Grandmothers in the mainstream.

What I think, well, it is important that him, the grandchild, keep on recalling "Grandma, there is a meeting for you at the school", as he sees that I treat him and take care of him. This week, he did something really cute, I underwent a surgery and I could not do things. He told me yesterday: "Grandma, let me serve my own food and you stay right there; do not do anything, I will take care of you". Since I came back from the hospital, he is taking care of me. That is it. The return. When the mother cannot help with his homework, he goes there, I teach him. (Marisa, S grandmother. Interview. Oct. 2018).

Grandmothers were interviewed due to children's suggestions. Narratives by grandmothers and grandchildren highlight that, such an inter-generation care is based on self-giving, protection, presence and wholeness. The caregiving act that leads to

acknowledging the other reinforces bond through the need of the family support network. Not all children have living grandparents, or grandparents living close to them, but such a caregiving is addressed as special by the interviewees.

What do children say?

Listening to the children, trying to understand their narratives, actions and ways of understanding the world was a theoretical practice, policy and pedagogy of the years, which have resulted in the approval of the *Statute*. This respect and acknowledgement have been pursued in the research, in policies and in practices since its approval, as shown in other studies by Delgado; Muller (2005), Cruz (2008), Sarmiento and Gouveia (2008), Abramowicz and Henriques (2018), Nunes and Corsino (2019), among several others that were developed in Brazil. This issue was also one of the core concerns in the present investigation.

Testimonies of children have pointed towards the need of creating – finding, assuming, or (re)defining – categories beyond those that have emerged during the interviews with the adults, teachers and family members. The current study was carried out through a dialogue with the theoretical references, since what children understand as caregiving is sometimes close to concepts addressed by the adults, or sometimes refers to childhood experiences linked to recreation, to the reinterpretation of the world and to referring to the culture of the pairs (CORSARO, 2011).

The initial analysis of categories associating the relationships of children with the act of *taking care of*, which was set through topics that have emerged from the theoretical study and from interviews with the adults. An example of it is “carefulness” in the relationship between children and adults; caregiving by adults to children. The act of *taking care of* oneself, care provided among children (relationship among siblings, the provided care and playing, caregiving itself and friendship).

However, more intriguing ways have emerged in this field: children in the first grade of Elementary school in a given institution, have pointed out one teacher as the one who provided care to them – children gave visibility to this teacher and have told what they understand as caregiving. In another situation, researchers have identified the kitchen servants as the people presenting the most careful attitudes. However, the main pathway lied on defining categories based on interviews with children from each institution.

The option made for the literature workshops was the way to gather the methodological strategies during the field work. Institutions have different *caregiving* relationships between children and objects (toys, materials), between children and adults (cookers, teachers, family members). The literature has mediated the interactions between researchers and children, and it made it possible observing and listening about the *caregiving* relationships in the testimonies of children, their bond to adults and their way of picturing the act of *taking care of* as protection, presence and subtlety.

The researcher has asked the children whether they take care of someone: “Marta – I take care of my grandmother. Sometimes, when she puts the toys in the wrong box, I take them out” (S student, Workshop. Jul. 2018).

In this excerpt, the child talks about *caregiving* as attention and expresses her *care* over adults. She does not point out the grandmother's mistake, but embraces her mistake: the grandmother, in her way of speaking, put the toys in the wrong box, because the grandmother does not know what is the right one, because she was unaware of it.

Children in the 5th grade, in one of the Elementary School institutions, chat and talk, besides pointing out "attention" and "caregiving" as tenderness:

Andreia: *taking care of* means providing tenderness, attention, love, reading the child's agenda every day, talking about how was the child's day at school, look in the child's school case, help the child with the homework.

Bruna: I think that the mother must act right and cannot do wrong things, mothers shall not yell at their kids. My mother is not like that. She helps me, gives me affection...

Camila: Cooking to the kids is a way of *taking care of*. Cooking dinner to the kids, as soon as she comes from work. (S child, Workshop. Aug. 2017).

Children also report the adults, and by doing so, they show that, although they are older children, they wish affection from them. It regards affection translated into actions such as checking in school cases, reading stories, hanging around with them. They also say that it does not happen to them, they talk about what they miss or what the friends are missing. Therefore, children talk about the other place, they reproduce the talks of adults, based on what they understand of it. Would the testimonies of the children point out kids' invisibility to parents?

There are situations where children talk about the act of *taking care of as teachers' competence*.

Researcher: how do you think the child can feel like being *taken care of* by someone?

Daniel: When the teacher does not erase the homework from the blackboard. (S Child, Workshop. Aug. 2017).

At this point, the act of *taking care of* lies on something simple in school routines, although it is quite important to the referred child. This way of seeing things allows addressing the perspective of caregiving and education that, according to Buber (2009), accounts for fulfilling the needs of the other and aims at well-being and happiness. The only way to achieve accountability lies on giving real answers to daily events, as says Buber (2009), which, in this case, seems to be important for children.

