



Articles

Profile of Prosocial Behaviors of Institutionalized Children at a School Yard

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Abstract

Prosocial behavior refers to actions directed to the welfare of the others and it is influenced by physical and social aspects of the environment. This study objected to investigate chiefly the occurrences of care behavior among institutionalized children. Four boys and one girl took part in this study, with ages between four and six years old, who were observed in the yard of the school. A total of ten sessions of twenty-five-minute were recorded for each focal subject, summing 250 minutes of recordings. At total, 26 behavioral events which denoted care with the others were identified and organized into the following categories: Helping, Care-taking playing, Establishing affectionate contact, and Entertaining. The results indicate that while participants are at the school yard, the most demonstrated behavior subcategory involves cooperation attitudes (Helping subcategory). The data also show that male focal subjects who were older than five years old and were at school for less than 15 months would emit more care behaviors. Concerning receivers, it was found that the girls who were studying at school, younger children and the ones who had less time in the institution received more prosocial behavior. It is expected that the results of this study may contribute to future researches while investigating prosocial behavior in educational settings, especially when they involve special populations, such as children who live in shelter institutions. Similarly, studies like this can encourage the development of (pedagogic-political and other) projects in institutions for children in order to stimulate prosocial behavior among peers.

Keywords: care behavior, institutionalized children, school

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Current studies about the patterns of interaction in environments for the children (e.g., Barnett, Burns, Sanborn, Bartel, & Wilds, 2004; Carrus, Fornara, & Bonnes, 2005; Carvalho, 2000; Fernandes, 2006; Sager, Sperb, Roazzi, & Martins, 2003; Sebanc, 2003; Wolff & Fesseha, 1999) show that the social behavior of children is influenced by physical characteristics of the environment (dimension, structure and space setting) as well as social characteristics (characteristics of the subjects that attend such space). Therefore, interactions and behaviors of children have been studied, taking into consideration the influence of aspects related to the context in which these children interact with adults and groups of peers in the daily life activities.

Environmental Psychology among other areas that value the influence of the institutional and family environment on the children's behavior presents today several perspectives of analysis (Carrus et al., 2005). Among them, there is the investigation centered on the understanding of the ecological context that regulates social behaviors, in an attempt to show how the physical and social characteristics of the environment have influence on the relationship between people and vice-versa. In other words, the human interactions that take place on their ecological environment may contribute for the development of the child and its peers, a perspective shared by Bronfenbrenner (1996).

The ecological approach of the development, especially, considers the structure of each environment to have different effects on the same person. According to Bronfenbrenner (1996), with regards to the environmental characteristics that define the great urban centers it is verified that how these living areas for children are currently structured probably reflect ecological changes that resulted from substantial changes in the familie's routine and in the dynamics of the interactions between people in these contexts. Hence, it might be mentioned the reduced presence of children playing on the sidewalks, or on the streets, watched by their parents and/or in the company of neighbors and friends, as a habit that produced an urbanization logic that is not based on the verticalization and the segregation of the spaces so common nowadays. The current urban environment tends to reduce the changes of a close and intimate interaction between people, increasing the individualism and decreasing the prosocial activities, besides limiting such behaviors to specific environments since childhood (Carrus et al., 2005).

In Brazil, among other changes in other current society, the school began to have more responsibilities in promoting social interactions between peers in the first years of life, for, as an institution for children, it became one of the few places in which the child is driven to live along and relate to each other (Raymundo & Kuhnen, 2009). For these authors, it is important to highlight the strict relation between the school environment and the psychological development of children on the grounds of a society that is guided by essentially urban values and practices.

Under this perspective some studies (Costa & Cavalcante, 2012; Fernandes, 2006; Sager, Sperb, Roazzi, & Martins, 2003) show that schools are conceived by many specialists as an environment in which the sociability of the children is stimulated in all possible ways according to new demands of the urban life, valuing experiences that can improve the quality of the relationships created in the children's interactions contexts, favoring therefore the expression of actions of a prosocial nature between peers.

