




Affective Relationships Among Siblings in a Situation of Institutional Care

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ABSTRACT – The purpose of this article is to identify the relationships of affection that exist between children/adolescents institutionalized in the same shelter. Data collection was carried out in two sisters hosted in Brasília-DF, through field notes, documentary analysis script, theme-story drawing, collage and semi-structured interviews. The indicators arose from the results, which guided the organization of two of the sense zones, based on the methodology developed by Gonzalez Rey: a) The family of origin and the affective memories; b) Institutionalization and affection in the fraternal relationship. The importance of the sibling group was identified for the establishment of the sense of security, protection and pre-disposition for more positive and resilient attitudes.

KEYWORDS: fraternal relationship, foster child, foster care.

Relações Afetivas entre Irmãos em Situação de Acolhimento Institucional

RESUMO – O objetivo deste artigo é compreender as relações de afeto preservadas pelos irmãos crianças/adolescentes institucionalizados numa mesma instituição. A coleta de dados foi realizada em duas irmãs acolhidas em Brasília-DF, por meio do diário de campo, roteiro de análise documental, desenho-história com tema, colagem e entrevistas semiestruturadas. A partir dos resultados foram levantados os indicadores que orientaram a organização de duas das zonas de sentidos, baseada na metodologia desenvolvida por Gonzalez Rey: a) Memórias afetivas sobre a família de origem; b) Institucionalização e afeto na relação fraterna. Identificou-se a importância do grupo de irmãos para o estabelecimento do sentimento de segurança, proteção e pré-disposição para atitudes mais positivas e resilientes.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: relação fraterna, criança acolhida, acolhimento institucional.

The hegemony of the legal discourse in today's times has led to the fitting of family relationships into a judicial framework (McBeath et al., 2014; Moreira, 2014), in which psychologists are called to integrate the teams of social and legal protection network and give subsidies to the affective dimensions of the relationships, which cannot be neglected in the application of the law (Bucher-Maluschke & Carvalho e Silva, 2018). Institutional sheltering causes family and community ties to weaken, hindering the possibility of family

reintegration (Cavalcante & Cruz, 2018; Cavalcante et al., 2010; Mitchell, 2016). On the other hand, families are not adequately assisted by the State, indicating serious violations of human rights of this portion of the population.

Regarding the aspects of interactions among members of the same family, the National Plan for the Promotion, Protection and Defense of the Rights of Children and Adolescents to Family Living and Community (Brasil, 2006) determines in its legal framework that judicial decisions

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must respect a normative hierarchy with prevalence over international conventions, regulating the promotion and protection of human rights, ratified in a special way in Brazil. Regardless of their origin or socioeconomic status, every child and adolescent has the right to have a family and be cared for it (Brasil, 1990; Cruz et al., 2018; McBeath et al., 2014; Miranda, 2017).

According to the approach of Systemic Family Therapy, the nuclear family and the implied interactions (conjugal, parental, filial and fraternal interactions) are like an open system that makes exchanges with the environment and, therefore, tends to oscillate between balance and imbalance from time to time, necessary for its development over time (Bowen, 1961; Minuchin et al., 2008, 2009; Mitchell, 2016; Relva et al., 2019). The fraternal subsystem is constituted from the birth of the second child, having its own organization and operation with very particular rules, even though the relational references are linked to what the children learned from their parents (Williams et al., 2016).

The relationship between siblings is unique because there are things that can only be lived between them, things that are intense due to their particularities and constant because they share the same family. Becoming a sibling is a complex task, filled with ambivalent feelings such as rivalry, companionship and others (Hall & McNallie, 2016). In this context, the family must adapt to the emotional demands of children who will often contradict the principles established by parents in order to seek a way to rebalance the family system. Therefore, the change in attitude of a family member favors and influences the change in family behavior and vice versa (Minuchin et al., 2008, 2009; Nichols & Schwartz, 2007; Williams et al., 2016).

Goldsmid and Féres-Carneiro (2007) consider that fraternal relationships have a strong influence on the emotional and social development of individuals. It is one of the most enduring relationships, one that follows a life cycle of its own, contributes to the development of personality and the social behavior of family members, and is egalitarian (Relva et al., 2019). In the absence of the parental role, the union between the siblings can help to rebalance the family system so as to provide mutual protection from the adversities imposed by life (Minuchin et al., 2008, 2009; Mitchell, 2016). Siblings learn from each other's experiences and this relationship increases the fraternal bond. According to Meynckens-Fourez (2000), a fraternal relationship performs at least three basic functions: attachment, parental replacement, and learning of social and cognitive roles.

