ARTICLE

Affective relationships, gesturality, and musicality:
children's ludic cultures in pre-school education

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ABSTRACT

This article results from an ethnographic investigation that, based on contributions from the social studies of childhood, aimed to research the production of ludic cultures by pre-school children in early childhood education. Methodologically, we used the strategies of observation, written and photographic records, and conversation circles with children. Based on the analyses, the gestures, affective relationships, and musicalities expressed by the children were mapped as analytical units that illustrate the production of ludic cultures in everyday situations that are not necessarily linked to playing. Through the research, we could infer that ludic cultures relate to the children's sensitivity in recognizing playful experiences, including aspects that escape their cultural references, when they find themselves emotionally involved in situations not yet experienced in the various environments of which they are part.

KEYWORDS

early childhood education; ludic cultures; pre-school.

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RELAÇÕES AFETIVAS, GESTUALIDADES E MUSICALIDADES:CULTURAS LÚDICAS INFANTIS NA PRÉ-ESCOLA

RESUMO

O artigo é decorrente de uma investigação etnográfica que, fundamentada nas contribuições dos estudos sociais da infância, teve como objetivo pesquisar a produção de culturas lúdicas infantis por crianças pré-escolares na educação infantil. Metodologicamente, foram utilizados como estratégias a observação, os registros escritos e fotográficos e as rodas de conversa com as crianças. Com base nas análises, mapearam-se as gestualidades, as relações afetivas e as musicalidades expressas pelas crianças como unidades analíticas que ilustram a produção das culturas lúdicas em situações cotidianas que não se encontram vinculadas necessariamente às brincadeiras. Por meio da pesquisa, foi possível inferir que as culturas lúdicas dizem respeito à sensibilidade das crianças em reconhecer experiências lúdicas, também naquilo que escapa às suas referências culturais, ao se perceberem envolvidas afetivamente em situações ainda não experimentadas nos diversos ambientes dos quais fazem parte.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE
educação infantil; culturas lúdicas; pré-escola.

RELACIONES AFECTIVAS, GESTUALIDADES Y MUSICALIDADES: CULTURAS LÚDICAS INFANTILES EN LA EDUCACIÓN PREESCOLAR

RESUMEN

El artículo se deriva de una investigación etnográfica que, a partir de las contribuciones de los estudios sociales de la infancia, objetivó investigar la producción de culturas lúdicas por niños en la educación infantil. Metodológicamente se utilizaron, la observación, los registros escritos, fotográficos y las ruedas de conversación con los niños. Con base en los análisis, se mapearon las gestualidades, las relaciones afectivas y las musicalidades expresadas por los niños como unidades analíticas que ilustran la producción de las culturas lúdicas en situaciones cotidianas que no se encuentran necesariamente asociadas a los juegos. A través de la investigación, se pudo inferir que las culturas lúdicas corresponden a la sensibilidad de los niños en reconocer experiencias lúdicas, incluso en lo que escapa a sus referencias culturales, cuando se perciben involucrados afectivamente en situaciones todavía no experimentadas en los varios ambientes de los cuales forman parte.

PALABRAS CLAVE
educación infantil; culturas lúdicas; educación preescolar.

INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ludic cultures have been conventionally defined as "a complex and hierarchized structure, composed of known games, playful practices, and individual, traditional, universal, and generational forms of play" (Brougère, 2010, p. 53-54), or even as a set of "procedures" or schemes that allow children to engage in a play or game, making playing possible (Brougère, 1998, 2010). In the scope of this discussion, "this culture includes an environment made of objects and particularly of toys" (Brougère, 2010, p. 54) that allow children to play.

By being related to games and plays, ludic culture, as a cultural manifestation, has been considered a *singular mode of expression of children* (Salgado, 2005), in which games and plays become potential constitutive elements of this culture. Thus, we understand that play:

- is "the association between action and fiction" (Brougère, 2010, p. 14);
- is "a way for children to live the culture that surrounds them" (Brougère, 2010, p. 62), based on "an active involvement while playing" (Garvey, 2015);
- makes it possible for children to perform "actions that represent the interactions, feelings, and knowledge found in the society to which they belong" (Wajskop, 2012, p. 40);
- "involves negotiations, mistakes, friendships, and conflicts" (Fians, 2015, p. 59).

As Brougère recalls (2010, p. 106), play "is a space at the margin of common life that obeys the rules created by circumstances".

From this perspective, the "nature of the play activity has been understood as a space of cultural production of childhood due to the opportunity that the child has to, through play, experiment, reproduce, and recreate reality and its rules" (Arenhart, 2016, p. 147) based on interactions established in the play. Ratifying this argument, Grigorowitschs (2011, p. 78) affirms that "the processes of socialization in childhood, from a sociological perspective, rest on the fact that children participate in a series of modalities of social interactions"[1].

On the other hand, the modalities of social interactions experienced in childhood are not restricted to those produced by children when they play games with their peers, which according to Brougère (2010), are the privileged vectors of production of ludic cultures. In addition to play-based social interactions, children also develop "interactions within the school institution (among children, between children, teachers, and other employees) and within family

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1   The group of interactions established by children in the daily life of the institution constitutes social relations (Buss-Simão, 2012). From this perspective, processes of socialization occur through "a compendium of interactions among human beings, in which they actively participate and thus become members of a certain society and culture" (Grigorowitschs, 2011, p. 77).

life (with parents, siblings, cousins, grandparents, etc.)" (Grigorowitschs, 2011, p. 79), which, in our understanding, equally produce ludic cultures.