Cavalcante (2008) has a hypothesis that in this context, if the school enables benefits to the development of children that live in a family environment, maybe the experience in this kind of context may have a clearer value for the sociability of those who live in sheltering institutions. Inserting children from sheltering, foster home, orphanages, and other sheltering institutions, makes it possible to establish bonds with the community, allows them to distance from the strict institutional routine and its way to organize the activities by age and gender, that limit the chance to choose interaction partners. Additionally, at school, the author carries on, the child that is in a situation of institutional sheltering also has the opportunity to establish bonds with partners that have other social family conditions that are not in personal or social vulnerability. The perceptions from the insertions in the school environment, the activities, the roles and relations associated to it, act in order to understand and overcome the suffering situations and anguishes created by the distance from the family (Alexandre & Vieira, 2004; Cavalcante, 2008).

In this study, prosocial behavior is understood as attitudes of help and cooperation in actions of solidarity that look for the other person's welfare without a stated interest in getting something in return. (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2008). The prosocial behavior is seen as proactive and reactive responses to the needs of the others, that serve to promote their welfare (Hastings, Utendale, & Sullivan, 2007). Some studies have confirmed the hypothesis that children who engage in prosocial actions (Carvalho, 2000; Cole & Cole, 2003; Lordelo & Carvalho, 1989), even when institutionalized (Alexandre & Vieira, 2004; Cavalcante, 2008; Conger, Stocker, & McGuire, 2009; Wolff & Fesseha, 1999), have the possibility to better develop socially (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2008), learn to put themselves in somebody else's place (Kail, 2004), to cooperate and to become more skilful people to work in group

(Kovács, Téglás, & Endress, 2010). It is worth mentioning that institutionalized children, due to their experience in adverse situations, can express prosocial behavior more easily (Cavalcante, 2008).

In addition to these direct benefits to the children it is possible to affirm that the presence of prosocial behavior between peers act in the sense of preventing aggressive and stressful situations towards education, care, and child sheltering (Williams, Mastergeorge, & Ontai, 2010; Wolff & Fesseha, 1999). An example is the massive broadcast by the medias of bullying scenes and aggression episodes for frivolous reasons that involve the relations between peers inside the school surroundings. Therefore, the school institution is being challenged to search for ways on the opposite direction to this reality, in an attempt to stimulate social interactions guided by prosocial behavior, whereas, as shown by, Motta, Falcone, Clark, and Manhães (2006), selfless actions inhibit the recurrent manifestations of aggression among classmates.

Despite the importance of the prosocial behavior and its benefits to child development, it is noted that there are still few studies with the purpose to observe prosocial behavior of children in school environment in the last decades (Carvalho, 2000; Saud & Tonelotto, 2005; Sebanc, 2003; Turini & Rodrigues, 2008). Even fewer may be the studies on prosocial behavior with the observation of institutionalized children (Costa & Cavalcante, 2012).

It's interesting to remember that as the benefits of prosocial deeds for the human development are several, moreover are distinct the modalities of this form of behavior, even in the childhood. Among them, it is stressed the care behavior that have motivated several studies about the children's interactions and the peer relationship, either attached or not.

In this study, the care behavior gathers events that lead to complementary interactions among children that mimic the adult parental behavior as it offers care and protection. It is linked therefore to the interactions that offer social support in difficult situations and emotional support that ease the adaptation to the environment (Carvalho, 2000; Cavalcante, 2008; Cavalcante, Costa, & Magalhães, 2012; Costa & Cavalcante, 2012; Lordelo & Carvalho, 1989).

Amongst the publications on this modality of behavior with children in school context, it is highlighted the study performed by Sebanc (2003). At a preschool in the state of Minnesota, the study investigated two specific behaviors in the children's interactions: antisocial and prosocial behavior. This research aimed at assessing the characteristics of friendship among children and determining whether they are connected or not to prosocial and aggressive behavior. Among the findings, the author affirms that one of the determinant factors for the child behavior is the gender, for the data show boys to have a higher tendency for antisocial behavior than girls do, data also show children that present a greater number of peers show more prosocial behaviors.

In Brazil, Carvalho (2000) compared contextual factors that imply on the care behavior among children in institutional environment. For that, three groups of children were observed: two at a preschool and one at an orphanage. The researcher aimed at demonstrating evidences that indicate the influence of the environment on the care behavior between peers. It was highlighted the importance of considering the effects of contextual factors for the occurrence of care behaviors among children from different institutional environments. The method used by Carvalho (2000) was characterized by the observation of 30 two-year-old children, 15 boys and 15 girls, from two preschools and an orphanage. The observational sessions lasted twenty minutes, resulting in 16 hours of recordings and some written notes of several free recreation situations. The recordings were separated into four subcategories of the care behavior: Affectionate contact, Entertaining, Helping and Care-taking Playing. Among

the results, the main discovery was that the environmental organization had direct influence in the occurrence of the care behaviors. The results also show day care centers have a higher frequency in the occurrence of this type of behavior, especially when considering the subcategory *affectionate contact* for giving more motivation for the students to exercise the touch during the teacher-student, student-student interaction.

