

The Bond between Educator and Baby is Devised in the Interlacement of Caring, Educating and Playing

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ABSTRACT – The Bond between Educator and Baby is Devised in the Interlacement of Caring, Educating and Playing. The literature about early childhood education proposes an interlacing between educating, caring, and playing as a subsidy for the teacher's action. However, those actions and their possible effects on the bond with the baby must be more accurately understood. Our aim is to think of this relationship as the basis for an interested presence of the adult educator. To do so, we will use the topological figure of the Möbius strip on the proposition of a connection between caring, educating and playing, regarded as a single action in the educational work with babies in the daycare center.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education. Psychoanalysis. Daycare Center. Playing. Caring.

RESUMO – O Laço Educador-Bebê se Tece no Enodamento entre Cuidar, Educar e Brincar. A literatura acerca do trabalho educativo na primeira infância propõe uma articulação do educar com o cuidar e o brincar como subsídio para ação do professor. No entanto, é necessário entender com mais precisão essas ações e os seus possíveis efeitos no laço com o bebê. Nosso intuito é pensar essa relação como fundamento para uma presença interessada do adulto educador. Para tanto, usaremos a figura topológica da banda de Möbius na proposição de uma articulação entre cuidar, educar e brincar, entendidos como uma única ação no trabalho educativo com bebês no âmbito da creche.

Palavras-chave: Educação Infantil. Psicanálise. Creche. Brincar. Cuidar.

Introduction

Desire is the body's beginning (Arnaldo Antunes).

Currently, daycare centers are part of the field of early childhood education. The preeminently educational character of the work in educational equipment was endorsed by the 1996 National Educational Bases and Guidelines Law (LDB) (Brasil, 1996), postulating early childhood education as the first stage of K-12 education, aimed at providing the child's integral development. There is a change in the character of the developed tasks, which previously had an assistance nature of keeping babies and that prized stimulation to their satisfaction while the mother was at work. A proposal, therefore, emerging from the needs of a society in which women started to exercise a function in the labor market. Understanding the daycare as an educative equipment had an impact on the care offered to the early childhood, as well as on the function of the teacher as a privileged agent of this care.

This article has the objective of debating three aspects that are essential in searching for parameters to educational activities aimed at babies and small children in the context of daycare centers. The terms *educate*, *care* and *play* are presented in the literature as having an intrinsic function to the attention offered to children. However, it is necessary to understand more accurately those actions and their possible effects on the bond offered to the baby.

To achieve this end, we took as starting point the reading of the Brazilian Curricular Directives for Childhood Education (RCNEI), published in 1998 by the Ministry of Education (MEC), and that was broadly disseminated in Brazilian states. The purpose of the document is to serve as "[...] a set of pedagogical references and guidelines that aim to contribute with the implantation or implementation of quality educational practices" (Brasil, 1998, p. 13). Although not mandatory and criticized by several authors (Kuhlmann Jr., 2005; Cerisara, 2005; Aquino; Vasconcellos, 2005), the document emphasizes its own importance as an inductor of public policies propositions and early childhood education programs, to offer parameters and guidelines for the daily professional exercise.

Analyzing this document, we noticed that the topic *Educating* comprises the subtopics *Caring*, *Playing* and – following the proposed sequence – *Learning in Oriented Situations*. In this study, we highlighted the first three terms, since the last one mentions, above all, the organization of the offer by the teacher so that learning and interactions occur. The topic *Learning in Oriented Situations* highlights the purpose of the adults' intervention and, as we intend to show, the action directed to the baby or small child is founded on a specific interlacement of the other three terms: *educating*, *caring* and *playing*. In this sense, the presence of the educator with babies is not necessarily restricted to the proposals offered in situations oriented by him/her.

To build this debate, we will initially address the binomial *caring/educating* and analyze how it appears in both the RCNEI and the psy-

choanalytic literature on the function of daycare centers with the infants. Secondly, we will address the central role of *playing*, as well as the theoretical foundation supporting the discussion proposed. Finally, we shall have elements that allow us to make remarks on what we regard, with the contribution of psychoanalysis, as an interlacing between *caring*, *educating* and *playing* in the context of early childhood education.