Thus, based on the argument that "ludic culture is not restricted to children's play and the toys with which they play" (Salgado, 2005, p. 3), we conducted an ethnographic investigation with pre-school children grounded in the contributions of the social studies of childhood (Corsaro, 2002; Ferreira, 2004; Grigorowitschs, 2011; Fians, 2015; Arenhart, 2016; Agostinho, 2019). We believe that, to understand the theme of "ludic culture" beyond its conceptual definition of a "complex and hierarchized structure, composed of known and available games" (Brougère, 2010, p. 53), as generally discussed in studies on early childhood education, we must observe the *logics of social action* (Buss-Simão, 2012; Agostinho, 2019) employed by children.

In this sense, the objective of the study that we share in this article was to investigate the processes of production of children's ludic cultures in social interactions established by them in daily situations of early childhood education that are not necessarily linked to play. Thus, based on an ethical-methodological perspective (Farrell, 2005; Alderson and Morrow, 2011), we carried out *an ethnographic–inspired investigation* (Graue and Walsh, 2003; Vasconcelos, 2016) with a group of 19 5-year-old children from low-income families, who attended pre-school at an institution of early childhood education associated with the municipal school network of Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.

The methodology used to generate research data involved six consecutive months of full-time fieldwork; observations of the children's social interactions; in-depth descriptions of these observations; proposals for situations in which the children could produce drawings and photographic records; as well as the promotion of discussion circles with the investigation participants. The study was based on observation, listening, and above all, respect for the singularities of the children (Vasconcelos, 2016). Moreover, the investigation rested on the understanding that children are "active and creative social agents" (Corsaro, 2011, p. 15) and, therefore, "they should be treated as children, but in a way that adults do not usually treat them" (Graue and Walsh, 2003, p. 78), that is, with attention, warmth, and accessibility.

Regarding the ethical aspects (Alderson and Morrow, 2011) that permeated the research process, we highlight that, at first, a prior exposition of the objectives of the study was made to school administrators and teachers of the institution of early childhood education that we defined as the locus of the fieldwork. With the approval of the administrators and teachers at the institution, at a second moment, a meeting was held with parents or guardians of children attending the pre-school class. In this meeting, the research stages were presented, and the parents/guardians signed the Informed Consent Form, authorizing the children's participation. In addition, before beginning the fieldwork, the research intentions were shared with the children, allowing them to agree (or not) to participate by signing an Assent Form (by making a drawing). This process reflects the fact that the presentation of participatory

research requires sensibility from the researcher to "learn to see, hear, speak, think, and act" (Vasconcelos, 2016, p. 57) respectfully toward all those involved.

In keeping with the above discussion, we should underline that the systematic observation of children's interactions in the institution of early childhood education, through *peripheral participation* (Corsaro, 2002), allowed us to construct the argument that children's ludic cultures are also produced from a myriad of *social and affective relations* (Ferreira, 2004; Fians, 2015) established by them in daily life. Based on data analysis, we mapped regularities that comprise ludic cultures. These regularities were present in the ways that children socially shared certain cultural references among their peers during the daily routine in pre-school. After reading the field diaries, we defined *gesturalities*, *affective relations*, and *musicalities* as units of analysis that (in a certain way) illustrate the children's production of ludic cultures in situations of daily life that are not directly linked to play.

Through the study, we came to understand children's ludic cultures as a process of social relations that involves the children's capacity of both appropriating and sharing ludic culture references and recognizing play experiences beyond their own references. Therefore, we defend that ludic cultures concern a certain sensibility of children in recognizing ludic experiences also in what escapes their own cultural references, by perceiving their affective involvement in situations not yet experienced in the various environments of which they are part. This scenario derives from the fact that we conceive ludic (Rivero, 2011) as an experience constituted by a set of emotions and feelings, such as joy, satisfaction, contentment, and pleasure, which uses fun to, for example, allow children to affectively shift to a position in which they can enjoy these gesturalities, affective relations, and musicalities.

This article is organized into six sections. After this introductory section, the second section discusses the concepts of culture, ludic, and children's ludic cultures. The third section addresses how children, through *gesturalities*, playfully interact with their peers. The fourth section presents the circumstances and intentions that involve children in their *affective relations*, making ludic experiences possible for them. The fifth section shares the *musicalities* of children and their relations with ludic experiences. Lastly, the sixth section presents the final considerations.

ABOUT THE CONCEPTS OF CULTURE, LUDIC, AND CHILDREN'S LUDIC CULTURES

Addressing ludic cultures necessarily involves discussing the conceptual understanding of culture and particularly of ludic. Thus, we present these concepts and their implication for the discussion about children's ludic cultures. We highlight that studies with children in the field of social studies of childhood, by problematizing the perspective that sees *society as an entity* (Pires, 2010; Corsaro, 2011), have corroborated the defense that children are not *indices of*

the adult world (Pires, 2010) but active agents in the processes of socialization and cultural production (Corsaro, 2002, 2011). In other words, children have been regarded "not only as beings determined by cultures but also as productive agents of culture" (Barbosa, 2014, p. 650). Ratifying this argument, Pires (2010, p. 148) affirms we should consider that: "1) cultural learning is not restricted to a single age; 2) children learn from as well as teach their peers and adults; 3) learning does not take place only by conscious and rational means".

From this perspective, the concept of culture supporting these discussions and used in our investigation defines that "culture is not solely that which we live, but also to a large degree, that for which we live" (Eagleton, 2005, p. 184). This conceptualization reinforces that culture, as a *process of human development* (Du Gay *et al.*, 1997), allows subjects access to "shared frameworks or 'maps' of meaning which we use to place and understand things, to 'make sense' of the world" (Du Gay *et al.*, 1997, p. 6). As a result, we can argue that culture, as a "constitutive condition of social life" (Hall, 1997, p. 9), is a producer of a field of references that can preserve certain modes of social relations, innovate thinking, and also resignify the subject positions occupied by people. In fact, cultural practices, by "penetrating each corner of contemporary social life" (Hall, 1997, p. 5), mediate the social relations of subjects with a variety of images that produce references, which constitute their ways of being, living, and relating to others and themselves. Thus, we reaffirm that children "elaborate meanings for the world and their experiences, fully sharing a culture" (Cohn, 2005, p. 35).