Another research that deserves highlights for revealing data about the care behavior among institutionalized children is the research of [Cavalcante \(2008\)](#). Such study is important for being one of the most recent researches on the children's care behavior and for having taken place at the same institution as the current study. In other words, it gathered children with similar social family characteristics to those selected for this study and that lived at the same institution the present research was performed.

[Cavalcante \(2008\)](#) aimed at analyzing the ecological dimension of institutional care provided to children from zero to six years old, through the investigation of aspects from the interactional dynamic between children and the subsystems that constitute the shelter as a context for the human development. In that study the author analyzed contextual factors that have influence on the setting of prosocial interaction patterns and the emergence of care behavior between peers in an environment of children's shelter. Took part of the study performed by the above-mentioned author ten children aging from two to four years old that lived in the shelter. At first, the categorization of the children was performed, and then a total of 60 sessions of observation was carried out, each with five minutes duration. In total, each children was observed by approximately 300 minutes, in different shifts and places.

In the main results, [Cavalcante \(2008\)](#) summed 957 behavioral events distributed in the following categories: Establishing affectionate contact (537). Helping (321), Care-taking (96), and Entertaining (3). The data reveal that in the researched sheltering institution the care between peers appeared by the demonstration of affection towards the other with or without physical contact.

From what was exposed it is considered that the study of contextual factors that act in the sense to allow the manifestation of care behavior between peers in the school environment must be investigated as so for it has specific contours. Such factors act on these behavioral modality through physical characteristics of the environment (dimension, setting, and special organization), as through the people that are integrating in this space (variables as gender, age and period of permanence), as exposed by [Cavalcante \(2008\)](#), but also [Sager et al. \(2003\)](#) and [Carvalho \(2000\)](#). This means considering such influences through the ecological perspective, they are also subjects to the effects of macrosystemic contextual factors, possibly favoring or inhibiting the manifestation of this form of behavior.

Before the stated by the literature ([Alexandre & Vieira, 2004](#); [Carvalho, 2000](#); [Cavalcante, 2008](#); [Costa & Cavalcante, 2012](#)) about prosocial behavior between institutionalized children and the lack of publications on the theme, this study aimed at investigating both aspects of the environment, physical (dimension, setting, and space organization) and social (activities accomplished), in addition to the attributes of the focal subject as personal and physical (gender and age), and also social (period of permanence, age, gender, and period of permanence of the receptor) aspects that compete with the manifestation of the care behavior between peers in the yard of an educational institution.

Method

Participants

There were five participants in this study, four boys and one girl, with ages from four to six years old, who were at the time of the research in institutional shelter. The selection of the participants had as priorities the age of the children for considering that as the age advances it favors the manifestation of the prosocial behavior, as the child grows, its empathetic ability increases (Cole & Cole, 2003; Kail, 2004; Lordelo & Carvalho, 1989; Sebanc, 2003). For the selection criteria the subjects chosen should be regularly enrolled at the school and without perspective to go back to their families for the estimated time form completion of the observational sessions. All the children that partook the study fitted the predefined inclusion criteria.

Physical and Social Environment

The institution proposed as research environment is set in the municipality of Icoaraci, in the metropolitan region of Belém-PA, in the North of Brazil. This school was selected for counting with the highest number of children that lived in a sheltering institution and already attended school. The school had a major educational structure, with the first grades and more advanced groups, their educational activities and cultural dissemination were oriented by a Political Pedagogical Project (PPP) which was guided by social and political democratic values. With regards to the number of employees and students the school had, at the time, 29 workers to attend 474 enrolled students, who were distributed in three shifts, Preschool (60 students), Elementary (190 students), Young And Adults Education (224). This institution attended the children of the workers from SESI (Social Industrial Service - *Serviço Social da Indústria*), the community where it is inserted, and the children sent by sheltering institutions through scholarship. The school yard was the chosen environment to perform the observational sessions, it was understood this space had the social function to promote the interaction among students of varied ages and the spontaneous play (Fernandes, 2006; Sager et al., 2003). This space has an area of approximately 299 square meters with furniture for the meals, as tables and chairs. Besides the setting, the space organization is constituted of several "little corners" as the snack bar, the TV area, yet, in the center of the area there is room for recreation.