Educating and Caring Intertwined as a Möbius Strip

As stated in the RCNEI (Brasil, 1998, p. 23), educating means “[...] to provide situations of care, play and learning, guided in an integrated way”. Hence the subsequent subdivision of this axis into the three sub-topics above. However, we believe that the order in which they are listed is not random, since, at the beginning of the debate on early childhood education, the need to integrate the *educating* and *caring* functions was stressed, and there should not be a hierarchy between them.

Caring, before the LDB (Brasil, 1996), was regarded as a minor activity, an activity for the assistants of child development – attendants, servants – when the daycare center was proposed and understood as a benefit to the working mother. Concerning that, Mariotto (2009) comments that this conception, called by her traditional, takes the two functions separately. In this point of view, “[...] the notion of care refers to the work provided to the body and its physiological and instrumental functions”, while educating “[...] refers to the entrance of the little one in the formal world of pedagogical knowledge” (Mariotto, 2009, p. 16). This polarization between education and care is called by Kuhlmann Jr. (2000, p. 12) of clash, in which the “[...] educational or pedagogical are seen as intrinsically positive, as opposed to the assistance, which is negative and incompatible with the first ones”.

There is an attempt to overcome this polarization by proposing to address the binomial *caring/educating* as functions of the daycare educator. To contemplate care in the educational context, still according to the RCNEI, is “[...] to understand it as an integrant part of education, even though it may require knowledge, skills, and tools that extrapolate the pedagogical dimension” (Brasil, 1998, p. 24).

Again, we have the same movement: while to define *educate* it is necessary to refer to *care* as being equal to the first, to define *care* it is necessary to notice it as part of education, even though it requires skills that are not eminently educational. *Care* and *educate*, in the context of early childhood education, start to function as a binomial, which entails an inseparability present by definition. The meaning of *educate* is, therefore, built in the relation with *care*, passing through the pedagogical but without being signified solely by it.

First, there seems to be a dubiousness that the RCNEI text allows. While the connection of care/education is consolidated and both actions appear as equally important in the making of early childhood education, a prioritization of *educating* rather than *caring* emerges. The very organization of the document places *care* as a subtopic of *educat-*

ing, implying that there would be a prevalence of one over the other. This misunderstanding does not happen without consequences. Frequently, daycare educators say that their job is not only to *care* and that they prepare pedagogical activities in which they anchor their actions as teachers.

As Kuhlmann Jr. warns (2005, p. 60), the RCNEI ends up segmenting the two dimensions. He recalls the use of the English word *educare* and proposes that:

[...] if the care must be observed in the most different educational levels, it is a fundamental element in the education of a small child. The translation of the English word to Portuguese needs to maintain the unity of the terms, using links between them: educate-and-care.

He resumes the polarization between care and education to highlight that the educational institutions have as an element intrinsic to their operation the function of assisting, keeping and caring for the children that study there. As he states, “[...] we do not need to be ashamed of these dimensions of the pedagogical work” (Kuhlmann Jr., 2005, p. 60). To the author, the attribution of the need for new pedagogical proposals to the polarization between assistance and education was recurring in early childhood education institutions throughout History. Nevertheless, the new proposals “[...] did not change significantly the typical characteristics of an assistentialist conception of education” (Kuhlmann Jr., 2005, p. 185). It seems that the challenge of overcoming the dichotomy is not, after all, a defeated challenge. “The terrain is the ambiguity, not the polarity between past and present” (Kuhlmann Jr., 1998, p. 194).

Another point that gains importance in the reading of the RCNEI is, precisely, the disjunction between educational and pedagogical. According to the document, *to educate* and *to care* require certain skills and some of them are not in the educational field, which ultimately establishes the act of *educating* as not coincident with teaching. In this perspective, to educate is the action of an adult in a relationship with the child, in which the former uses his/her experiential and professional contributions to transmit to the latter an accumulated knowledge, allowing that children access “[...] broader knowledges of the social reality” (Brasil, 1998, p. 23). Teaching is referred to as being the theoretical and technical framework that sustains a directed action in which the educator is a “[...] mediator among the children and objects of knowledge” (Brasil, 1998, p. 30). Thus, teaching has its place in early childhood education, but the education, even if it passes through it, depends on more extensive connections. The RCNEI points, therefore, towards proposing an educational action that is not limited to teaching and that includes the imbrication of *care* and *educate* by definition. But this sense is itself a goal to be conquered because both in regulations and, mainly, in the daily life in daycare centers this notion still seems to waver.