In this context, culture "is conceived mainly based on local practices, daily knowledge, incorporated knowledge, or even an ethnography of the minuscule" (Barbosa, 2014, p. 661). As Pires clarified (2010, p. 148), "culture does not rest statically in the heads of adults, waiting to be sent passively to the heads of children". Culture is dynamic and "is not located anywhere but can be studied in the relations between people" (Pires, 2010, p. 152). In sum, "if culture is understood as an invention of daily life, it is certainly possible to confirm the participation of children in the cultural construction of the world" (Barbosa, 2014, p. 164).

However, we must always remember that children have only a "relative cultural autonomy compared to adults" (Cohn, 2005, p. 35). This argument results from the fact that "the meanings that [children] elaborate [about the world] are based on a symbolic system shared with adults" (Cohn, 2005, p. 35). For example, upon discussing children's ludic cultures, we are in any way "affirming the particularity of childhood experience, at the cost of a split between adult and child world" (Cohn, 2005, p. 35). As Pires affirms (2010, p. 152), we understand that "children recreate the world based on the world presented to them, a world of adults", that is, we are aware that children "are agents of change, but also of continuity" (Pires, 2010, p. 152).

After presenting the concept of culture and warning about what it tells us regarding children's cultural production, we will now discuss the concept of ludic (Rivero, 2011; Massa, 2015) and the ways that it is manifest in the realm of early childhood education. To this end, we conceptually define ludic as one

type, among many, of experience, constituted by a set of emotions and feelings, such as joy, satisfaction, and pleasure. From this point of view, we consider the existence of a constant dialog between ludic and its context, which allows children, through fun, to affectively shift to a position in which they can enjoy emotions and feelings, as indicated by Rivero (2011).

On the other hand, we oppose the use of the term "ludic" as an adjective in an *a priori* manner — as it has been regularly used in early childhood education — to, for instance, identify a specific type of object or action — "ludic game", "ludic sequence", "ludic action", "ludic activity". This opposition is because such use of the term is based on the premise that play, the sequence of activities, etc. are inseparably related to a supposed "ludic culture" for being considered naturally ludic.

In this context, we reaffirm that ludic cannot be predefined (Rivero, 2011), as it depends on the experiences of children, grounded in a set of cultural references appropriated by them in certain situations of their lives. As a result, we maintain that no guarantees can be offered that a plan, proposal, or space thought to be ludic attains its objective by the simple desire of those who have such expectations. Obviously, we are not stating that no planning should be done in early childhood education or that opportunities should not be given to proposals that teachers consider pleasurable, fun, and productive for children. In fact, we want to call attention to the excessive and naturalized use of the concept of ludic in the pedagogical vocabulary (Massa, 2015). Like Rivero (2011), we believe that ludic is not exclusively linked to play and depends on the perspective of those who live and experience it.

For example, as we could observe in the study, children may consider ordinary daily situations as ludic events in their lives, including greetings, dialogs, sharing secrets, or even moments of rest, meals, rehearsals for an end of year party, field trips. For this reason, even if we can count on the same space (the classroom), objects (available materials and furniture), and children (classmates), we would be mistaken in thinking that this context guarantees, *a priori*, the emergence of a ludic environment[2]. From this perspective, we understand that the discursive inflation of the concept of ludic in early childhood education occurs perhaps by a certain expectation of teachers that, by implementing a certain proposal or interacting with a certain object supposedly considered "ludic", children will enjoy some type of ludic experience.

Thus we suppose that many teachers who use the term ludic as an adjective — in the context of early childhood education — do so not by conducting some type of future prognosis, but, in contrast, by addressing the past, something already experienced by them, and that, to a certain extent, brought satisfaction to the children. In this case, past ludic experiences are in some way evoked, "invited" to return to the scene once again to confirm or legitimate some

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2   An inseparable set of elements that permeate children's social relations.

intentionality proposed by the teachers in the present. This movement uses a field of cultural references shared by teachers.

Given this logic, we can deduce that there is an attempt to conform and confirm a ludic aspect to certain actions of children — as in the case of "ludic activity" — as if teachers had the ability to anticipate the sensations that children would experience. Therefore, we believe that an understanding of the concept of ludic should be urgently developed beyond pre-determined adjectives since we can only affirm that a certain experience is ludic based on meanings attributed by the children in the present.

Considering the argument that children actively participate in the process of cultural production (Corsaro, 2002; Pires, 2010; Grigorowitschs, 2011) and that ludic is constituted by meanings attributed by them, we understand it is important to expand the concept of children's ludic cultures. Firstly, like Brougère (1998, p. 110), we believe that "ludic culture, like all culture, is a product of social interaction". In addition, ludic culture produced by children is not "isolated from general culture, given that this influence is multiform and begins with the environment, the conditions, and materials" (Brougère, 1998, p. 111). We also agree with the premise that we should be careful so that the ludic culture "is not established as a substance since it only exists potentially, that is, virtually" (Brougère, 1998, p. 112). Moreover, we emphasize that Brougère (1998, p. 112) defines ludic culture as "the set of elements that a child uses at play" or as "the set of procedures that make play possible" (Brougère, 1998, p. 107).

As we can see, according to Brougère (1998, p. 25), ludic cultures are accurately conceptualized as "play schemes — vague rules of general and imprecise structures that allow organizing games of imitation or fiction". On the other hand, we disagree that ludic cultures are restricted to the realm of play because, as we mentioned previously, children can *recognize ludic aspects* (Rivero, 2011) in daily situations. In this context, in no way do we deny that the ludic cultures are also produced by children at play, but, like Rivero (2011), we defend that ludic experiences are not only linked to these activities. After all, we would be naive to assume that children are always playing (Fians, 2015) and that other situations that promote social interactions cannot be recognized by children as ludic and even serve as ludic references[3] in future circumstances. According to Corsaro (2011, p. 199), "if it is true that all children play, this does not mean that play simulating real actions of the adult world synthesizes and accounts for the entire life of children".

