

**DOSSIER***Childhood(s), social movements and the city: curriculum(s) and teacher training***Care in fishing communities: reflections on and for the Early Childhood Education curriculum*****O cuidado em comunidades de pesca: reflexões sobre e para o currículo da Educação Infantil*****Suzana Marcolino<sup>a</sup>**

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**ABSTRACT**

In Brazil, since the first decade of this century, there has been a concern as to outlining the meaning of care as a principle of the curriculum and the early childhood education policy. Based on references from philosophy and historical and sociological analyses, care is outlined as relationships and actions that have the other in mind and become constitutive of being, implying the constitution of each person. Between 2021 and 2022, we carried out post-doctoral research that sought to deepen the meanings of care to reflect on the early childhood education curriculum. The idea of the project was to consider care from the perspective of traditional populations and social movements. For this, we carried out an ethnography with a fishing community on the north coast of the state of Alagoas, Brazil. The study refutes notions that traditional people offer precarious care, as considered by the colonizer. In fact, it is just the opposite. Traditional peoples develop community care, implying greater freedom for children to move around community, and greater autonomy in relation to the demands of life and to act according to their curiosities. Subtle friendly relationships that are expressed in silence, economy of words and attention to gestures are at the basis of care. We consider that early childhood education curricula need to incorporate the different forms and meanings of caring for babies and children, and not subordinate social identities.

**Keywords:** Early Childhood Education. Curriculum. Care. Traditional Peoples. Social movements.

**RESUMO**

No Brasil, desde a primeira década do novo século, existe a preocupação em delinear o significado do cuidado como princípio do currículo e da política da educação infantil. A partir de referenciais da filosofia e de análises históricas e sociológicas, delineia-se o cuidado como relações e ações que têm o outro em vista e se tornam constitutivas do ser, implicando na constituição de cada um e de cada uma. Entre os anos 2021 e 2022, realizamos uma pesquisa de pós-doutorado que buscou aprofundar os significados do cuidado para fazer reflexões sobre o currículo da educação infantil. A ideia do projeto foi considerar o cuidado a partir

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do prisma dos povos tradicionais e dos movimentos sociais. Para isso, realizamos uma etnografia com uma comunidade de pesca do litoral norte do estado de Alagoas, Brasil. O estudo rebate noções de que os povos tradicionais oferecem um cuidado precário, como considerado pelo colonizador, sendo esse um cuidado mais comunitário, implicando maior liberdade das crianças para circularem pelos espaços da comunidade, e maior autonomia em relação a demandas da vida e para agir conforme curiosidades. Estão na base do cuidado relações de amistosidade sutil que se expressam no silêncio, na economia de palavras e na atenção aos gestos. Consideramos que os currículos na educação infantil precisam incorporar as diferentes formas e significados de cuidar para acolher bebês e crianças, e não subalternizar identidades sociais.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação Infantil. Currículo. Cuidado. Povos Tradicionais. Movimentos Sociais.

## Introduction

Between 2021 and 2022, we carried out a post-doctoral research<sup>1</sup> that sought to deepen the meaning of care, in order to reflect on early childhood education curriculum. We consider that it is possible and desirable to deepen the curriculum debate from the perspective of social movements and traditional peoples<sup>2</sup>. For this, we carried out an ethnography with a fishing community on the north coast of the state of Alagoas and participated in activities of the Costa dos Corais Fishing Women's Network.

We were inspired by the idea of in-between places (Anzaldúa, 2012), which, through an interstitial perspective — built between people, things, relationships, stories, cultures —, new perspectives and new ways of thinking take place.

Fishing communities descend directly from the indigenous presence in the state of Alagoas and have an important role in the settlement of the coast and in the founding of the state capital, Maceió (Pereira, 2018). Thus, the culture, way of eating, religious traditions, and the ancestry of people from Alagoas — as in many other regions of Brazil — are connected with the ways of life of fishing communities, although official history minimizes this participation and school curriculum ignore this identity relationship.