The proposition of Lajonquière (2004, n.p.), which already became the classic conception of *education* to psychoanalysis, is in a close rela-

tionship with the disjunction of the terms education and pedagogy. To him, “to *educate* is to transmit symbolic marks that allow the infant to enjoy a place in the field of word and language, from which it is possible to be launched to the impossible intents of desire.” *Educating* is not limited to teaching, but it is, above all, inserting the child in the humanized world to allow them to make use of words, with the risk of misunderstanding, which is a constitutive part of every language relation. Every act of the educator that carries this dimension of transmitting an unknown knowledge is named as an educational act. Kupfer, Bernardino and Mariotto (2014, p. 20), when commenting about the function of daycare centers in the reception of babies, state that they will have access to speaking if the educator is recognized “[...] also in the place of the one who has something to say, and not just to do, because only then he/she can give the baby a place of speaker.”

To give ballast to the saying and doing of the educator, that is, to support their action in the educational context, Mariotto (2009) proposes that the caring/educating binomial is understood as the two faces of a coin, but that can be articulated in a Möbius way.

The Möbius band is a strip with two continuous sides, in a way that it is impossible to discern the back and the front side. This happens in a half twist that is made in the band and in a later union of its extremities. Thus, the produced topological figure subverts the traditional division in two sides since when you run your finger through the surface of this band you will continuously touch both sides. In this way, it is possible to affirm that the twist results in a strip that has a single surface.

According to the proposal of Mariotto (2009), if we take a rectangular strip of paper, write *care* in one side and *educate* in the other, and give it a half twist to unite both tips, we would have a *Möbius strip* that would represent the articulation between *care* and *educate*. If, for instance, we started passing our finger on the face where *care* is written, we would necessarily follow this way passing by *educate*, and then we would reach *care* again, which was our starting point.

To take the Möbius articulation of *care* and *educate* as a base for the educational act corroborates that this is done in a relation of subject to subject. The educator will also support, in their relationship with the baby, that their manifestations can be read as manifestations of the subject. According to Kupfer (2007, p. 220), the subject “[...] is the effect of speeches, but, when it breaks in, it creates, recreates and transforms the same thing that made it emerge. The subject focuses on the speeches that were used to be said.” Manifestations of subject are those written in the social bond that update the unconscious dimension.

Mariotto (2009, p. 132) proposes an articulation of the caring/educating binomial with what she postulates as being the preventive character of the daycare center work. To the author:

We go from the idea that it will never be possible to anticipate the way something will affect and will be taken by the subject, but the way they orient themselves in relation to this should be Möbian. That is, they should contem-

plate the twists that allow the experience and its meaning *a posteriori* to contemplate the partiality of the function of the one who educates and the impossibility of predictable results in the one that is educated.

In this quote, “prevent” is not being used as a synonym for detecting problems in a relation of cause and effect that binds several events. Mariotto used the term “prevention” to affirm that the other can offer to the baby conditions to its subjectivation.

The topic of prevention is controversial in psychoanalysis, so it is possible to explain a twist that some psychoanalysts propose towards thinking a *health promotion* action as being within the scope of educational work. About that, Almeida (1998) comments about the impotence of the school to prevent mental disorders, since, with the psychoanalysis, “[...] we recognize the radical impossibility of eliminating intrapsychic conflicts and performing the prophylaxis of neuroses, because there is no way to ensure a *good education* that, in turn, ensures a *good mental health* to the subject” (Almeida, 1998, p. 116, emphasis added).