Children have talked about the grandmothers as people who provide care, and grandmothers, in their turn, have reported to take care of the children. However, the figure of the father was also addressed.

Ana Júlia – My father is cool because he is funny. He always does funny things. He always plays with us.

Researcher – And do you think that playing is a way to take care of?

Ana Júlia – Yes, and my father takes care of me.

Sofia – My father, all the time he goes to the mall, he takes us along.

Researcher – And is your father taking care of you when he takes you to the mall?
Sofia – No. He is always looking at me, so no one can kidnap me, no evil person. (S Child, Workshop. Aug. 2018).

Based on children's opinion, the act of *taking care of* as playing, once more, shows the power of adults' presence. Although they do not understand what really happens when they are caught by "bad people", children seem to identify that the act of playing means *taking care of* – since it is bond to needs of children – rather than adults' concern with surveillance, which, based on the references adopted for the research, highlight child safety as adults' accountability towards children.

Yet, some reflections

The time for action - be it time for research, policies or practices – is different than the time for writing. The complex context that has encouraged the production of the current text got even worse. At the time to finish the text, it is still impossible to truly predict the scenario where the readings will take place, or even to draw likely losses with health, lives, job positions and wage, projects and rights. However, these losses will be deep and severe. Economic and political conditions in the country reinforce the institutional risk to democracy.

In order to face such a risk, there are fundamental instruments, for instance, the conquests of the macro-dimension, such as the *1988 Constitution, the Statute of Child and Adolescent*, public policies focused on social justice against inequalities, exclusion, prejudice; however, there are the daily conquests of the micro-dimension, which are expressed in reports on experiences, practices and life stories. In all cases, the research plays the central role of highlighting gains, needs, deviations and distortions.

The *Statute of Child and Adolescent* (BRASIL, 1990) took children and adolescents to the universe of human rights, which has contributed to the concept of citizen child. Thirty years after SCA, at times – due to political reasons – when conquests are at risk, it is essential taking care of childhood itself.

Population inequality gets worse due to lack of access to social equipment aimed at ensuring public health, education and culture. Children and adolescents, given their vulnerability, still suffer a lot with domestic violence, which is a reality in all social classes, mainly for poor children, since it is generated by the cruel face that neglects human dignity.

Nowadays, it is more than necessary caring for the safety of SCA. We have been reading and watching the pronouncements by education councils in Brazilian municipalities. These councils are influenced by groups that have private interests in the political game; therefore, they end up inducing the offer of pedagogical activities and/or the remote development of contents to daycare centers and pre-school, while society is subjected to social isolation. The National Education Council itself has launched, on April 17, 2020, a public hearing on the reorganization of the school calendar and on the conduction of distance pedagogical activities during the pandemic, so that it would

be possible suggesting the offer of Child Education in the distance learning modality. The propositions express the challenge of breaking with an instrumental perspective, according to which, the act of *taking care of* completes the continuous education in course, to the detriment of the legislation and of studies developed to reinforce opinions in opposition to it.

Once more, the social movement has been important to reinforce the conquests and to show that schools are a public equipment; therefore, the social role of supporting the different forms of family, to respect the differences and private life. Life cannot value less, neither the ethical nor human perspective, although they can lose room for knowledge that is not much open to human formation.

The *Inter-Forum Movement of Child Education in Brazil* was launched to advocate that when school calendar is not assured, and that the annual calendar for babies and children in daycare centers and in pre-school cannot bring more losses than those already caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. It takes into account the social function attributed to child education by LDB 9.394/96, which was ratified by the standards of CNE itself. CNE addresses daycare centers and pre-schools as non-domestic collective spaces –; according to it, experiences lived in child education institutions are, somehow, different from those experienced in family environment. It is important recalling that we also have children in Elementary School and that they need *to be taken care of*, welcomed and protected from the current pandemic, given the fact they can be overloaded of school assignments and exposed to long periods-of-time in front of the computer screen or excluded from education due to lack of accessibility to technology.

Accordingly, two topics remain open for reflection; besides, they are challenge for action: the centrality of caregiving within the human sphere and the urgency of mobilization, at the present time. The act of *taking care of* – oneself, of others and of all – mainly of children – is a matter of survival. This is the aspect emerging from the current research. Ethics at caregiving is mandatory for our human sphere – our humanity – not to be destroyed. It means the presence of the adult, reciprocity, bond and encounter.

Mobilization – of people, groups, public and private instances, institutions collectives, unions, associations, organizations, social movements – is needed, so that such an ethics at caregiving becomes a fact, rather than just an intention.

The act of *taking care of* and mobilization are up-to-date factors, because they must take strong actions.

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