In fact, what we propose, based on Brougère's theories (1998), is expanding the concept of ludic cultures to also understand them as:

- the capacity of children to appropriate and share ludic references by means of *social interactions* (Grigorowitschs, 2011) that can be related to games and play, or even, to the broad spectrum of situations of daily life;

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3 Cultural references to which children establish affective ludic relations (ties).

- the affective (relational) sensibility of children to recognize ludic experiences in circumstances that escape their own references "based on the participation in social interactions forming an uncountable set of processes that are not provided beforehand" (Grigorowitschs, 2011, p. 121).

To illustrate the discussion, we share below some analyses from the study that reveal indications of how children also produce ludic cultures by means of or beyond play. Thus, some of these fieldwork indications will be presented as *units of analysis*. We also highlight that the definition of these units necessarily involved the understanding that the records — produced from a dialogical relationship with the children — should support the reflections we used to develop this article. Consequently, our intent is not to make generalizations about how children's ludic cultures are manifest. We sought only to describe certain possibilities for production of children's ludic cultures that were observed and that perhaps can promote future discussions and investigations. In this regard, each unit — *affective relations*, *gesturalities*, and *musicalities* — will reveal excerpts from the field records[4], reported in episodes, which will serve as analytical material.

AFFECTIVE RELATIONS: NETWORKS OF ALLIANCES AND SOLIDARITY

The "network of alliances and solidarity" (Ferreira, 2004, p. 193) formed by children through affective relations with their peers allows them to experience the world, perceiving it "with their own style within a cultural experience" (Le Breton, 2016, p. 15-16). For this reason, we highlight that "the pre-school is a space of sociabilities where children meet other children, play, talk, exchange information, and make friends" (Gomes, 2015, p. 132). According to Ferreira (2004, p. 193), "relations of sociability are manifest in the children's ability to establish and nurture a network of alliances and solidarity", marked by intense affective relations present in the ways that closeness, dialogs, disputes, and transgressions shared among peers occur.

For the reasons presented, we share episodes that reveal the affective character of the relationships established by the children among themselves and with adults in the process of constitution of children's ludic cultures. Considering the understanding of *children's social experience* (Grigorowitschs, 2011; Gomes, 2015; Gomes and Aquino, 2019), we describe some circumstances, strategies, and intentions involving children in their *affective relations* (Le Breton, 2009, 2019) in school, making ludic experiences possible for them. The affective relations produced by children in their groups of peers will be discussed in their

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4   Although the article was written in co-authorship, the fieldwork was conducted by only one of the researchers.

"transitory states, framed in a mosaic of movements permeated by ambiguities and shadowing, by serenity and fury" (Le Breton, 2009, p. 209), given that "the groups of peers represent a prominent space in the life of children because it is through them that the construction of social action takes place in childhood" (Gomes and Aquino, 2019, p. 13).

In the realm of observations, we noted that, for the children, *affective relations* (Le Breton, 2009, 2019) were essential to the emergence of "innovative and creative collective productions" (Corsaro, 2011, p. 39) in environments constituted by them. Since they spend time together every day, children find creative solutions to the challenges raised by the *adult institutional order* (Ferreira, 2004). In addition, in the context of affective relations established among the children, we observed the importance of the *environments* (Forneiro, 1998). For instance, based on her study, Arenhart (2016, p. 176) also recognizes the importance of environments and highlights that "the different social places in which children are located produce distinct modes, meanings, and references". Therefore, we can affirm that there is an influence from physical space, objects, furniture, the different decorations produced in classrooms, smells, sounds, that is, the various elements that constitute the *environments* (Forneiro, 1998) in early childhood education, shared by the children with their peers in the development of their social relations.

Based on these indications, we present an episode in which the children, playing autonomously and inspired by the practices regularly employed by the teacher, organize a storytelling circle, as can be seen below:

Episode 1 – The children's storytelling circle
At a relaxed moment of storytelling, I approach some children who, seated, form a circle in the classroom. I sit next to them to listen to the girl Ana[5], who enthusiastically starts to tell a story. At this moment, Julia leaves her place in the circle, sits by my side, and hugs me, interrupting her classmate's performance. Ana then awaits to have the attention back on her and begins again. Soon after, Ana is interrupted by Nicolas, who starts to tap his feet on the floor. He begins to laugh, alone. After he taps the floor a few more times, Ana becomes upset and asks Nicolas to stop: "That's rude!" she says. Aware of the reprehending look of the group of children, the boy stops tapping the floor, and Ana continues her story. A bit later, Melina approaches the group, asking what we are doing. Nicolas quickly kneels and answers: "This here is a fun storytelling circle! To participate, you have to be respectful too". (Diário de campo [Field diary], October 2018)

The reading reveals that, although Nicolas was having fun interrupting the storytelling a few times, he realized that, in that group, he would need to

5   The names of the children participating in the study are fictitious to preserve their anonymity and protect their identities.

reevaluate his behavior. During the storytelling, the children who formed the group had to establish certain criteria so that the event could occur in a way that would please everyone. Nicolas, up to a certain moment, did not share this group "harmony". A few interventions were necessary, such as those made by Ana, for him to understand that not everything that we think is fun is considered as such by our classmates.

In this context, we noted the fragility with which certain *environments* (Forneiro, 1998) were constituted by the children during the study. Thus, based on the learning that "social interaction [among children] is something that must be developed" (Grigorowitschs, 2011, p. 121), we observed, during the investigation, constant readjustments of children's behaviors in the production of their ludic cultures. This understanding also resulted in the lesson that children's ludic cultures have their limits. However, these limits are not necessarily "universalizable". They are expressed as we consider, in each context, the "singular character of the feelings" (Le Breton, 2009, p. 162) involved in the affective relations shared by children in the challenging learning of group interaction (Buss-Simão, 2012; Gomes and Aquino, 2019).