From politics to curricular text, positions regarding knowledge, education and life of certain groups are included, while those pertinent to other groups are excluded (Silva, 2022). Regarding this aspect, an important issue for the debate is that curriculum as a cultural practice is a territory of meaning and is linked to the process of creating social identities. The production of social identities — “the ways in which different social groups define themselves and in which they are defined by other groups” (Silva, 1999, p. 25) — is made up of a double process. From a young age, people recognize similarities within their group and notice differences in relation to other groups; however, in the context of relations of domination, difference is never just difference: it is hierarchical, valued and categorized (Silva, 1999).

<sup>1</sup> The article is an initial analysis of postdoctoral research carried out by the first author and supervised by the second.

<sup>2</sup> “Traditional Peoples and Communities: culturally differentiated groups that recognize themselves as such, that have their own forms of social organization, that occupy and use territories and natural resources as a condition for their cultural, social, religious, ancestral and economic reproduction, using knowledge, innovations and practices generated and transmitted by tradition” (Brasil, 2007, art. 3º, inc. I).

Historically, local populations' ways of caring were rejected, and the European way were valued (Silva; Lima; Siller, 2021). This way of caring was based on a set of knowledge, with a view to managing care based on the idea of normality (Sarmento; Pinto, 2004; Moysés; Collares, 2013). The process of producing scientific knowledge about children care and education obeyed the movement of modern science of moving away from life to legislate on it, often violently destroying it (Moysés; Collares, 2013). Once pedagogy is one of the fields that teach how society should care and educate children it has created a series of practices and ways of communication that impose the education of a certain type of "self" (Kohan, 2003).

We consider that the exclusion of knowledge and practices of traditional people is carried out with the intention of creating subordinate social identities. From the perspective of critical interculturality, reflecting on this issue calls on people who have historically suffered from subordination to act in political, social, ethical and epistemic projects, in order to overcome the devices that maintain subordination in all fields of social life (Walsh, 2008), including education and, in education, early childhood education.

Based on Walsh (2008), we understand that building knowledge about care with traditional peoples in order to influence the construction of curricula for early childhood education is part of an epistemological change in relation to the knowledge of traditional peoples. Therefore, experiences of babies, children and adults in daycare centers and preschools can be experienced as a legacy of human knowledge about life, nature, history, technology, language, human relations and art. From this perspective, such knowledge is part of the heritage of human knowledge, requiring social refoundation and decolonization, and create a complex path for the construction of other possibilities for collective early childhood care and education.

## Care as a principle of early childhood education curriculum

Debates about care in early childhood education began in the 1980s, with the creation of the term *educare*, in England and the United States, and aimed to overcome the dichotomies between education and care. In Brazil, in the nineties, the binomial "care and education" was proposed for early childhood education policy, in order to overcome the historical dichotomy between welfare and schooling practices (Cerizara, 1999).

In the early 2000s, research and discussion on care in early childhood education gained momentum. Machado (2000) considers that care gave specificity to pedagogical practice in early childhood education, and Rosemberg (2001) observes that care began to designate new functions and attitudes of teachers, such as physical protection of the child, complementary service to the family, better attention to individuality etc.

Kramer (2009, p. 17), when discussing a curriculum proposal, understands care in early childhood education as a set of adult actions and practices towards children. Such actions involve: "[...] welcoming the child, encouraging their discoveries, creation and imagination; respect the game; listen to children in their needs, desires and concerns; support children in their challenges; interact with them, recognizing themselves as a source of information, care and affection". Care, as a principle of the curriculum, unfolds into a special and specific form of pedagogical work.

Montenegro (2001), dealing with theories from health, psychology and philosophy, postulates care as a practice linked not only to emotion, but also to thinking. The author argues, based on Comte-Sponville (1995) and Snyders (1984), that care can be seen as generosity, but a generosity that involves, in addition to affection, rationality.