In the context of sheltering, the absence of family relationships in the host institution is a risk factor for

emotional and behavioral issues, since children and adolescents who isolate themselves and do not interact with their peers can assume risky behaviors, besides feeling unhappy and alone (Cruz et al., 2018; Pearson et al., 2015; Williams et al., 2016). Among the aspects that can hinder the establishment of affective bonds, Lemos et al. (2017) mentioned scarcity of activities that stimulate interaction, excessive domestic activities and lack of preparation of social mothers to play their role.

The National Survey of Children and Adolescents in Sheltering Services (Assis & Farias, 2013) investigated 2,624 Institutional Sheltering Services and 144 Sheltering Services in Embracing Families located in 1,157 Brazilian municipalities, in the 27 units of the federation. The information, collected from 36,929 children and adolescents in institutional care and 932 in family foster care, showed that the majority of the 30,000 cases resulted from the neglect of parents or guardians (33.2%), abandonment (18.5%), chemical and/or alcohol dependence (17.7%), physical aggression (9.6%), and sexual abuse (11%). However, almost all sheltered young people have families (86.7%) and contact with family members inside or outside the shelter (61%).

There are few studies in the Brazilian literature evaluating the fraternal relationships in groups of foster siblings, although the interest in this field has increased since the 2000s (Cavalcante & Cruz, 2018; Cavalcante et al., 2010; Fukuda et al., 2013; Miranda, 2017). Family interactions and strengthening of family bonds, when necessary, are fundamental for the reintegration of the children not only to their families, but to a healthy environment conducive to the expected biopsychosocial development (Cruz et al., 2018; Pearson et al., 2015). Family cooperation, which is typical of phratries, is fundamental to understand that each generation assumes a specific and important role in the family dynamics within the institution (Goldsmid & Féres-Carneiro, 2007; Meynckens-Fourez, 2000; Williams et al., 2016).

In view of the theoretical notes that point the maintenance of relationships between siblings is fundamental for the psychic development of children (Goldsmid & Féres-Carneiro, 2007), the question is: how are the affective relationships between siblings preserved in the situation of institutional sheltering? In order to contribute to this theme, this case study aims to understand the affective relationships preserved among siblings – children/adolescents – sheltered in the same institution. Data obtained from a group of sheltered siblings in Brasília-DF were analyzed through the methods of field journal, documentary analysis, thematic story drawing, collage and semi-structured interviews.

METHOD

Type of Study

This is a qualitative research based on a case study that is a specific method of field research to understand, explore or describe complex events and contexts, in which several factors are simultaneously involved (Creswell, 2013).

Place of Study

The research took place in a host institution founded in 1964 that provides shelter to more than 380 children and adolescents and about 200 families in situations of social risk and vulnerability. The institution operates in the logic of home-houses and is located in an affluent area of Brasília-DF. The physical structure of the institution comprises ten houses with three rooms each, equipped to house from eight to ten children and two social mothers per house. In addition to the houses, which are in the same area, there is a cafeteria, where children make daily meals, sports court, and study rooms.

Participants

Two sisters, Carol (11 years old) and Vivi (9 years old), who belong to a group of four siblings, participated in the research. At the beginning of the research, the group consisted of four siblings: three girls aged 9, 11 and 14 years, and one boy aged 13 years. There was also another brother, the eldest (16 years old) who was arrested and murdered. Over time, the older sister (14 years old) escaped from the institution and the boy was reinstated to the paternal family, under the guardianship of an uncle. Therefore, only two of the sisters participated fully in the research. The selected group had been sheltered for approximately 5 years, a time longer than that established by the technical standards. Rúbia was enrolled in the 4th grade of elementary school. Salvador was enrolled in the 2nd grade, Carol is enrolled in the 2nd grade and there was no information about Vivi. The criterion for choosing the group was the prolonged time of the siblings' sheltering in the institution and their willingness to participate in the study. The names of the children and family members are fictitious.

Instruments

Documentary analysis was conducted in the host institution (registration form of children and multidisciplinary care records), providing information on the family of

origin, the history of institutionalization, and the individual specificities of the participants.

Field diaries were used to write down the information and impressions during visits to the host institution.