Instruments and Materials

During the field research three instruments were used. The Children Characterization Form (CCF) made possible the records of the personal data from the focal subjects, family's profile, reason for sheltering, and educational aspects. At the Observational Data Register Sheet (ODRS) it was made the transcript of the recordings, minute by minute, performed at the research environment. Finally, it was used the Field Diary (FD) to register all the researcher's perceptions during the observation period.

Procedure

Court authorization and approval of the research project by the Ethics Committee: this research had the authorization of the judge from the 1st Court of Childhood and Youth from Belém. The Ethics Committee approved this project as stated by the Sentence N°0002/10.

Habituation period: it had one month duration and happened consecutively in a way so the children and the other propel from the institution would be familiar to the researcher.

Completing the children characterization form: the sheets were examined and the information logged in a specific form. For the intended analysis were collected the data from the focal subject's personal information as gender, age, family living, as well as the information from their report card.

Accomplishment of the observation sessions of the children defined as focal subject: the technique used for observation of the interactions predicted the definition of focal subjects (Altmann, 1974), in other words, the behaviors registered were the ones spontaneously emitted by the participants in a real environment to interact with other children that were in institutional shelter and that studied at the researched school. Each child was filmed with a digital camera for five consecutive minutes at the beginning of each break for ten sessions at the school yard, summing a total of 50 minutes of recording per focal subject. The recording sessions were performed consecutively, every day for a month in the morning shift.

Data analysis: at first it was performed the systematization of the collected data, the researcher watched five times each session of the focal subjects. Later, the content of the filming was transcribed using codes for the identification of the participants: the focal subjects (S1, S2, S3, S4 and S5) and "SC" for the school children, then the interactions in the school yard were described minute by minute. Finally, it was performed the analysis of the behavioral events that had as a starting point the ranking from the subcategories defined by Carvalho (2000) and Cavalcante (2008):

1. *Helping*: initiative to cooperate, offering oneself to do something for the other, or searching for help from others and providing it to the peer in situations of risk or difficulty. It is added the habitual care with the food, sleep, hygiene, looks, and safety of the other.

Episode 1: "S3 is talking to SC33 at the school yard and offers snacks to the play peer. SC33 accepts the snack offered by S3 and brings to the mouth the portion received".

2. *Care-taking Playing*: care behavior that are experienced at the play context, leading the child to make gestures that, on the one side, represent behaviors of attention, support, and help to the partner, and on the other hand, simulate or take imaginatively typical roles of caretakers and targets of the care, as for example: mother/daughter; grandfather/grandchildren.

Episode 2: "S2 is sited at the table at the school yard during the break with SC24. Both girls play of taking care of a doll as if they were their mothers, taking turns on fulfilling the tasks related to the parental role. At a certain moment, S2 combs the hair of the doll while SC24 fixes the clothes of the toy."

3. *Entertaining*: behavior of calling the attention of the other with the intention to involve it at a playful activity through gestures, speech, or physical contact, conducting the other while in a situation of taking a walk or at any other leisure activity;

Episode 3: "S4 runs around the yard along with SC43. During the play SC43 trips and fall. SC43 gets up and look towards the bruise on the peer's knee as if it was checking for the extent of the wound. S4 goes then towards his colleague, places his hand on his shoulder to comfort him and tries to convince him to go back and play with the group, attempting to deviate his attention from the wound".

4. *Establishing Affectionate Contact*: it is understood as caressing behavior towards other when it is possible to notice specifically actions as hugging, kissing, and caressing.

Episode 4: "S4 is running around with its friends SC42 and SC43. In the middle of the race S4 hugs SC42. Another child sees S4 hugging SC42 and meets the dyad, also hugging SC42. S4 smiles facing the attitude of the peer.

After the characterization of the identified events from the sessions, the statistical analysis based on the calculation of the frequency and percentage, both simple and cumulative. The total amount of the sample of each table was correlated to each subcategory of the care behavior (helping, care-taking playing, establishing affectionate contact and entertaining). The frequency of the behaviors of each category was counted when noticed at least once. All the subcategories and variables were subjected to a method of analysis that used the distribution of frequency that synthesized the data. The Microsoft Excel software contributed for the organization of the frequencies.