Research developed by Debora Sayão (2010) and Lea Tiriba (2005) show how caring actions were depreciated and undervalued in daycare centers and preschools. Such discredit is due to the gap between emotion and reason, considering care is an activity linked to emotion and carried out by women. The authors consider that caring and receiving care are part of the humanization process (Sayão, 2010) and that, if care is addressed to people and involve satisfaction of physical, emotional, cognitive needs of others, it is always relational and changes the person who cares and the person who is cared for (Tiriba, 2005).

Daniela Guimarães (2011), based on Foucault, considers that care can be seen as a less important form of education, in the sense of paying less attention to the details of everyday life when interacting with babies and children. She concludes that, in teaching early childhood education, it is important to establish a condition in which the pleasure of being with oneself is fostered, based on an ethics of caring for oneself and caring for others.

From this debate, we understand that care is not linear and unidirectional, as starting from the adult and affecting the child, but rather relational, as all participants involved create images, sensations, emotions and thoughts about the events of care situations, implying the constitution of each one. Thus, care influences the constitution of the self.

We consider that, before early childhood education in schools, babies and children are cared for in their communities, developing feelings, emotions, thoughts, sensations, musicality, body movement, aesthetic perception. They also shape food traditions, relationships with deities, forms of production and reproduction of life, gender relations. They live ways to heal pain, to offer comfort, reduce sadness and encourage joy, build preferences, etc. Thus, in care situations that take place in families and communities, babies and children create meanings about their experiences, which imply the construction of identities as belonging to that community.

In this sense, early childhood school is where many babies and children will face difference for the first time, in a more forceful way. The way they will understand this difference (as hierarchical, as subordinate, as resistance, as one of the ways of being in the world) is an important matter to reflect on if we are committed to an early childhood education that overcomes the production of subordinated identities.

From the perspective of care, increases the importance of what the guidelines establish regarding the relationship between early childhood education institutions and reality of traditional peoples, their cultures, traditions and identities: valuing knowledge and offering conditions that respect the environmental, social and cultural characteristics of the community (Brasil, 2009). Such guidelines are important. However, when we approach care related to the lives and experiences of babies and children of traditional peoples in early childhood education schools, we see that there is a knowledge and a way of caring linked to the identities of each person, their families and communities.

Many researchers in the field of early childhood education agree that the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) implies a homogenization of practices (Abramowicz; Cruz; Moruzzi, 2016). According to Silva, Lima and Siller (2021), with the adoption of a functional perspective on differences (Walsh, 2008), the BNCC reinforces the modern/colonial ideology in which forms of care and education are instrumental in continuing processes of subalternization (Silva; Lima; Siller, 2021).

Embracing the expression used by Amorim and Dias (2012), the BNCC is a deviation from the route on how the curriculum has been thought of in recent decades, creating conceptual and practical difficulties for a curriculum that embrace the knowledge of traditional peoples. In this context, producing knowledge to resist these perspectives is essential, seeking, together with communities, for the recognition of their knowledge and ways of being.

### **Issues relating ethnography in research in the fishing community: getting to the field, research decisions and ethnographic writing**

After requesting consent from the leaders of the Fishermen's Colony, I began<sup>3</sup> to participate in the Colony's meetings in a municipality located on the north coast of Alagoas. I approached the manager and got involved in some activities. In one of them, I met Regina<sup>4</sup>, a female fishing leader. Through my relationship with her, it was possible to start approaching two communities, which we will be called here "village" and "povoado", both on the north coast of Alagoas.

The research took place mainly with women. It is known that, socially, they are responsible for caring not only for children, but for the elderly and sick people. Women made responsible for care is a characteristic of unequal societies (Almeida, 2021).

Accessing people in the community, including women, was a slow process. In the book *Jangada: an ethnographic research*, Câmara Cascudo presents an ethnography of a fishing community in Rio Grande do Norte. The author describes the fishermen as silent people: "he is the only worker who cannot talk or sing while his task lasts" (Câmara Cascudo, 1964, p. 18). This aspect of fishing influences the way fishermen communicate, being laconic, without long narratives. They communicate rich and expressive elements, but without long conversations (Câmara Cascudo, 1964).