Thematic story drawing, a projective technique created by Trinca (2013), was used. This method consists in the preparation of themes previously determined by the examiner. At the end of each drawing, the individual narrates the story, which is associated with his own experience, followed by a title. Upon completion, the survey begins to explore more details of the drawing. In this study, the drawings were interpreted following the guidelines of the H.T.P (House-Tree-Person) manual (Buck, 2003).

Collage, a resource for children to express their feelings and data from the reality they are not able to express through words, was also used in this study (Bucher-Maluschke & Carvalho e Silva, 2018). The application of this method consists of two moments: the preverbal moment, when the individuals observe the images and chooses the ones with which they identified the most, and the verbal moment, when they explain the meaning of each of the images and their relationship with their history.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each child, using a script with 30 questions based on the "Research Questionnaire for Sheltered Children", prepared by Weber and Dessen (2009), which covered the sheltering, the siblings, the relationship with family members and with the siblings.

Procedures

Construction of the Research Scenario

After the acceptance of the institution and the definition of the group of siblings, 28 visits were made to the institution, lasting one hour each, to bring the researchers closer to the social mothers, the children's routines, the institution, the social interaction, and to carry out the documentary analysis. A field journal was used during each visit, totaling 28 field journals. The other instruments were applied in the last six meetings, which were conducted on different days with each participant individually and held in a room in the institution. A4 sheets, a black pencil number. 2, and a pencil case with 12 colors were used for the application of the thematic story drawing activity. In the first drawing, the participants were asked to draw a child who lives in a foster home. In the second, they were instructed to draw any situation experienced between them and the sister in the foster home. For the semi-structured interviews, printed drawings were

provided to the children for them to paint using pencils of various colors, contributing for a peaceful environment during the interview. Initially, the children were told that we would talk about some issues related to their family and sheltering and that they were free to answer or not to any question that eventually caused them any kind of discomfort. All impressions were recorded in a field journal to preserve the speeches, gestures, and expressions of each participant.

Analysis of the Information

Data analysis was based on Qualitative Epistemology (Gonzalez Rey, 2002), which enables the researcher to actively participate in the research, build knowledge and make reflections about the observed data of reality. The answers given by the subjects gain meaning based on the interaction between the research subjects and the researcher, throughout the investigation. The instruments allowed the interpretation of the verbal and nonverbal expressions of the research subjects, which became indicators, to give meaning to what cannot be observed.

Through these indicators it is possible to construct the zones of meaning, defined as a “space of intelligibility”, that is, where the researcher can formulate or develop his theoretical hypotheses. Two zones of meaning were constructed: 1) Affective memories about the family of origin, which discusses how the memories of living with the family of origin were internalized by the children; 2) Institutionalization and affection in the fraternal relationship, which brings together the indicators about the implications that the sheltering brought to the affective relationship between siblings.

In addition to raising the indicators based on the thematic story drawing for the construction of zones of meaning, this instrument was also based on the graphic interpretations of the H.T.P (House-Tree-Person) test elaborated by John N. Buck (2003) and, in the drawing itself, it serves as a diagnostic instrument of personality (Buck, 2003). This last analysis of the general graphic characteristics of the thematic story drawing must evaluate aspects such as the size of the drawing, the details, the pressure while using the pencil, characteristics of the strokes, and more specific characteristics of the drawing of the person and the tree, as suggested by Coutinho and Chaves (2002). The H.T.P. manual assisted in the interpretation of the drawings in order to obtain information about how the participants experienced their individualities in relation to the group of siblings and the environment of the shelter. The manual also stimulated the identification of personality elements and conflict areas in the fraternal system, allowing the evaluation of the drawings, in relation to the narrated history, and the establishment of effective communication between researchers and children.

Ethical Considerations

The project was submitted and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Catholic University of Brasília, CAAE 15160413.3.0000.0029, following the norms of Resolution number 466/12 of the Brazilian National Health Council of the Ministry of Health, which deals with ethics in research with human beings as set out in the Informed Consent Form (ICF).

RESULTS

Documentary Analysis

As represented in the family genogram (Figure 1), the family is represented hierarchically by the mother Maria (deceased) and the father José. The couple had three biological children, 13-year-old Salvador, 11-year-old Carol, 9-year-old Vivi. Two other children from Maria’s previous relationships - 14-year-old Rúbia and deceased 16-year-old Carlos – used to live with the couple. The children - Salvador, Carol, and Vivi - have no contact with their mother’s family. The records indicated that the father is a bricklayer, makes regular use of drugs and alcohol, and he used to physically and psychologically assault Maria and the older children, Rúbia and Carlos.