The term *health promotion* allows us to distance ourselves from the idea embedded in the notion of prevention that refers to the prophylaxis of neurosis and the guarantee of a healthy future. To give a base to this conceptual twist, it is necessary to turn to the Freudian temporality, that is, the incidence of retro-action in the construction of the experienced subjectively. Laplanche and Pontalis (1992, p. 33) comment that the term *Nachträglichkeit*, “afterwardsness” in English, is used by Freud to mark his idea of temporality and psychic causality: “The first thing the introduction of the notion does is to rule out the brief interpretation that reduces the psychoanalytic view of the subject’s history to a linear determinism, envisaging nothing but the action of the past upon the present.” This temporal dimension has its support in the idea that a second moment will have an effect on previous events that are not themselves *striking* or *traumatic*. It is at this time between a before and an after that a non-deterministic dynamic is put to the events. The resignification appears as temporality that can give several destinations to early events.

In this perspective, the Möbian articulation of *care* and *educate* in the work with children, to us, is close to the health promotion. According to Fukuda (2014, p. 32), “an attentive listener can operate the required turning toward the promotion of a new arrangement that is capable of giving rise to a significance.” The particular addressing of the educator to the baby attests, at the same time, that the educator is warned (even if it is an unknown knowledge) about the *prägnanz* of the Other’s desire in the subjective constitution, and that addressing is a necessary condition, even though it is not enough for the subject’s emergence. Dunker (2006, p. 16) explains that the Other is “[...] the set of symbolic systems, social forms, and cultural rules that make possible our relations with our equals (others). Since this set is always structured by the language, we say that the Other is the field of language.” This way, the little others – equals – will play the Other to the baby.

It is in a dialectical movement between the alienation and the separation that Lacan (1964/1998a) finds the propelling spring of the subject's constitution, being essential, therefore, that the adults significant to the baby can appear as those that name something of its subjective experience. When the educator anticipates a place of subject to the baby, it may be launched to the impossible intents of its unconscious desires (Lajonquière, 2004).

Crespin (2004), an author who devotes a large part of her work to thinking the subjective bond established between a privileged adult – the mother, for instance – and the baby, points out that it is a function of that other person to name the experiences of the child. The author states that, when a mother offers her breast when noticing a certain agitation or discomfort of the baby, she translates those manifestations as *hunger*. When she does this, “[...] she attributes to the baby the desire to be fed, in relation to her own desire – and pleasure – to feed.” This crucial moment must be alternated with the possibility to receive her child's manifestations as expressions of difference. This can happen when she respects the satiety signs, for example. That is, “[...] if, beyond her own desire, the mother is capable to admit the otherness of the baby, which deprives her of her omnipotence of deciding for him” (Crespin, 2004, p. 30).

Jerusalinsky (2011, p. 142) states that:

The necessary alienation to the Other for the constitution is evidenced by the fact that, when they begin to speak of themselves, children refer to themselves as ‘baby’ or by the nickname with which the mother usually calls them. The child names him/herself in the third person, calling him/herself as the mother does. It would be necessary successive movements of alienation and separation in the relationship as the Other so that the child can constitute an imaginary unit of their body [...] and so they can place themselves as a subject of enunciation that states ‘this body is mine’.

Playing as a Baby Activity

Taking *playing* as the language par excellence of the child is already a consensus. When playing, the child learns about his/her body, pleasures, tastes, and the world. According to Ortiz and Carvalho (2012, p. 104), “[...] when playing, the baby bonds with the world around, with those related with him/her, and with the cultural universe in which he/she is inserted.” It is while playing that the subjective construction happens in childhood, and, in this sense, we agree with Mariotto (2009, p. 142) when she states that “[...] when there is no play, the subject is silent.”

It is common, when we evoke playing in psychoanalysis, that we situate it in the description of *Fort-da* made by Freud (1920/1993), after seeing his one-and-a-half-year-old grandson playing with a reel, which was launched far from him while saying *fort* (gone) and then pulled back to him while saying *da* (there). This back and forth was raised,

in psychoanalysis, to the status of a nodal point in the construction of symbolic play. Through it, the baby accesses the possibility of elaborating the comings and goings of the mother, without being hostage to a despotic and capricious Other. If this Other is away, the child can play with this absence and create in that interval his/her own way to be placed in this field. The *Fort-da* game illustrates a unique creation of the baby, in which it is inscribed as a subject from the difference regarding the other.