This unique character of feelings, in school contexts, would gradually need to be understood by children, leading to changes in the way that they express their feelings when interacting with their peers. About these changes, Le Breton (2009, p. 162) argues that the same circumstances can determine "significantly different affective behaviors" if we are alone or in a group. This means that "the perception that being in the social world requires participating in social interactions that form an uncountable set of processes is something that is not provided beforehand" (Grigorowitschs, 2011, p. 121), but that is learned through interaction with other people.

As the episode shows, Ana and Nicolas went through a process named by Corsaro (2011, p. 185) as "negotiated agreements". Corsaro understands that children's conflicts and discussions in groups of peers vary considerably and that collective experiences can be determinant for these negotiations (Corsaro, 2011). In episode 1, we can observe, on the one hand, Ana making a negotiated agreement by informing Nicolas that it is "rude" to disturb classmates who are telling stories. From this perspective, we can perceive that "children constantly update the rules, norms, and social values by reorganizing them in and with their peer groups" (Gomes, 2015, p. 140). Nicolas had to adapt his behavior so that he could have fun and share a pleasant activity with the group. He listened, noticed the group's discontent, and resignified his attitudes, participating in the storytelling with his colleagues. By telling Melina that "This here is a storytelling circle", he demonstrated understanding the existence of collective agreements aimed at assuring an environment propitious to storytelling. Considering the above, we agree with Grigorowitschs (2011, p. 121) when he affirms that, the moment that children assume "the perspective of the other, they see not only the world from the other's perspective but also themselves as part of this world".

Continuing the analyses, we share an episode in which the children turn to their ludic references[6], revealing the affective relations they establish with their peers, as well as with the artifacts with which they have an opportunity to deal in daily life:

> Episode 2 – The Panther cartoon!
> I enter the classroom and find the children seated on cushions on the floor, while watching a cartoon on television. Apparently concentrating deeply, upon seeing me, some exclaim a sonorous "Misteeer…". Three or four children began to get up, but the teacher told them to stay in their places. I then greet the children as a group. With the door closed once again, the room dark, lit only by the light of the TV, the children turn their attention back to the cartoon. After some time, César comes in my direction, stops in front of me, and says: "Mister, next week is my birthday". Then, he sits next to me. The cartoon continues while I observe the reactions of the class. At one point in the story, Paulo kneels on the ground, saying: "Ah, I've seen this one!". A moment later, he turns to the side, towards Duarte, and hugs him, at the same time as two characters in the cartoon hug each other as well. The cartoon ends, and one of the teachers goes to the TV, saying to the class that she will put on a DVD of *The Pink Panther*. The children express their joy: "Yay!". Then, some children begin to tell portions of other episodes and even of other cartoons to each other. Paulo starts to describe scenes of the cartoon that is beginning. Duarte, who is listening to him, tells the ending before Paulo has the chance. Both laugh. Lívia, who is nearby and apparently upset by the situation, tells them both; "You can't tell the story of the film!". Paulo and Duarte calm down and turn their attention back to the cartoon, like the rest of the class. (Diário de campo, September 2018)

We can see that children have an affective relationship with cartoons. Most of the group already knew the characters and stories, producing, for that session, a continuity in the relationship between the children and these ludic references. Some children followed the adventures of the characters and expressed themselves bodily by moving their hands, arms, and legs. Other children had fun assuming the role of interpreters, repeating or orally anticipating the dialogs between the characters.

In this context, for some children, the teacher's announcement about which cartoon would be screened was a reason for joy and celebration. During the screening, the children shared hugs and smiles while talking with each other about the scenes that were yet to be seen. Thus, the children used the exchange of spoilers about the cartoons as a form of social interaction.

However, we highlight that children do not experience the *environments* they share with their peers in the same way (Forneiro, 1998). As seen, although

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6   Cultural references with which children establish affective ties.

Lívia was happy to know which cartoon would be screened next, she later became upset when hearing her classmate describe the scene that would be shown. Therefore, in a single video session, some children are happy and others upset at the same time and at the same event. On the other hand, through affective relations, the children establish negotiations that make the cartoon session pleasurable for all.

Agreeing with Grigorowitschs (2011, p. 121) when she affirms that "we must be others if we want to be ourselves because only by assuming the role of others we are capable of turning to ourselves", we emphasize that, in the episode analyzed, the children negotiate to establish behavioral criteria, seeking a pleasant environment for all. In these negotiations, those involved not only learn which cartoons their classmates may know and like — which, in this case, from our perspective, is a ludic reference — but also how a cartoon session could be carried out. This means that children, based on a process that entails "autonomy and interdependence in relation to global culture" (Salgado, 2005, p. 153), form a social group. This process involves the appropriation of knowledge that is external to children to construct a shared reality (Ferreira, 2004).

Thus, we understand that the negotiations that take place among the children are related to what Ferreira (2004, p. 104) calls *institutive order*, which she defines as "orders of existence regulated by principles and logics of action that are relatively autonomous, based on social integration". This is not to say that children strictly follow these *orders of existence* (Ferreira, 2004), but that they, as a group, establish a social convention that serves as a parameter for evaluating their postures and those of their classmates. Lívia, for example, used personal learning to share with the group the fact that they should spoil the next scenes of the cartoon. About this, Corsaro (2011, p. 97) underlines the active nature of children "in production and social change as they create their own cultures". Finally, we can affirm that the cartoon session progressed in different manners, and we could note that, in addition to the affective relations established by the children with characters and stories, they shared pleasant sensations with their classmates, materialized by means of gestures, laughter, hugs, and smiles.