The adolescent Rúbia was acknowledged by her stepfather, who had the guardianship of all the children after the mother died from cancer in 2009. In 2011, Rúbia and

her siblings were received in the shelter. At that moment, Rúbia (12 years old) was treated at the IML for suspected sexual abuse. Rúbia reported that she and her siblings had been under the care of their stepfather, who intensified the abuses he used to practice before her mother’s death. It is important to note that after José was arrested and Carlos was murdered, the paternal grandmother took the children with her, but she died shortly after this. José is currently prohibited to establish any kind of communication and to approach the children, keeping at least 200 meters of distance from them. The stepfather is accused of having assaulted/abused Rúbia and also being negligent with his biological children, especially after the death of his wife. Tired of the death threats and the beatings to give in to sexual violence, Rúbia left home, but she later came back to continue caring for her siblings because José started threatening to abuse them.

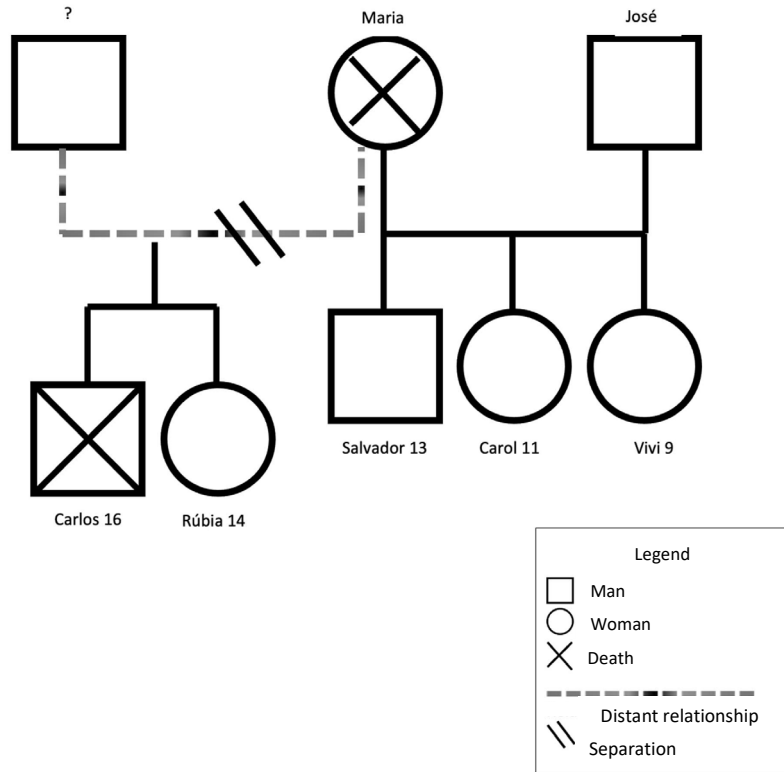


Figure 1. Genogram depicting the current relationships and hierarchical organization of the family.

José confessed to the crimes after two paternal aunts of the children denounced sexual violence and ill-treatment, although afraid of his reaction. When the children were to be received in the shelter, the paternal uncles expressed the desire to stay with the nephews but not with Rúbia, because they claimed they had no financial resources to cover all their needs. When the children were received in the shelter, at the beginning, they had frequent visits from family members, but the interest and the contact decreased over time, and this disarticulated the reintegration. According to the history of the sheltering process, the siblings were transferred from another institution. Rúbia was treated at the IML after sexual abuse and reported that none of the other three siblings suffered the same abuse, but they had no one to take care of them, had no food, and were not enrolled in school.

At the institution, the 4 siblings were cared for by the social mothers, Livia and Roberta. These social mothers explained that the siblings had good interactions with each other and with others in the shelter. According to the medical records, the bond between the siblings shows a connection among them and the sister Rúbia is considered as a reference of mother. Rúbia is no longer in the institution, as she has escaped several times to live with other unknown people. However, measures to reintegrate the adolescent for her to live with her siblings are being taken. Until the time of data collection, only Carol and Vivi remained in the institution, because Rúbia escaped and Salvador was reinstated to the paternal family. Several attempts have been made to

reintegrate the other siblings to the paternal family, but without success.

Collage

Two posters were prepared that show moments in the lives of Carol and Vivi (Figure 2). The first resulted from the choice of images that expressed what life was like before they arrived at the institution. This collage encouraged the children to externalize the affective memories internalized in the relationship with the parents and in the relationship with the siblings. The second poster stimulated the most significant memories of the fraternal relationship in the host institution. The children were instructed to choose the images that were related to their life after they came to the shelter.