When women fish, there are specific elements, according to our observations. They rarely fish alone. Female fishing is characterized by the use of artisanal items, which not always guarantee a good quantity of fish if you fish alone. Therefore, the group represents the possibility of increasing the quantity of the product. Furthermore, group fishing is protective, as fishing alone creates a situation of vulnerability to violence. Thus, I noticed solidarity and trust between the partners, but restrictions on people outside the community.

In this context, the approach to communities progressed slowly. I had difficulty in dealing with silent attitudes and, first, I understood that my attempts to get closer were being avoided.

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<sup>3</sup> Sections 3 and 4 correspond to the ethnographic research carried out by the first author under the guidance of the second.

<sup>4</sup> Fictitious name.

When I realized that people from outside the community were received with certain restrictions, I started paying more attention to be more delicate when interacting there.

During this process, Regina was an important interlocutor. With her I was able to reflect on several research questions. She always asked me about my interests and always mentioned the importance of knowing the reality of fishing community, especially the women.

The project initially included participant observation, photographic records, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. I continued with the proposal of participant observation, but the other procedures were abandoned, as we assessed that they were considered invasive.

Instead of semi-structured interviews, as stated in the research project, I opted for open-ended interviews, as they could create a closer and more welcoming atmosphere. These interviews always took place in homes. I usually started by asking about childhood, and, from there, the conversation unfolded.

I realized that one way to fit in was to participate in community events. During the period the research was carried out, Regina worked in the local women's organization. Thus, I participated in the fisherwomen' organization and joined Regina in activities of the Costa dos Corais Fishing Women Network in the village, in the "povoado"<sup>5</sup> and in Maceió. Regina and I organized a conversation circle in which we sought to discuss women's daily lives. Through the conversation circle, I was able to locate care actions and especially the time-spaces that children occupy in their daily lives.

From June 2022 on, heavy rains hit the Brazilian northeast, and fishing conditions became poor, affecting families economically. At that moment, the imperative was solidarity actions. I participated in the campaign to collect donations to create basic food baskets and helped distribute them. Working in the food and clothing donation campaign made it possible to get to know the community more. When collecting and delivering donations, we walked, talked to people and were able to observe relationships, day to day life.

I formulated the hypothesis of care as a constitutive aspect of community life, possible to be captured only through the observation of different aspects and relationships. Theoretically, I understood that care happens among human beings who share meanings of a culture, thus involving a cultural dimension. As a result of this hypothesis, ethnographic work should move towards understanding the cultural significance of care in the fishing community.

To capture this cultural meaning of care, I also observed children playing. I worked with the idea that play is the creation of an imaginary situation, in which children reveal their ways of understanding the world and especially social relationships (Marcolino; Mello, 2015). Fernandes (2016) indicates that elements of the social context in which children live emerge in play. However, considering that this process is mediated by imagination and children are free to create in play (Vigotski, 2018), they may introduce new nuances to social relations (Marcolino; Santos, 2021), mixing traits of tradition with more current situations from their experiences in different fields of social life. Therefore, we assumed that play would present both characteristics of tradition of care in the community and more current aspects assimilated by the children from different sources.

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<sup>5</sup> *Povoado* is related to the distribution of the population in a given place, that is, it is related to the population and the area

Finally, I would like to present some ideas that guided the writing of the ethnography.

Since the 1980s, there has been intense discussion and critical analysis about the practice of ethnography. Lately, it has been conceived as that knowledge about a culture is built based on references from interlocutors in the field and from researchers (Nascimento, 2019).

In the web of meanings woven by human beings about culture and in which they are also involved (Geertz, 1978), the description of a culture "means less to describe the minutiae or details of a fact (this is only the first stage or condition of its realization) and further situate this description in the symbolic web in which this fact is inscribed" (Marchi, 2018, p. 730). Furthermore, according to Rita de Cássia Marchi (2018), it is necessary to interpret the meaning that the actions, speeches and attitudes of the interlocutors have for themselves, as well as to trying to enunciate what this meaning informs about the culture.