GESTURALITIES: MODES OF COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION

Children, through their gestures, looks, body postures, and movements, "reveal that they speak a lot through their bodies" (Arenhart, 2016, p. 104) about the production of ludic cultures. Through the expression of their *gesturalities* (Le Breton, 2019), children use their bodies to support communication in their social interactions. In the environments experienced by children in this study, for example, there were moments when their gesturalities stood out in field notes. Considering the observation of imitations, "secret greetings", waves to each other, faces, smiles, and other expressions, we could understand the importance of body communication for children. In this way, we ratify Arenhart's argument (2016, p. 104) that "children not only have a body, but they also are a

body: alive, playful, questioning, a body capable of enunciating values, criticisms, and proposals in the face of reality".

Based on these considerations, we can affirm that the "body is also its surroundings" (Goellner, 2003, p. 29) because, in addition to having its "own history" (Buss-Simão, 2012, p. 111), it is shaped as "a surface and a thickness of inscription whose form and meaning are traced by cultural injunctions that are supported upon it" (Le Breton, 2009, p. 37). In this context, we must understand that just as it is "a set of muscles, bones, viscera, reflexes, and sensations, the body is also the clothes and accessories adorning it, the interventions operated on it, the image it produces, the meanings it incorporates" (Goellner, 2003, p. 29). Consequently, "the body is not the poor cousin of language, but rather its homogeneous partner in the permanent circulation of meaning, which consists in the very *raison d'être* of social tie" (Le Breton, 2019, p. 49).

Given the arguments above, we should clarify that we understand body "beyond the mechanistic and dualistic view of common sense that often teaches us that each person has a body, as if it were material support at the service of the mind" (Arenhart, 2016, p. 100). The discussions addressed revealed that "they are not, therefore, the biological similarities that define the body, but, fundamentally, the cultural and social meanings attributed to it" (Goellner, 2003, p. 29). As Arenhart indicates (2016, p. 123), the body is "this materiality in which the subject's experiences and characteristics (class, gender, age, race, ethnicity, etc.) are inscribed, shaping it as a variable in social interaction".

During the research, we repeatedly observed the children mobilizing their bodies by expressing their gesturalities. Namely, the children used their gestures as "figures of action and not merely as decorative complements to their words" (Le Breton, 2019, p. 47). Based on these indications, we share below a play episode in which the children express their gesturalities by inventing greetings:

> Episode 3 – "Conchinha!"
> The afternoon is coming to an end. Few children from the class remain, playing in small groups. I am invited by one of the groups to play with building blocks. At one point, Melina comes close, asking me to greet her: "Mister, hit here!" as she extends her hand. When I try to "hit" her hand, she pulls it back, exclaiming: "Conchinha!" [which means small shell], making a shell with her hand. Melina begins to laugh. I then realize that other children are also laughing. Melina looks at her colleagues, and the laughter increases. "Ah! How do you do that?" I ask. Melina takes my hand, folding it as she did with hers and then teaches me the remaining movements. The other children watching us also listen to Melina's explanation, making suggestions about the movements. I then realize that the children knew that Melina would do this greeting with me and were amused seeing that I still did not know it. I say to Melina: "Let's see if I learned". I call Nicolas, who is playing with another group. When he arrives, I extend my hand to him, saying: "Hit here!", as Melina had done with me. When he tries to hit

my hand, I repeat the gesture that the children taught me, saying: "Con-chinha!". Nicolas immediately looks at his classmates who are with us and laughs heartily. Once again, laughs are shared! Nicolas knew the greeting but did not expect that so did I! (Diário de campo, October 2018)

As Agostinho recalls (2019, p. 123), "children participate with their whole body in their contexts". Actually, the greeting the class called "conchinha" was one of the most used during the study, "revealing that children's bodies are a support for their social action" (Agostinho, 2019, p. 126). The greeting in ques-tion, due to its characteristics, ultimately became a type of "presentation" that denoted "the relationship of children with their body, as a source and resource for agency" (Arenhart, 2016, p. 123).

When the children taught someone who still did not know the greeting, as in the case described, they prepared for this event because it usually brought enjoyment to the "spectators" of the situation. As the episode shows, Melina, as well as the other children who watched the interactive scene, anticipated discovering the researcher's reaction, since, in general, this type of situation leads to confusion on the part of the learner, who at first mistakenly believes it involves a conventional greeting. Said confusion, when noticed, brings laughter and, correspondingly, the enjoyment of all involved. Within this logic, we believe that the "conchinha" greeting is a ludic reference for the class, given the number of times that the children had fun teaching it. Moreover, this greeting allowed us to realize that "it is the body in its posture attitudes that first reveals the presence of the other in the interaction" (Agostinho, 2019, p. 124).

Concerning the greetings created, we must refer to the study by Buss-Simão (2012, p. 188) because she argues that children do not perform "only motor actions, but express emotions and manifest meanings [by means of their gesturalities] both for themselves and for others". The episode presented, for instance, shows how the children are affectively involved when sharing the gesturalities that compose the "conchinha" greeting. It is precisely in this sense that gesturalities — like the "conchinha" greeting — are consolidated as ludic references for the class.

In terms of affective relations, Le Breton (2009, p. 43) alleges that "ges-tures, mimicking, postures, and movements express emotions, perform acts, highlight or nuance a discourse, conveying meanings in permanence, for oneself and for others". In the episode presented, the "conchinha" greeting seems to converge with Le Breton's (2009) proposal, given that it can be understood as a gesturality that evokes ludic references shared by children. By sharing this greeting with people who still did not know it, the children expand the reach of the ludic reference in question. What happened, in fact, was a type of "rite of passage" that involved, besides the children who greeted each other, the other individuals who observed the progression of the gesturalities to have fun with the confusion that the gestures provoked in the new participants.