During the observation, the children seemed motivated to make the collage. The family history, even though absent in the children's verbal accounts, appeared represented in the drawings and in the collage. It became evident that the perception of the children about the violence practiced by the father against their sister, the impotence in the face of the situation, the care for the mother before she died, and the feeling of helplessness are compensated by the good memories of playful moments among the siblings. Family episodes that highlighted the union between them, the conflicts and the suffering caused by the absence of some members were reported.



Figure 2. Collage made after the first (left) and the second (right) instructions.

Thematic Story Drawing

Instruction 1: A Child Who Lives in a Foster Care Institution

According to the interpretations of H.T.P. manual, characteristics of a child living in a limiting environment, which generates tension, anxiety and uncertainty were identified in the general aspects of Vivi's drawing (Figure 3). The interpretation also indicated traits that suggest traumatic experiences and fixation in the past, possibly related to the life with the family of origin and, later, to the shelter. The anxiety observed in the drawing and in the following excerpts is related to the need for safety and gratification as well as to the feeling of helplessness, loss of autonomy and aggressiveness.

(...) Then at the end of the story they lived happily ever after. **What did the girl like to do at the foster home?** She liked to make a mess, but sometimes to be quiet. Everything her aunt says she respects (...). **What else, what's she up to? Does she**

get mad? Yes, she gets mad because when no one spoils her, she gets really angry. (Vivi)

Instruction 2: Any Situation that has Happened Between the Child and the Siblings in the Host Institution

According to H.T.P. manual, the pressure applied when drawing with the pencil was strong (Figure 4), a trait that represents a situation of fear, insecurity and aggressiveness. The very small size of people in the drawing demonstrates an intelligent child but with emotional problems, which may indicate inhibition of personality, misfit in the environment, and repression of aggressiveness. The house in one of the corners of the page indicates escape from the group and misfit of the individual to the environment. The trunk of the tree enlarged toward both sides represents difficulty in life and difficulty to understand the reality lived. We can assume that these characteristics are a consequence of the family model in which intolerance on the part of the father was frequent,

as well as the physical and psychological aggressions that the mother and children suffered. The following excerpts of speeches confirm this interpretation of H.T.P. manual.

(...) I'm going to draw a sad picture. Once and again there were three siblings who had been fighting a lot, until one day they

started fighting with each other. Then Vivi started fighting with me and I hit her and pulled her hair. **Were you already here at the institution?** We were already here. And at school my brother and I were playing all the time of fighting. One day he got mad at me and threw a sandal when I ran out into the yard, but the sandal hit me. (Carol)



Figure 3. Thematic story drawing prepared by the research participant.



Figure 4. Thematic story drawing prepared by the research participant.

DISCUSSION

The indicators that allowed the construction of the two zones of meaning were extracted during the interviews from the verbal (narratives) and nonverbal expressions (attitudes, silent moments, and other behaviors observed), the graphic expressions in drawings and collages, the field journal notes, and the information collected in the documentary analysis. The two zones of meaning are: a) Affective memories about the family of origin; b) Institutionalization and affection in the fraternal relationship.

Affective Memories About the Family of Origin

This zone of meaning concerns the memories that these children and young people have internalized about their family of origin before being sheltered and which affections emerge from these memories. The studies presented in the literature review demonstrated that, regardless of the new family arrangements and the social class in which the family is inserted, the family is the first *locus* of development of the children and it is where the first affective bonds are established (Goldsmid & Féres-Carneiro, 2007; Minuchin et al., 2008, 2009; Mitchell, 2016; Williams et al., 2016).

The affective memories internalized by the children from early family life indicate that the relationships of affection in the family were marked by the physical violence that José (the father) perpetrated against Maria (the mother) and against the children, and that they were enhanced by the use of alcohol and drugs. “Because my father was just beating my mother all the time and that’s why she died” (Vivi, interview). Thus, the quality of the interaction between parents and children, as shown in this narrative, plays an important role in the fraternal relationship and can determine the affective, psychological and social future of each of the siblings throughout life (Cruz et al., 2018; Hall & McNallie, 2016; Relva et al., 2019).

Sierra and Mesquita (2006) state that there are many factors responsible for the vulnerability of children and adolescents. The risks include those inherent to the family dynamics, such as the problems related to alcoholism, to conflicts between couples, which makes the children to witness fights and aggressions. They also go through all forms of domestic violence, trauma, sexual abuse, deprivations, affective abandonment among others (Cavalcante et al., 2010; Williams et al., 2016).