These ideas influenced ethnographic writing and made me deal with the border between knowledges: as an intellectual condition, and visiting different places, knowledges and emotions, letting myself be affected by them (Barros; Domenici, 2019).

During the time I was in the field, I took notes and raised hypotheses. From this material, I organized descriptions in a table, aiming to structure the field diary data. The themes of the descriptions on the table were: "approach to the field", "relationships among women", "relationships between women and children", "relationships among children", "relationships between women and men"; "relations with nature". It was from this framework that ethnographic writing was carried out.

## Nature, movement and calm: small ethnography about care in fishing communities

In the fishing village and in the *povoado*, women are responsible for artisanal fishing and, following the dominant pattern of the sexual division of labor (Saffiotti, 2013), they are responsible for domestic activities and caring for children, the elderly and sick people.

There is also a spatial division marked by the bipolarity of sea and land/sand — this includes transitional environments between sea and land (Rodin, 2021), such as mangroves and river banks. At sea, men use boats and more sophisticated equipment, and, on land/sand, women fish with artisanal instruments they produce.

In the transition between sea and land/sand, fisherwomen also work with trawling, but this type of fishing requires a net, a heavy instrument that belongs to men. So, they need men to lend them the net and help them throw it into the sea, so that they can drag it.

In a way, within the public places of the *povoado* and village, groups of men and women are rarely seen together: where women are, there are no men. Relationships among men and women in the same place seem to be restricted for private places, such as the house, with the family.

Every time we visited the hut where meetings took place, when there was a women's meetings, the men generally left (if they hadn't gone to sea), and the women remained — and, with them, the children. Thus, women and children seem to inhabit the same places. Only once when I was in the hut, the men stayed, as they had fish, and people were buying it.

When boys reach a certain age, usually around 10 years old, they start fishing (lobster, for example), and girls continue in the company of their mothers or other family caregivers. Girls start fishing for shellfish. Women and girls sometimes keep the small, less valuable fish caught by the men, as a young girl tells me: "I went to live with my aunt... Then we fished, I fished with her. We caught shellfish and we got small fish from the men's catch."

As Patrícia Rodin (2021), we also found that fisherwomen have their lives characterized by the phenomenon of the tide, and, therefore, their daily lives change depending on this natural event. In the conversation circle, women talked about their daily lives. They usually wake up early in the morning, around 3 a.m., to prepare their husband's snack or lunch. They report to start, then, the domestic tasks, such as washing clothes, cleaning the house, etc. At four in the morning, if there is still fish left from the previous day's catch, they salt it and hang it on the line.

For those who have school-age sons and daughters, the bus comes to take the children at 6 a.m. Babies go by bus to daycare, mothers go with them. At 1 p.m., children who go to school in the afternoon take the bus.

As shellfish fishing can only take place during the low tide, if the tide is low when the children are at home, a friend can look after the child while the mother fishes. This event is mostly reported by older fisherwomen. In some cases, children go fishing with their mothers, but they are very concerned about taking kids to the beach during work, especially when it comes to younger children. One of the fisherwomen told us that representatives from the Child Protective Service usually visit the beach, advising mothers that children should not remain with them at work.

At 5 p.m., children who go to school in the afternoon leave school, and, at 6 p.m., those who go to school in the morning are getting ready for bed. Women's night is filled with activities such as watching soap operas, going to church or prepare fish to dry the next day.

Women report enjoying fishing. However, Zulmira says she would like to have more time for rest and leisure; Cláudia says she would like to cook different things, and Aline, a young woman, says she would like to be a veterinarian, and not fish.

Listening to these women, we realize that care fills their days: care of the house, care of their husband, care of someone who is sick. Care for children, however, only appears in their speech when provoked by my questions. For this reason, I raised the hypothesis that caring for children would be understood in this group as something very natural. This feeling seems to emerge because these women have taken care of children since they were children themselves. More than once in the open interviews, they reported caring for nephews and nieces, younger brothers and sisters, or as domestic workers.