Continuing the discussion and assuming the perspective that "children are full-body social actors" (Agostinho, 2019, p. 131), we present next an epi-

sode that also focuses on gesturalities as indications of ludic cultures, as well as the relations of friendship among children during the "secret greeting" game:

> Episode 4 – "The secret greeting"
> After a misunderstanding, Duarte takes the initiative and decides to speak with Nicolas. At first, Nicolas seems upset and does not respond, but at Duarte's insistence, a few words are uttered. Duarte then asks: "Let's do the secret greeting?" extending his hand to his colleague. Reluctantly, Nicolas responds to Duarte's gesture, returning the greeting. Next, Duarte spins around, raising his hand: "Now like this!" Surprised, Nicolas appears not to have expected this movement, but responds nevertheless. Duarte continues to innovate: "And like this!" moving his hand under his leg. Nicolas begins to laugh at Duarte's inventions. Soon after, laughter is once again part of the environment. (Diário de campo, October 2018)

During the episode, Duarte reinvents the greeting as a strategy to get close to Nicolas again. This fact reveals that "the body is mobilized in the social relations enacted by children" (Arenhart, 2016, p. 123). At the same time, unlike the previous episode, in which the "conchinha" greeting delighted the children involved, during "the secret greeting", the boy needed to reinvent the gesturalities, since, in that context, they were not enough to re-establish the ludic environment between him and his classmate. By observing his upset classmate, Duarte tried to "change" the situation, seeking conditions to modify the environment established after the disagreement between them. The strategy of using the "secret greeting", which involved a singular gesturality known only by them, was incapable of cheering Nicolas up at first. Nevertheless, Duarte innovated the old greeting to re-establish harmony with his colleague. In this case, we can affirm that Duarte understood the difference between the knowledge shared and enjoyable situations.

In some way, Duarte sought to reinvent a reference that, although already linked to certain past ludic experiences — a ludic reference —, proved to be insufficient for that occasion. This episode confirms that, despite the "countless practices, values, and routines that children can share among themselves" (Corsaro, 2011, p. 32), the affective relations present in the social interactions established define the production of their ludic cultures.

In this sense, we perceived that the children's *relations of friendship* (Ferreira, 2004; Fians, 2015) during the study are manifest in convergence with Fians's understanding (2015, p. 89) that these relations "are constantly re-established and redefined, culminating, at least in the absolute majority of cases, in the return to a friendly relationship, but never completely stable". This episode shows how different interactive situations are manifest during the variation of a greeting and can even constantly change, in an unstable manner, as the relations between the boys advances. "Relations of friendship are at times conflictive" (Corsaro, 2011, p. 182), and children's production of ludic cultures is not always marked by friendly relations. As Ferreira recalls (2004, p. 194),

friendships among children involve strategic social relations, which "contribute to the process of cultural reproduction within a group, that is, it is with other children that they play, talk, exchange ideas, build, and expand their culture".

From this perspective, we believe it is important to highlight that the concept of children's ludic cultures allows revealing the relations of friendship among children and the challenges Duarte had to face during the interaction with his colleague. As much as we, adults, can suppose that some activities or actions would "naturally" be ludic, for children — as "play" conceptually understood —, these premises are often not sustained in the face of an empiric observation of the relations established among the children. Thus, continuing the discussion, the next section will present episodes that emphasize the musicalities of children.

MUSICALITIES: BETWEEN CIRCLE DANCES, SONGS, AND SOUND PRODUCTION

During the study, based on the observations conducted, we found that "children are protagonists in constant musical experiences that transcend the institutional organization" (Werle and Bellochio, 2017, p. 255). Regardless of projects planned by teachers, children repeatedly sang, explored sounds, and carried out musical appreciation and performances in daily activities at the institution. Actually, we can affirm that children's musical expression is manifest "by banging utensils when eating, by singing, the sound of steps during a walk, laughter, noise, music" (Strapazzon, Pillotto and Voigt, 2017, p. 29). Thus, addressing musicalities in early childhood education "implies considering the countless meanings that children attribute to the sounds with which they interact, have contact, know, and explore" (Werle and Bellochio, 2017, p. 248). By relating to music, children not only share their repertoires but also resignify them because "musical meaning is culturally constructed in given contextual conditions" (Lino, 2008, p. 36). In their own way, children express themselves by musicalities in distinct forms.

Considering the arguments above, in this last section, we present episodes that illustrate how various sound expressions produced by children become significant in the process of development of ludic cultures by contributing to the constitution of environments that mobilize interactions among peers. The records shared refer to what we call musicalities, that is, moments when circle dances, traditional folk and/or contemporary music, songs sang alone or in group, among other sounds, had a central role in class practices. The musicalities expressed by the children gave rhythm to the experiences of daily life. We will now present an episode of the game of *cirandas* [circle dances] to reveal the manifestation of children's musicalities.

Episode 5 – "Cirandas"
The children return to the classroom after concluding the proposals involving written language in the computer laboratory. The mood is pleasant,

and some children enthusiastically recount their achievements regarding the use of the programs. I am then surprised by Lívia, who takes my hands and begins to spin in circles, making a circle dance. She sings and smiles. I am also enjoying it, although I do not know the words to the song. Amanda comes close, enters the circle, and sings with Lívia. Ana, who had been watching since the beginning, decides to join the circle as well. With songs and smiles, we continue to dance and sing in the circle. (Diário de campo, September 2018)

As we can see, the environments can be created when least expected. In the event described, the researcher was surprised by Lívia's joy, as she quickly led him to the circle dance. Affected by the girl's joy, the researcher, despite not knowing the words to the song, had help from other children who came close to participate. In this situation, although we recognize Corsaro's argument (2011, p. 66) that children use "more indirect strategies to access the interactive space, like watching at a distance to discover the nature of what is taking place", we also understand that, at times, the environments of interaction can be constituted by the impetus of certain children.