The documentary analysis showed that the sexual abuse suffered by Rúbia was the reason for insertion of the group of siblings in the shelter. The arrest of the father brought to public knowledge the state of neglect of the children, which was characterized by lack of attention, absence of the father, neglect of food and nutritional security, absence of school education and, also, omission of emotional support and physical security. Expanding this observation, Assis

and Farias (2013) added that intrafamily violence can be expressed directly, when the children suffer this violence, and indirectly, when they witness it.

When my dad went to work, he’d lock the gate and we’d have to go to school. We jumped the fence because there was no food there. We were 5 or 6 years old and my sister was 9, then we would stop by the grocery store, we would steal food and take it to school. (Carol, collage)

The above excerpt, extracted while Carol was making the collage, agrees with the results of other researchers in the sense that the violent acts practiced by parental figures within the family also produce in young people feelings of anger, fear, loss of confidence in relationships, helplessness, guilt, low self-esteem, insecurity, depressive mood, and lack of self-confidence (Abranches & Assis, 2011; Relva et al., 2019). Some of these consequences could also be observed in the results of the graphic analysis of the thematic story drawing produced by the participants, which demonstrated their difficulty in relying on social contacts, lack of confidence in their own productivity, which indicate feelings of guilt and worthlessness.

In this sense, Holt et al. (2008) researched the impact of domestic violence on the health and development of children and adolescents and identified that younger children may present excessive fear, anxiety, difficulties in verbalizing emotions, aggressive behavior, stomachaches, insomnia, nightmares, and enuresis. As they grow up, they tend to blame themselves for the violence between their parents and even feel responsible for protecting the victims.

Minuchin et al. (2009) affirm that the union of siblings in the absence of the parents can help rebalance the system towards mutual protection from the adversities imposed by life, including the abandonment of parents or the conflicts between them. Such protection is often directed to the children and also to one or both parents. Episodes of violence and tenderness also give rise to ambivalent feelings towards the aggressor, because children experience the situation of living with an abusive father who punishes and beats them but who also at the same time is a caring father, who plays with them and with the siblings (Holt et al., 2008; Pearson et al., 2015).

What about my dad? I don’t want to talk about my dad. Because my dad sucks, he used to beat my mother and my brothers (...) When I did something wrong, my father didn’t hit us, he took care of us” (Vivi, interview).

“My father would hit people very, very, very much. If we made a mess, he would hit us (...) Sometimes, it was cool. When we went to live in Paranoá (Brasília’s satellite city) he stopped hitting us. There he played with us making tickles, playing horse, riding a bike. (Carol, interview)

Maria's dedication to her children and her embracing attitude helped to appease the common quarrels in fraternal relationship. At this stage of life, children and adolescents are in development and need to establish a relationship of affection and care with the family that guarantees the construction of self-esteem and self-confidence, which are the basis for establishing healthy affective and social relationships outside the family (Minuchin et al., 2008, 2009). The relationship of care may have been delegated by the mother to Rúbia and, at the same time, a need imposed on this child, in view of the situation of the family. She, in turn, ended up abandoning the role of daughter and sister to assume the role of caretaker of her siblings, a role previously played by her mother and neglected by her father.

The expression "parental child" described by Minuchin et al. (2009) characterizes the situation experienced by Rúbia and the role she began to play from the dysfunctional circumstances of the family. This role is usually occupied by the oldest sibling, who usually assumes the task as a continuation of the previous generation, bearing the weight of the ambivalence of acting as a defender of the youngest siblings (Goldsmid & Féres-Carneiro, 2007; Williams et al., 2016). Carol's speech during the interview provides an example of this theoretical issue, when she said: "Then after my mother died, my sister would dress us when we were going out, give us food and give us a shower" (Carol, interview). Siblings must also adapt to a non-legitimate authority exercised by the parental child, who will now establish or suppress domestic rules, among other attitudes.

We identified in the family history of the sisters that, in addition to the death of the mother, there were other affective losses that were very significant and that may have had a negative impact on the establishment of future bonds. The children reported the following significant losses: the arrest of the father; the death of the paternal grandmother who took them after the arrest of the father, and then the murder of their brother. The participants expressed regret and sadness at the loss of these significant figures who contributed to the maintenance of the group of siblings in the face of adversities.