According to Lacan (1964/1998a, p. 63), the *Fort-da*, which could be translated as *here or there*, “[...] whose aim, in its alternation, is simply that of being the *fort* of a *da*, and the *da* of a *fort*” (emphasis added). The game “[...] is the subject’s answer to what the mother’s absence has created on the frontier of his domain” and it is from it that a process of symbolization is established.

Although absolutely central in the psychoanalytical development about the subjective constitution, this moment does not cover events and experiences prior to the construction of the symbolic playing. Jerusalinsky (2011, p. 231) asks precisely about these precursory productions of a symbolic playing. To the author, if playing implies a *jouissance*¹, “[...] it is in the hard work of establishing the coast between *jouissance* and knowledge.” She names the attempt to produce such inscription as *constitutive games of the subject*. An inscription that creates a coastline, a border that allows the experience to be translated and qualified by the child. An experience from which the child extracts a possible knowledge, which makes them tangible without exhausting it. The symbolic game would be an unfolding of this first time, in which “[...] the child enjoys the displacements to which the signifier gives place, the metaphors that it enables and through which one thing can be taken by the other” (Jerusalinsky, 2011, p. 233).

When we look at the RCNEI (Brasil, 1998), there as a topic entirely directed to contextualize and fundament playing in the field of early childhood education, which, as it should be remembered, covers children aged from zero to five years and eleven months.

In the RCNEI, we find the following definition of playing:

Playing is a child’s language that maintains an essential link with what is ‘not playing’. If playing is an action that occurs in the imagination plane, this implies that the one who plays has the *dominance of symbolic language*. This means that it is necessary to have *awareness of the difference between playing and the immediate reality* that gave it content to be realized. [...] This peculiarity of playing happens through the articulation between imagination and imitation of reality. Every game is a transformed *imitation*, in the plane of emotions and ideals, *of a reality* previously experienced (Brasil, 1998, p. 27, emphasis added).

The terms highlighted in italics in the quotation explain this concept of playing as an imitation of a previous reality experience, in which the consciousness of the difference between what is a game and what

is the immediate reality appears. A distinction that is evidenced, for example, in the make-believe of a child that makes noises when they *pretend* to eat. This definition approaches the child's dominance over the symbolic playing. The problem lies in the fact that this reinforces an idea that playing is the same as: play games, make believe, and build situations in which they know they are playing.

Jerusalinsky (2011), when discussing the status of the subject's constitutive games as parts of the symbolic playing, makes us think about the consequences of this conception for educational actions with children.

The author reminds us of the temporary paradoxical situation of babies that are between the symbolic anticipation made by another and the immaturity of their body. This incongruence between something the adult anticipates to the baby – the image of an organized and harmonic body – with the subjective experience that the baby has of that body – which is still fragmented – was studied by Lacan (1949/1998b) in his famous text *The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the Self as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience*. From this, the jubilant assumption of babies identifying with this illusory image that they see reflected in the eyes of the other who is significant to them arises.

According to Jerusalinsky (2011, p. 245), “[...] what is at stake in the baby's playing is an intense job of building a coastline.” This coastline will have its effects of inscription in the Self-Other separation and even in the times of the subject as it allows “[...] an articulation between the ‘now’, the ‘I was’, and the ‘become’.” (Jerusalinsky, 2011, p. 234) The very interest in another's body, especially their orifices, tells of this costly activity of building borders. “The mother, while caring for the baby, introduces pleasant games that extrapolate the pure satisfaction of the needs, as well as she supposes a play on the part of the baby.” (Jerusalinsky, 2011, p. 247) This would be the first half of playing, the time of assumption made by the helpful Other who is mainly – but not exclusively – incarnated by the mother.