According to the facts narrated, the researcher learned the circle game as it happened. Namely, he learned not only the words to the song but also the movements that should be made. Moreover, Lívia teaches the adult, leading his movements in the changes of direction required by the dance. In fact, the conclusion of the situation reveals at least three aspects:

- the understanding of music as "communication, as a practice that people undertake together" (Beineke, 2009, p. 138);
- a special "interdependence between music, hearing, body, and the surrounding sound landscapes" (Lino, 2008, p. 129);
- the fact that the "meanings of music seem always to be connected to the active participation of children in making music" (Beineke, 2009, p. 129).

These considerations certainly have a role in countless events involving the musicalities produced by children during the study.

In addition to the circle games repeatedly enacted and the constant production of sounds from common materials found in the classroom, the children also sang various songs at all times of the day. The soundtrack composed by the children included a variety of popular Brazilian musical styles (including funk, *sertanejo*, and *pagode*), and due to the content of the lyrics, they were not always accepted by the teacher. In this context, we share an episode in which two children discussed what would be the "right way" to sing a funk song:

Episode 6 – "I sing funk my way"
It is early afternoon in the school. It is very hot. I notice the children's discomfort with the weather. The children are engrossed in a cutting and pasting project. At one of the tables, I hear Isabela singing a funk song whi-

le she works. My attention focuses on that group. Duarte, who is sitting in front of Isabela, begins to sing the same song. When she realizes this, Isabela stops singing and says: "You're singing it wrong". She speaks without taking her eyes from what she is cutting. The two have a quick discussion about the right lyrics of the funk song until Duarte says: "I sing funk my way". Finally, the two stop singing and continue their activities. (Diário de campo, November 2018)

The episode depicts a situation in which Isabela feels bothered upon noticing that Duarte is singing the same funk song as she. In the episode narrated, the children were individually carrying out the cutting and pasting project planned for the class routine when Duarte decided to sing the same song as Isabela. She was upset because, according to her, her classmate was singing it wrong. Upon hearing Isabela's intervention, the boy became annoyed with her and retorted that he "sang funk his way". Concerning this aspect, we reinforce that "the meanings of music and their function in human life are found in the musical performance and appreciation in which people participate" (Beineke, 2009, p. 129). In this incident, Duarte heard Isabela sing and then expressed himself musically, through his individual interest in expressing that song in a particular performance. We should also highlight the boy's process of resignification of the song, given that, as a child, his relationship with songs presents "singular forms of perpetuating, understanding, signifying, confronting, or transforming them" (Lino, 2008, p. 130).

The production of musicalities often occurred in environments experienced by children. We understand that, perhaps in another type of environment different from that of the episode used to illustrate the situation, Isabela could have interacted with Duarte in another manner. This implies the understanding that, although we approach musicalities based on children's experiences, the dialog between Isabela and Duarte points to the diversity of possibilities that this aspect can promote.

Thus, we can affirm that children share musicalities according to their singularities and the discovery of the new, in re-encounters with certain cultural references, and, above all, "in the relations established between their musical experiences and everyday situations" (Beineke, 2009, p. 129). In sum, we infer that, during the study, the children developed deep affective relations with the production of musicalities through their forms of expression — soundtracks from cartoons and films, music played on the radio, songs shared with classmates, a solfège learned occasionally, sounds produced by materials in the classroom, etc.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Children's ludic cultures involve a process that stems from social relations. According to Pino (2005, p. 106), "a system of social relations is a complex system of positions and roles associated with these positions, which

define how social actors are located in relation to others" in a given context. This process, on the one hand, includes the children's capacity, in the context of social relations, of appropriating cultural references linked to their own ludic affectivity, that is, to "ludic" references. Upon appropriating this stable set of references — cartoons, "secret" greetings, songs, etc. —, children expand their *backgrounds of ludic experiences* (Salgado, 2005), which allow them to establish relations with other subjects. Thus, "to have a ludic culture is to have a certain number of references" (Brougère, 1998, p. 108).

On the other hand, in this same process that stems from social relations, children's ludic cultures also involve their sensibility in recognizing ludic aspects in what escapes their own cultural references. In other words, children, upon perceiving that they are affectively involved in situations not yet known to them in the various environments in which they take part, not only experience situations that can represent ludic episodes but also create conditions to share these learnings in the future, as ludic references.

In this way, by expanding the understanding of children's ludic cultures, which have been generally discussed as a "set of procedures" (Brougère, 1998, p. 24) at the service of games or play, we sought to dissociate children's ludic experiences from these activities. Therefore, by not recognizing ludic as an aspect exclusive to play, we defend that a ludic quality is not found *a priori* in the actions or activities proposed by teachers, but above all in the social relations that can be established by children; in the existing conditions for them to undertake the proposals; in the relations that can be introduced to their daily routines, which may (or may not) offer them experiences considered ludic.

Considering what was presented in the analytical units, which we called *affective relations*, *gesturalities*, and *musicalities*, we highlight specific moments of production of children's ludic cultures in episodes that express points of view about a process that can be reinvented at any time based on environments constituted by children in their social interactions. These environments are conceived in the social interactions promoted by the children among themselves and/or with other elements — physical space, furniture, objects, colors, sounds, smells, among other possible examples — that compose them. As the article shows, by expressing themselves in a ludic way — for example, through a secret greeting, a joyful and contagious circle dance, or a musical performance during a project —, children expand the possibilities for creating ludic environments.

Finally, based on these discussions, we infer that, as researchers, the closer we are to children, to the ways they socially interact, and to the ways they constitute their environments in school (not only when they speak, but also when they express themselves through their different languages), the more potent our reflections on the production of their ludic cultures can become. The challenge we face as researchers is to produce reflections that consider, in addition to theoretical presumptions that have conventionally defined how to understand the production of ludic cultures in early childhood education, the singularities of children as historical, geographic subjects with rights who

inhabit the present time through a myriad of *logics of social action* (Buss-Simão, 2012; Agostinho, 2019).

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