The information provided by the participants indicates ruptures in the interactions between the members of this family. It is observed in the speech below that the experiences are being recorded in the individual memory of the siblings and, when shared between them, they provide a construction of personal and family identity.

My father did not like my brother Carlos because he was not his son, then he sent my brother to live there in Sobradinho, when I was 11, and I only saw him when he was 15/16 (...). He was arrested and then when he left prison, they killed him. (Carol, field journal)

Mitchell (2016) noted that siblings share experiences and memories that can be pleasurable or painful depending on the family context in which they are inserted. In the

case of the children participating in the present study, in addition to the affective losses caused by the deaths, there were also losses related to their home, where they had good memories, photos and significant belongings, the pet, living with the godmother and her people. Positive situations related to family experiences also emerged in the memories of the sisters, which included the fraternal relationship and the moments of family harmony. Thus, they showed stronger loyalty toward each other and the strengthening of fraternal bonds.

Institutionalization and Affection in the Fraternal Relationship

This zone of meaning analyzes the implications of institutionalization in the affective relationships of the group of siblings who left their family and went to the host institution. In Bowlby's (1990) opinion, two conditions must be associated in order to minimize the negative reactions during the separation of children from their mothers: the presence of a known person and/or family objects in the new developmental environment of the child; and the presence of the maternal care of a surrogate mother. In this study, the host institution had in its structure the presence of a woman called "Social Mother", a substitute for the biological/affective mother of the children according to the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (Brasil, 1990) and other researchers of child development (Cavalcante & Cruz, 2018; Cavalcante et al., 2010; Lemos et al., 2017)

Mitchell (2016) considers that the host institution is not the best environment for development of children and adolescents because care is usually standardized in these places. Individualized care and attention are limited due to greater number of children in relation to caregivers. The bonds constructed are fragile and inconsistent and children have difficulty in forming new attachment relationships. In host institutions, the change of the children's primary caregivers, the technical oscillations in care, the lack of consensus on the educational process to be adopted, and the transfer of the children from one institution to another are factors that negatively affect the bond between siblings (McBeath et al., 2014; Pearson et al., 2015).

In this study, we identified the importance of the group of siblings to establish the feeling of safety and protection. It was evident in the statements of Vivi and Carol that the fact that they were a group of siblings helped in the adaptation to the institution, as it promoted the strengthening of the bond among them, to the extent that they began to divide things, and to protect each other.

When I got here I felt a little weird, I wouldn't want to talk and I was shy. (...) We stopped fighting so much, we shared things, played together, I would lend things to Vivi and give my clothes to Rúbia when I got them, even to my brother Salvador. (Carol, interview)

Another aspect identified is that fights among siblings became more frequent after arriving at the institution. However, it should be emphasized that the lack of tenderness or the quarrels in the fraternal relationship do not necessarily mean lack of affection. For several researchers (Goldsmid & Féres-Carneiro, 2007; Hall & McNallie, 2016; Minuchin et al., 2009; Relva et al., 2019), the contradictory attitudes in the fraternal relationship allow the learning of skills and feelings through dispute, admiration, envy, cooperation, negotiation, imitation, possibility of comparing or differentiating, loving and giving. The fights that started in Vivi and Carol's relationship may be related to the arrival at the shelter, the anguish of seeing the family being dissolved, and the rivalry present in the fraternal relationship, but also to care and affection.

The person I like the most from this shelter? Only my sister, of course. But sometimes she hits me because I misbehave. I still want to escape, but anywhere I would go, I go with my sister (...) we do not hug or divide things. (Vivi, interview and collage)

This same situation was identified in the thematic story drawing. The title of the story given by Carol was "friendship" and described the fight of two brothers in the host institution, but which had a happy ending.

We also observed in the application of the instrument that the fraternal relationship became more fragile after Rúbia fled the institution and Salvador was reintegrated to the paternal family. The reports emphasized the feeling of loss. The discontinuity of affective ties with the last members of the family of origin provoked in the group a high level of personal insecurity, fear and lack of confidence in others. McBeath et al. (2014) and Cruz et al. (2018) consider that fraternal bonds arise as a result of living together and should be stimulated in a healthy way by the foster family or the shelter homes.

Although Vivi and Carol are aware of the whereabouts of their brother (Salvador), the sorrow remains for the feeling of rejection and frustration that may represent for them the realization of the real dissolution of the family. Minuchin et al. (2009) state that loyalty to family precepts is related to the feeling of belonging to the family group. Based on this statement, it becomes relevant to point out the issue of the delegation of responsibilities that becomes evident in the documentary reports about Rúbia trying to keep the group together and Carol's annoyance when other members speak ill of her siblings.