In the second half, this game is relaunched, beyond the borders of the body, in the relation with the environment. “As soon as the baby starts to experiment spatial displacements, by crawling or walking, it starts to fiddle in all holes, crevices, perforations in the house, and to stop on its corners, borders, steps.” (Jerusalinsky, 2011, p. 247)

Continuing with the important contributions by Jerusalinsky (2011), we highlight two games as precursors of the *Fort-da*. One of them is the game of throwing objects away from oneself. Unlike the *Fort-da*, there is in this proposal the necessary participation of an adult that recover the pieces, so the child keeps throwing them, exercising the establishing of alternation between presence and absence. The second game is what we call “Peek-a-boo!”, in which it is introduced a discontinuity of the look between adult and baby, once one of them is hidden behind their hands or a bulkhead that is often the own baby's blankie. For this game to happen, it is necessary the presence of an adult and that the discontinuity introduced is not excessively prolonged so as to not gen-

erate distress in the baby. The adult needs to think of those games as the baby's productions, and not only as another job that forces them, for instance, to collect the toys and objects scattered around. Another characteristic present in those games is the repetition, which makes that the games are proposed or requested by the child repeatedly, demonstrating a satisfaction that is experimented exactly in the recurrence of what is already known.

Both games are supported in the bond that the baby has with this primordial Other and unveil what Laznik (2004) called a third time of the drive circuit. It is a moment in which the baby offers itself to another one, provokes them, in order to catch the jouissance of that other and not have only its needs met. The drive circuit is powered by those pleasant exchanges that are not contained in satiety. To play "Peek-a-boo!", for example, makes the child experiment the joy the adult feels when seeing them fully hooked in the game.

Françoise Dolto (1981), a psychoanalyst consecrated for devoting herself to the care of children, reports an interaction she had with Jacques, a baby of only nine months of age. This encounter illustrates the articulation between the games precursors of *Fort-da* and the beginning of the symbolization actively made by the baby and its game partner. Dolto realizes the interest of the boy for a hat she was using. She offered him the hat, and he starts to throw it on the floor so that the good lady retrieves it and put it back in her head, to then offer it one more time to the boy, who would throw it on the floor again. The analyst attributes words to the game when saying that the hat was on the floor and, after a certain number of times, she announces that *now there is no hat anymore*. Jacques insists, asks for the hat. She repeats that *there is no hat anymore* and starts to hide and show the hat, saying *hat/no more hat*. Initially, this alternation followed the disappearance and reappearance of the object, until Dolto decides to separate word and gesture, saying *hat* when hiding it and *not more hat* when it reappeared. This makes the baby laugh each time she proposed the repetition of the game, in which the word was followed by a gesture that contradicted it.

This story left me the memory that a little communicative baby of nine months, through language and even without pronouncing himself the words, can become master of its desire; that a baby that still cannot talk is not only capable of motor and verbal games in harmony with another human being, but already knows the contradiction between what is said and the experience of sensory reality (Dolto, 1981, p. 10).

This course through the games that are precursors of the *Fort-da*, or still, of the symbolic game, authorizes us to state that, as soon as in the baby's initial interactions, there is a playing being exercised. But this playing depends on a helpful another to name it as such and to enter the game, and to volunteer to be where the baby needs. This expands what we understand as playing in the universe of early childhood and has a direct consequence on what the education can propose as a function

of the teacher. Playing with children assumes, in this perspective, the possibility of “[...] sustaining the condition so they can come and go and be authors of creative acts, supporting their place as subjects where the speech is insufficient, but that can be exercised in the protected sphere of playing” (Jerusalinsky, 2011, p. 260).

We can go back to the question about the consequences that the understanding of *playing*, as fundamentally connected to the symbolic playing, has in the educational action. In the last paragraph of the RCNEI, in the topic on *playing*, it is highlighted as an important tool of recreation and stabilization of several knowledges on the part of the children. The text stresses that the teacher must differentiate free and spontaneous playing from situations in which certain learnings are the goal: it is necessary that they “[...] are aware that the children are not freely playing in these situations, since there are educational objectives in motion.” (Brasil, 1998, p. 29)

The action of the teacher is tied to the didactic proposition that aims to enable learning. This is evidenced in the conception that learning in oriented situations “[...] depends on a direct intervention of the teacher.” (Brasil, 1998, p. 29) The figure of the mediator-teacher appears, who, as a more experienced partner, will have the function of providing a variety of experiences with the objects of knowledge. Of course, there is no problem with the teacher planning the activities and proposing them to the class, aiming at a certain objective. Our discussion resides in the fact that this protagonism is assigned to the teacher and to the pedagogical activity, having as consequence that the playing is not understood as the educator’s role in the full exercise of their functions.