Fisherwoman: I took care of my brothers at home. I wasn't born here, I fish because I married a fisherman. I lived in the country. One day, on the street, a car stopped, a man and a woman asked me if I wanted to work at their house.

Researcher: How old were you?

Fisherwoman: 13.

Fisherwoman: I went. I took care of the house, I took care of the children...

Luisina Morano and Andrea Szulc (2023), who carried out an ethnography on children who care for other children in a rural region of Argentina, analyze that girls have complex learning in care

relationships, as this learning translates into knowledge about caring for others, developing skills of analysis, observation, production of diagnoses, among others. However, care is not harmonious (Lara; Leavy, 2023), and the fact that it is attributed to women, from a young age, requires more in-depth analysis.

Carol Gilligan (1982) is considered the researcher who introduced the idea of female care ethics. She presents an interesting argument. According to the author, not only abstract categories (such as justice) are important for the debate on morals and ethics, but also judgments based on the experience of care and affective relationships, categories used by women. Gilligan (1982) supports that there are two types of ethics in society, one male and one female, the latter being based on care.

For Neil Noddings (1986), traditional philosophy neglected care because, as they were exercised by specific social groups, in this case, by women, it was treated as something unimportant. According to Noddings (1986), it is necessary to replace abstract masculine ethics with the ethics of care, learned in close emotional relationships, which involves the need to offer and receive care, motherhood being the pragmatic model of care relationship.

Juliana Missigaia (2023) summarizes criticisms regarding ethics of female care. The problematic issue is attributing it to women and motherhood, without a debate on historical and social issues involved. Care often constitutes a burden on women, since childhood, and is expressed differently according to class and ethnicity. In the field of feminism, criticism is related to the attribution of a fixed identity to women, which links them to care and motherhood, and not all of them identifying with motherhood.

Another issue is that, although affection may be central to care, it requires decision-making and other attitudes that require cognition (Morano; Szulc, 2023), which is done excellently by women: they manage tasks, take decisions, take care of budgets, make analysis, etc. Therefore, reflect on care as an activity only linked to affection places it within the sexual division of emotions (Heller, 1979), without overcoming it. In the sexual division of emotions, women are recognized expressing empathy, kindness and sensitivity. Men are recognized by leadership and aggression. However, Soares (2012) analyzes that, when men express emotions such as empathy and kindness in care, they are appreciated and recognized. In this way, women's emotions are sometimes recognized, sometimes considered inferior, but they rarely achieve the same social recognition as men's emotions.

In the village and in the *povoado*, care actions are still mostly carried out by women, from an early age. However, we also observe community care, highlighted by traces of solidarity. This type of care seems to establish trust to circulate and establish relations within the community. In the case of children, it manifests itself in the freedom to move and play in different places in the village and *povoado*, but with restrictions on situations outside the community, a conjecture based on the perception that people hardly go out of the community. Even among adults, especially among women, they hardly leave the community.

A young fisherwoman reports having once gone to Maceió; Rosa, a retired fisherwoman, says that her life was lived between "fishing with the girls" and going to sell the fish at the market. In the conversations in the group of fisherwomen, I heard that going to a distant location did not seem to

be pleasant. Regina always sought to take women to activities outside the village and town, but it was something that needed a lot of work.

In most houses that are on the way to the sea there is no backyard. The doors of the residences face directly onto the street, where children play. I saw boys playing with balls; girls talking, playing with dolls, running; girls and boys playing imaginary situations. I saw little ones playing with bricks, stones, wood or whatever they found on the street. Thus, the street is home to all types of games, either movement or imaginary situations.

In this sense, we raise the hypothesis of the non-existence of a clear border between house and street, and we think that the latter functions as the backyards of houses. Then, we reviewed our thought, considering that the idea of "backyard" comes from a notion of home based on the concept of private property, which is not the case there.