Stierling (1973) and Hall and McNallie (2016) explain that "delegation" in the family context means that a mission is attributed to some or one of the family members. According to the authors, the family legacy is a kind of loyalty with regard to the repetition of family patterns that is transmitted from one generation to another. It is bound by the sense of

loyalty that, according to Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark, (1973), is a kind of invisible thread driving the rules of collusion among family members and justifies certain family behaviors that are established through affective bonds. The delegation of roles can be harmful when involving someone who is not mature to perform the task, and when there is conflict between what was delegated and the sociocultural environment in which the fulfiller is inserted.

The data obtained in the documentary analysis about Rúbia's age at the beginning of sexual violence are not accurate, but it seems the abuse started when she was around 12 years old, the same period of her mother's death. Thus, it turns out that Rúbia began to take care of the siblings very early in an attempt to fulfill the mission delegated by the mother that she could save everyone from disgrace and pay off her parents' debts. The parental children, as observed by Minuchin et al. (2009), generally do not have the necessary maturity for the fulfilment of such a huge responsibility. With the siblings in the host institution, Rúbia felt liberated from the burden of caring for them, what contributed to her evasion.

In the future I want joy, love, peace, affection and a lot of things. (Vivi, interview)

When I grow up and stay here until I'm 18, I'm going to get myself a house, buy a car and get my sister out of here. (...) I think about helping them (siblings) all the time, whatever I have in my house, whatever she needs I give. I want to live nearby and help all of them... a nice future and not a bad future like those in which people fight with each other outside or those fights of adult people. I don't want to live dating these useless guys that are out there. I want to live in a nice home, where nothing will be missing, where children are cared for, and everyone works hard. (Carol, interview)

We observed, in the sisters' narratives, that there is a positive expectation that in the future the siblings will be together again, demonstrating a predisposition to adopt more positive and resilient attitudes in the face of the reality in which they live. Moraes and Rabinovich (1996) understand that resilience is a combination of factors that help individuals face and overcome problems and adversities in life. Resilience in the institutional context would, therefore, be related to: individual characteristics; significant affective bonds that enable children and adolescents to have some form of safe attachment; adequate mothering that gives priority to the individual needs of the child. These factors should be offered by care and support networks and by foster care institutions so that children can develop skills to face adversity (McBeath et al., 2014).

The narratives of the children showed that there is a desire of the siblings to preserve the fraternal relationship. According to Morais et al. (2012), the well-being of children and adolescents and the ability to develop resilient attitudes

depend on the protective effects provided by support networks. Moreira (2014) and Mitchell (2016) state that the host institution can be a space that contributes to the adequate

development of these institutionalized children. However, the institutional space must be equipped and the staff trained in order to achieve this goal (Cavalcante & Cruz, 2018).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The psychologist's work in the legal area has increased in the most varied sectors of the judicial system, both in the field of interventions and of research. This study aimed to contribute to the scientific knowledge on the relationships of affection preserved among institutionalized child/adolescent siblings in the same foster home. Total institutions are traditionally characterized as instruments to model, change and transform people, disregarding individualities and gradually mortifying the identity of the subjects.

In the present case study, the instruments used revealed that the relationships of affection in the family were marked by physical and psychological violence, with ambivalent feelings towards the aggressor. The affective losses experienced by the siblings highlighted the role of the parental child, played by the older sister, while the memories of the siblings of the positive moments increased the loyalty toward each other and strengthened the fraternal bonds. After institutionalization, fights became more frequent and fraternal relations became weakened by the fragmentation of the group. The preservation of the two sisters in the same

host house contributed to the establishment of the feeling of security, protection, and a predisposition to adopt more positive and resilient attitudes before the reality in which they live.

We emphasized that all entities that offer institutional foster care, regardless of the modality of care, must meet the assumptions of the ECA and the National Plan for the Promotion, Protection and Defense of the Right of Children and Adolescents to Family Living and Community. The planned actions can encourage the interactions of the foster children with their families of origins, through visits to the family homes, and the possibility of visits by family members to the host institution. In addition, we highlight that these services must accept children and adolescents of both sexes and different ages so as to preserve the bond between sibling groups.

Considering the limitations of a case study, we highlight the need for research with larger samples and new designs that favor more substantial contributions about the investigated phenomenon.

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