Results and Discussion

Research Environment and Care Behavior Among Children

The results are organized as the following: physical aspects (dimension, setting, and space organization), and social aspects (activities performed) of the environment; physical attributes (gender and age), and social attributes (period of permanence in the institution) of subjects and its receptors. Therefore, this research demonstrated that, when observed at the school yard, the focal subjects emitted 26 episodes of this type of prosocial behavior, including the four subcategories researched. The most frequent was Helping (53.8%) and the least frequent was Care-taking Playing (7.7%) as shows [Table 1](#).

Table 1

Events by Subcategory of the Care Behavior by Emitter (Focal Subject) at School (n = 5)

Behavior subcategory	Frequency	%
Helping	14	53.8
Care-taking Playing	2	7.7
Establishing Affectionate Behavior	7	26.9
Entertaining	3	11.5
All categories	26	100.0

The data in reference to the emission of the subcategories at the school yard reveal there was a great diversity of prosocial behaviors emitted by the focal subjects, which points out that the school may be an environment that favors solidarity actions when there is the concern in stimulating their users to be sympathetic. This data is linked to the social profile of the school that stimulate its students through activities directed by the Political Pedagogic Project (PPP), corroborating the literature ([Motta et al., 2006](#); [Williams et al., 2010](#)), for the bigger the incentive the adults provides to the child through the programmed activities and intervening during the conflicts, the bigger the possibility to emit prosocial behavior ([Sebanc, 2003](#)). In addition to this fact it is highlighted that the politics for including students with special needs probably influenced the emotion of this behavior, as for during the data collection it was common to observe students helping a child that makes use of a wheelchair to move around the school yard, as well as from behaviors observed in other school environments, such as the classroom.

The data collected in the observation sessions also showed that the children that took part in the research can establish interactions with the other students. As it was observed at most interactions, the subjects chose to take care of the school peer (23 occurrences), and, in rare cases, they demonstrated attention and zeal with the children from the shelter they were housed, maintaining the group solidarity (3 occurrences). This raises the hypothesis that the contact with the community has brought to this child the possibility to know and interact with others that aren't being sheltered, broadening the possibility for new friend relationship and bonding experiences. This hypothesis has been discussed through the evidences that are present in empirical studies that compose the literature about the theme (Alexandre & Vieira, 2004; Cavalcante, 2008; Costa & Cavalcante, 2012). Such authors state that institutionalized children that take care of one another have the possibility to overcome family traumas and reduce the suffering provoked by distance from its original family.

Another issue is that the results obtained by this research corroborate other findings pointed out in the field literature (Fernandes, 2006; Sager et al., 2003) by demonstrating that the school yard is in fact a space for recreation and interaction. This environment usually offers the child the opportunity to play with peers from different profile, whether from the point of view of its physical characteristics (gender and age), or social ones (socio-family conditions), even when it is part of a population of children that is in an institutional sheltering situation as socio judicial protection measure. In this sense, the school is shown to be a space for the social development and if stimulated, a proper environment for the emergence of prosocial acts, as demonstrated by previous studies on this issue (Carvalho, 2000; Sebanc, 2003).

Another factor that might explain this result are physical factors of the school yard, as for example, the dimensions of this space, as it has 299 square meters. In addition to the presence of space settings limited by the use of chairs and tables distributed throughout the yard that for a period of time are related to the working of a snack bar that attends dozens of children during the break, and at other times, also to the TV set that is available for the children where they meet to eat and talk. All these spaces and objects allow the student to have the possibility to engage in several activities that promote frequent and/or occasional interactions between the dyads or group of pairs. It was verified that how the room is organized may have been responsible for the frequency which the behavior (helping) was shown at the sample researched, once similar studies (Carrus et al., 2005; Raymundo & Kuhnen, 2009) showed how much these set of environmental factors (settings and spatial organization) may contribute for the children's interactions, mainly with regards to the school yard (Fernandes, 2006; Sager et al., 2003).