The street is collective, it constitutes an interconnection between inside and outside, between one's house and other houses. Children and women walk to each other's houses, without much reserve: just a call at the door, and soon neighbors, children and women are inside each other's houses to talk or ask for help. Sitting on the sidewalks, adults talk, and children play.

This freedom to move seems to be linked to knowledge and mastery of spaces (in the sense of knowing how to act in them). We assume that one of the factors that influence this freedom to move is the close relationships between people in the community, which makes each other (adults, adults and older children) assistants in care. Although those closely responsible look for the children and guide them, everyone in the community also looks for the children.

A grandmother says that her granddaughter takes messages to neighbors, goes to the market and makes small purchases. She says she keeps an eye out, but knows that if something happens, someone will come and tell her. A fisherwoman mother reports that her boys play in the street and walk around the village. She makes recommendations and advises them on inappropriate locations. So, during the time they are not at school, they play in the street and move around the community.

In this context, this community care seems to enhance children's autonomy in several ways. By autonomy, we understand the possibility of children taking and leading their own initiatives towards what interests them, acting consciously in relation to body movements, cognition and affections. According to Mello (2014), in childhood, autonomy is intrinsic to relationships with adults. In this sense, autonomy does not mean separation. On the opposite, it means security in the relations with adults, even when far from them. However, in this type of community care, as children grow, there appears to be less exclusivity in the child's relationship with a closer adult and more bonds of trust with several other adults and/or children.

In this sense of autonomy found in this fishing community, children often take on responsibilities for life's demands. We observe, for example, a boy, the son of a fisherwoman, engaged in planting tomatoes with his mother. In dialogue with this mother, she tells us that the boy was interested in planting tomatoes and that she helped him. Tomato was planted on the street, right in front of the house. Planting in the sand is not easy, as it is a type of soil with few nutrients. Care for the tomato plants was daily, and the boy was burning with curiosity to see the fruits grow.

We noticed that children are also committed to helping. At the meetings in the hut, at snack time, they helped bring food to the table and organized plastic bags for the garbage.

Thus, childhood in the village and in the *povoado* is not characterized as urban childhoods which are governed by the logic of increasing domestication and institutionalization. This logic reduces the possibilities for children to enjoy public spaces, due to the overdone perception of risks to children. This generates overprotection from adults (Sarmento, 2018 *apud* Trevisan *et al.*, 2022), limiting the possibility of children to move around places outside the familiar environment. In the village and *povoado*, this problem seems to be reduced, apparently, due to a wider community experience.

Children play were also important sources of interpretation of care in fishing communities. During the fisherwomen's meetings, we noticed children of different ages, boys and girls, playing together. We noticed a dimension of care among them: the older took care of the younger. I observed older girls braiding the hair of the younger, helping younger children to jump off the bench in one of the games, helping the younger ones put on their shoes.

Returning to the idea that, in play, we can observe new nuances of social relations, considering that children imprint what they know from multiple links with reality on relationships recreated by imagination, we saw boys playing family with the girls and involved in care relationships, as shown in this piece from the field diary, dated April 20, 2022:

The children are sitting in the hut next to the circle of chairs in which the mothers are sitting and debating. Clarice combs Inês' hair and braids it. Jorge seems irritated, sometimes whining. Rosa takes his hand and walks with him. He climbs onto the bench, then jumps, she helps him. "Let's play? Want to eat?" They sit down and pretend to eat.

In a research carried out in 2013 (Marcolino, 2013) in a Public Early Childhood Education Center in a city in the center-west in the state of São Paulo, I had noticed resistance of boys playing family: one boy told me, in a demanding tone, that he preferred to do homework! I interpreted the boys' attitude as resistance to this play, as it presents caring relationships that occur in the family, being considered a *girls' play*.

When I noticed boys playing family in the fishing community, I interpreted the situation as an indicative that they participate in care actions, which means the occurrence of transformations in social relations of care, even if small.