The educational task seems to be explained when the teacher gains the place of proponent, and not of interested and helpful observer. Their action is highlighted when their intentionality wins the scene. But this ends up placing in the background the function of building a creative playing with the baby. This situation also depends on the presence of an interested adult, who can take the baby’s initiatives as addressed to him/her and give them credit. The early childhood education has the risk of giving to the teacher the protagonist role when they take the initiative of conducting the learning.

This ends up devaluing the role the adult has, also active and central, in letting themselves be led and seduced by the baby. The uncertainty we mentioned about the connection between *educating* and *caring* seems to unfold in this valuation of the oriented action for learning as being the teacher’s function par excellence.

To highlight the symbolic playing and raise it to paradigm of child playing contradicts the Möbius lacing of *care* and *educate*. If we accept playing as a synonym of children’s play, we will be adopting one mode of play as the definition of play itself, which would disqualify the other interactions present in the field of playing and its game potential.

The Möbius Interlacement of Educating, Caring and Playing

How can we think the interlacing between *educating*, *caring* and *playing* in a way that those actions can be taken as a foundation for an interested presence of the adult/educator? This is this question we intend to answer in the conclusion of this study.

To this end, we took as an enigma to be unveiled the following statement, that names the study by Ortiz and Carvalho (2012): caring, educating and playing, a single action. Enigma because we had worked out that *caring* and *educating* are articulated as a Möbius strip and, in this sense, as a single action and not as two sides or two actions that are interlaced. How to think the insertion of *playing* in this Möbius relation of continuity? Would it be possible to establish a Möbius interlacement of the three terms?

To this end, we researched the properties of this topologic figure of the Möbius strip. The first interesting quality appears when making a longitudinal cut in the middle of the strip. When performing this incision, the Möbius property is extended, that is, a long strip is obtained and that maintains this continuity relation between the faces, provided by the half twist.

However, if instead of cutting the strip in this central point we make a longitudinal cut in the proportion of one-third of it, what we will obtain as result is the detachment of a ring, fruit of this section, hooked to the Möbius band. This cut makes the figure, once unique, to unfold in two: a Möbius band and a ring that can stroll along the strip, being always attached to it².

If, as we indicated, this band was built with a strip with the inscriptions *care* and *educate*, this ring that results from it will also be made of this fabric. Our proposal is to think *playing* as this ring that is detached from the band and that has, in its texture, the *care* and the *educate* as a foundation. Playing is detached through an act promoted by the educator in their relationship with the baby and is constituted as a space for the elaboration of subjective experiences and apprehension of the world. When we say that playing is an act of the educator, we also include the dimension of an active, interested waiting, comprising the contemplation and not exactly equivalent to the initiative. This is the result of a position that takes care and education as bases of the educational act.

In our view, this image could work as a paradigm for the educational action, as it puts on equal terms *caring* and *educating* and, moreover, is an evidence that *playing* is powerful precisely because it is interlaced and effected as an act of caring/educating. In this sense, taking this property of the strip as a principle, it is possible to affirm that *care*, *education* and *playing* are articulated in a Möbius way and, therefore, can be thought as a single action in the bond between educator and baby and, thus, as a foundation to the work in early childhood education.

Translated from Portuguese by Laura Varanda and proofread by Ananyr Porto Fajardo.

Received on August 11, 2017

Approved on April 19, 2018

Notes

- 1 Jouissance is a Lacanian concept hard to define, especially by the fact that its status changes throughout his work. It is a concept that cannot be learned or equaled to the idea of pleasure or satisfaction; it concerns something unnameable that is a source of anguish and appears in the formation of symptoms. It has its origin in the Freudian proposition of *beyond the pleasure principle* (Freud, 1920/1993).
- 2 We can easily perform this experience using paper, scissors and tape or glue (just follow the instructions provided in this text).

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