Regarding the activities performed at the school yard (social aspects), the observation sessions showed that when the care behavior would be expressed at the social environment researched four activities were noted more frequently: Play (7), Meal (110), Watching TV (6), and Others (2). The last category makes reference to the presence of activities as talking to the peer. This result demonstrated that during the break the snack is still the activity that more frequently permeates prosocial situations between children at the school yard, as for during the recordings it was very frequent to see the focal subjects sharing food with their peers. This datum also confirms what is stated by the literature (Fernandes, 2006; Sager et al., 2003) that the school yard can be an environment for socialization and culture, once in this space the children interact with others through several activities. The same result points out that the research site presents several options of activities and it is understood that they are linked to several settings and its spatial organization, for the "little corners" enable distinct types of manifestation of care and the child has the possibility to exert their prosocial skills in development, as demonstrated by the research of Carvalho (2000).

After the presentation of the data in reference to the manifestation of the care behavior by the focal subjects at the school yard, the results still show the relation between the characteristics of the people involved and the occurrences of prosocial actions in the research environment.

The Research Subjects and the Care Behavior Among Children

Several factors contribute for the manifestation of the care behavior in environments where the children interact (Barnett, Burns, Sanborn, Bartel, & Wilds, 2004; Carvalho, 2000; Cavalcante, 2008; Sager et al., 2003). Among them, besides the characteristics of the environment, it must be considered the profile of the people involved. Therefore, this research also presented the distribution of the behavior occurrences by gender, age, and period of permanence of the focal subject and the receptor of the school.

In this sense, regarding the physical aspects of the emitter (focal subject), it was verified that the four boys emitted 15 prosocial behaviors while the girl presented 11 types of such events, regardless of the category considered for the analysis. In both genders, the type of care behavior emitted was predominantly represented by the subcategory Helping. This result may be related to the way the institution treats its students, when it is willing not to give different treatments by gender, stimulating only girls to get involved in prosocial actions that involve everybody, as suggested by the data presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Frequency by Subcategories of Care Behavior According to the Gender, Age (Months) and Period of Permanence (Months) of the Emitter (Focal Subject) at the School

Behavior subcategory	Gender		Age		Period of permanence	
	Female	Male	≤ 70	> 70	≤ 15	> 15
Helping	5	9	5	9	9	5
Care-taking Playing	2	0	0	2	0	2
Establishing Affectionate Contact	2	5	5	2	5	2
Entertaining	2	1	1	2	1	2
All categories	11	15	11	15	15	11

Still on the physical characteristics of the emitter, the children with ages up to 70 months manifested 11 behaviors of a prosocial nature and for those older than 70 months the total of events reached 15 times more. Generally, children older than 70 months (the equivalent to 5 years and ten months) show a higher number of behaviors than the younger ones, in this sense, this result comes close to the findings of the literature (e.g., Carvalho, 2000; Cole & Cole, 2003; Kail, 2004; Sager et al., 2003; Saud & Tonelotto, 2005; Sebanc, 2003; Turini & Rodrigues, 2008), which demonstrate that it is common for older children to take care of the younger ones for having a better comprehension of the needs of the other. Regarding the social aspects of the emitters, the children with time of permanence up to 15 months emitted 15 times more the behaviors considered of care. It must be observed the presence of all the four behavior subcategories at children with a permanence time over 15 months.

The results of Table 2 strengthen the hypothesis that the institution provides stimulations for the manifestation of solidarity actions in the school environment as highlighted by (Motta et al., 2006; Sebanc, 2003; Williams et al., 2010).

The Interaction Peer of Focal Subjects and the Care Behavior Between Them

Another factor analyzed that seems to favor the manifestation of the care behavior in the researched sample is the influence of the characteristics of the interaction peer of the focal subjects. Amongst the physical characteristics of the receptors of the observed behaviors, the data from Table 3 also show that institutionalized children emitted care behaviors more frequently towards other students associated to the school, above all, with regards to the girls (12 occurrences).

Table 3

Frequency of the Care Behavior Subcategory According to Gender, Age (Months), and Period of Permanence (Months) of the Receptor at the School

Behavior Subcategory	Gender				Age (in months)			Period of permanence (in months)		
	FS		SC		FS	SC		FS	SC	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	64	≤ 78	> 78	24	≤ 24	> 24
Helping	0	1	6	6	1	5	7	1	6	6
Care-taking Behavior	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	2	0
Establishing Affectionate Contact	0	2	2	3	2	5	0	2	5	0
Entertaining	0	0	2	1	0	2	1	0	2	1
All categories	0	3	12	10	3	12	10	3	15	7

Note. FS = Focal Subject; SC = School Children.