Another example is in Janaína and Pedro's play, recorded in my field diary:

Janaína and Pedro play. She is approximately 5 years old and he is 7 years old. They play with toy pans. Janaína brings dolls and sits them near the wall. The two make food, talk, laugh. They sit at the table. Janaína brings the dolls close to the table. They feed them.

In this record, the boy not only gets involved in the play that reproduces relationships of care, but he himself interprets actions of care, namely, cooking for the family.

Getting towards the conclusion of this text, I highlight an aspect of the fishing community that seems to inform the cultural meaning of care there. Since they live in a natural environment, fishermen have complex knowledge of maritime life and are excellent observers of nature (Oliveira, 2018). This knowledge is empirical and acquired through the observation of physical and biological

phenomena (winds, tides, fish shoal reproduction). To observe nature, which is a source of life as a source of sustenance, silence and concentration are necessary.

A striking feature from the observations is how relationships happen within silence. At the meetings in the hut, while women talked, in the same room, children played. There was body movement, gestures of children playing. There was the sound of women talking, but everything happened calmly. Children did not call their mothers for attention, and they never shouted or asked for silence.

Thus, I began to watch more closely that adults did not give children long instructions, but brief guidelines, and joined the activities that children volunteered to do, as in the case of the boy planting tomatoes and the children organizing the snack. There is a subtle friendliness in all this once it is silent, almost wordless, and, consequently, more gestural: children with their bodies, and adults with facial expressions and especially with their looks.

The boy curious about the fruits of the tomato plant told me that he liked early childhood education more than elementary school. I imagine it might be due to the fact that the first one was a space — time for play. However, the boy continued and said that “at that school, there were fewer fights, and the children were more friendly” (July 2022 field diary). Therefore, friendliness was at the center of his assessment of early childhood education.

Care that is based on this friendly subtlety and is offered in a community way allows more freedom of circulation and movement for children, in addition to more bonds of trust.

As we are used to think about child care within the family (bourgeois nuclear) with few adults as reference (the mother being the main one), we found community care in the community what provokes us to reflect on the possibilities of more community care also in early childhood education: care that provides children with the possibility of several bonds that offer freedom and autonomy.

It is important to think that the identity of babies and children is forged in their communities. Institutions suffocate children's roots and subordinate their identities when children do not have the freedom to crawl, walk, run and play; places where there is no contact with nature, no activities outside walls and in public spaces, no relationships with children of different ages — experiences that are part of their everyday lives.

Therefore, the duty of the early childhood education institution to be linked to the reality of traditional peoples, their cultures, traditions and identities, cannot be reduced to the supply of a place where children spend the day. Furthermore, this attention must be based on the recognition of knowledge and practice about care, another way of conducting relationships, which incorporates ways of caring for the community. Thus, respecting the children, their social identity, is also what care is about as a principle of the curriculum.

Provoked to reflect on a curriculum for institutions that welcome babies and children from families that live on fishing, we understood that it should be an early childhood education carried out with the community, in a friendly way, with flexible and gentle physical boundaries between the spaces inside/outside (school room, reference/external spaces, institution/community, institution/street). Another point is that, in this early childhood school, care relationships are not to happen exclusively between adults and children, as they also occur among children, reinforcing community ties, belonging, empathy and respect among peers.

## Conclusion and implications

Like manufacturing a network, this work points to so many plots that can and still need to be investigated and reflected on. For example: the possibility of investigate deeper into the issue of children's freedom and autonomy, adults' attitudes towards childhood that may be unsafe, issues relating to female care, the role of children as caregivers, the curriculum for babies and children belonging to traditional peoples.

It was possible to notice that, when we look at traditional communities, their knowledge, their lives and a complexity of issues emerges.

From a methodological point of view, the description of how the field was entered shows that many questions could not be explored in depth. We believe that the time spent in the community was still limited to bring more elements that could highlight the interpretations and speeches of the interlocutors. Therefore, this first moment, carried out due to post-doctoral research, was just the beginning: we raised hypotheses and started a way that will lead us to deepen our knowledge of the community.

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