The results clearly show yet through the frequencies that the care was more directed to the younger receptors (a total of 15 occurrences between focal subject and the school children). Moreover, at last it was analyzed the social aspect of period of permanence of the interaction peers. The data indicate the children that received more care at the school yard were the most recent at the school (in total 18 occurrences between focal subject and the school children). This result may be related to the fact that the receptors that were for a short period of time at the school brought up in the interaction peer a greater will to help and collaborate, which, as time passed by, recognize them as classmate and/or friends, as the fact itself of the new ones are in process of adapting to a strange environment, makes people more sensitive to offer help in the attempt to integrate them.

Final Considerations

Amongst the children interactions that take place in these areas it is possible to notice that several types of behavior were being manifested, among them the ones which denotes solidarity, in other words, prosocial acts. Even though it is known that many benefits are brought to its emitters, this behavior has been little researched, especially when it is regarding its manifestation between institutionalized children in institutional shelter, even though previous studies (Alexandre & Vieira, 2004; Barnett, Burns, Sanborn, Bartel, & Wilds, 2004; Carvalho, 2000; Cavalcante, 2008; Wolff & Fesseha, 1999) have showed that this behavior would increase the possibility for the children to overcome their traumas and decrease a little their suffering caused by the family distance through the interactions that they will have with their peers.

For contributing with the theme, this study aimed at investigating aspects of the physical and social environment that compete with the manifestation of the care behavior between peers at the yard of a school in the metropolitan

region of Belém, in the attempt to point out the differences in the proportion of events as helping, care-taking playing, entertaining, and establishing affectionate contact, according to the physical and social characteristics of the institution.

When it was investigated the proportion of prosocial behaviors at the school the data analyzed by a binominal test pointed out that there was a predominance in the subcategory helping. This result raises the hypothesis that some characteristics of the researched environment, as the physical dimension, the settings, and the space organization of the yard helped to structure several "little corners" that favored the social interaction, for instance the area where the snack bar is, it is the place where the children watch TV, the tables and chairs can be moved closer and they sit to play, talk, and eat together, this may create the opportunities for the emergence of daily situations that favor the manifestation of prosocial behaviors at school.

Still on the characteristics of the environment, another factor that might be related to this result is the social role of the institution which has its Political Pedagogic Project directed towards the citizenship, with programmed activities to stimulate the prosocial behavior between its students. This result corroborates what is demonstrated by recent studies (Motta et al., 2006; Sebanc, 2003; Wolff & Fesseha, 1999) which show that the educators can and must stimulate as much as possible prosocial deeds between the children for they also learn through the example of adults and stimuli present in the environments were they are discretely inserted.

About the characteristics of the individuals, regarding the variables analyzed (gender, age, and period of permanence) of the emitter and the receiver, the only one that seems to have influenced on the statistical point of view, was the period of permanence in the shelter of the receiver. This data may also be related to the hypothesis that the longer a person spends time in an environment more comfortable one feels to receive the care offered to one at this space.

Through the analysis of the records (filming, and field diary with all the manifestations of the subcategories) it was found that the qualitative data showed by the interactive episodes that the care behavior offered by the institutionalized children was very diverse. This result gives room for the interpretation that this group could have a relationship with the children from this community, for most established interactions involved institutionalized children and students from the school (23), only three of the care behavior manifestations were between the focal subjects (3). The research reveals some data about how the sheltered children interact with the world besides the walls of the shelter.

Facing the results, this study points to the direction of a construction of a new look at some issues related to the care behavior of children that are in institutional sheltering, as for example, the need of studies that investigate the influence of the environment on the care behavior in a way to be rethought, adopting an ecological perspective. That means to consider that the relationship between People and Environment is bidirectional (mutual influence) and the notion of environment is contextual, in other words, interdependent dimensions, connecting from the micro to the macro system, as affirmed by Bronfenbrenner (1996).

It is hoped that the results of this research come to contribute for future studies that will be performed in environments for children, such as schools and shelter. It is also hoped that this theme may be continued, that the care behavior of children is more deeply studied, especially from children in institutional sheltering.

At last, it is highlighted the importance of augmenting new studies on the theme, in a way to broad the number of subjects, the period of observation, and the number and/or the types of researched environments, investigating how the institutionalized children direct the care behavior towards children they interact outside the shelter, at places as the community or the church.

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Competing Interests

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