

WOMEN WITH CHILDREN UNDER THREE YEARS: LIFE CONDITIONS

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ABSTRACT

This text presents a profile of women living in the state of São Paulo who are mothers of children ages 0 to three years, and compares those whose children are enrolled in early childhood education – EI – institutions and those who do not use this service, in order to discuss the social role of these units. We used the 2010 Demographic Census as our source of data, and selected the variables referring to general profile (age, color/race, education), family life (family structure, position in the family), professional life and income (occupation, income per capita). The study reaffirms phenomena referring to social inequalities which aggravate according with gender and race/color relations, underscoring these differences in terms of access to EI institutions.

PUBLIC POLICIES • EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION • SOCIAL INEQUALITIES • WOMEN

¹ The article deals with a study conducted at the Fundação Carlos Chagas [Carlos Chagas Foundation] – FCC –, from 2014 to 2015, titled *Educação infantil no estado de São Paulo: perfil e condições de atendimento* [Early Childhood Education in the State of São Paulo: Profile and Service Conditions], coordinated by Fabiana Silva Fernandes. It received valuable advice from Miriam Bizzocchi, a statistician at the FCC.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (EI) HAS BEEN TAKING ON INCREASING IMPORTANCE IN the context of educational policies. Since the 1988 Federal Constitution (BRASIL, 1988), it was integrated into the educational sector, and was defined as the first stage of basic education by the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (Law 9394/1996) (BRASIL, 1996), which establishes for it to be provided in day care centers for children aged 0-3, and in preschools for children aged 4-5. Until 2006, EI covered children ages 0-6, but due to the Constitutional Amendment 53 (BRASIL, 2006), children age six are now to be served in basic education.

Among the reasons that gave EI an increasing visibility since the 1970's, Maria Malta Campos (2008) lists three, which are related with women's integration into the productive world and changes in family structures: urbanization, which caused significant changes in social relations and childhood experiences; advances in research on child development; and the recognition of children's rights at a global level.

The arguments for the importance of EI are not a consensus, and they revolve around different conceptions of childhood and child which result from analyses in the fields of psychology, sociology and history. In terms of educational policy, measures and actions announced at the federal government level would justify the formulation of policies for childhood and childhood education, but they have drawn severe criticism from academe for being founded on an instrumentalist, overly school-oriented perspective aimed at an EI that promotes good

educational performances in subsequent educational stages (CAMPOS; COELHO; CRUZ, 2006; FÜLLGRAF, 2001).

In spite of advances in legislation, the dynamics of policies for EI follows a different pace, facing a series of obstacles, such as the readjustment of day care and preschool institutions to the principles, guidelines and regulations of basic education (CAMPOS, 2012; CÔCO, 2009; KRAMER; NUNES, 2007), the poor quality of services (CAMPOS, ROSEMBERG, FERREIRA, 1995; ROSEMBERG, 1999; CAMPOS et al., 2010, 2012), the lack of adequate infrastructure, qualified human resources and financial resources, and insufficient offer to meet the demand, among others (CAMPOS, ROSEMBERG, FERREIRA, 1995; CAMPOS, 2012; CAMPOS et al., 2010, 2012).

In addition to these difficulties which are internal to education, studies have found that EI offer – which is not enough to meet the existing demand, especially in day care centers – is important for the poorer parts of the population, contributing to social protection policies (MONTALI; LIMA, 2013). A few studies within the area of gender (MONTALI, 2013; SORJ, 2004) have highlighted a positive correlation between women’s socio-economic condition and their children’s access to EI, discussing poverty as an obstacle to providing EI to children, particularly in the age group from 0 to 3 years. Studies have also shown that mothers with small children who have no access to EI have faced more difficulties to enter the job market and contribute to family income (ÁVILA, FERREIRA, 2014; MONTALI, LIMA, 2013; SORJ, 2004), which reinforces the situation of exclusion and inequality in access to social policies.

This work aims to investigate the profile of women who are mothers of children aged 0-3, comparing those whose children are enrolled in early-childhood education – EI – institutions and those who do not use this service, in order to analyze the social role of day-care centers in family life.

The perspective that guides this work is founded the conception of EI as a social right established in the Federal Constitution. In its chapter two, which refers to social rights, the Constitution foresees families’ right to free day care and preschool service (BRASIL, 1988).

In our view, children’s right to EI is complementary to social rights, thus widening the conception of their purpose, since EI institutions promote activities of both education and care for small children, but they also provide a protection and safety environment for the children of working persons.

Children need rights for their protection, which requires effective political action. The idea about children’s rights is that society has the duty to meet their fundamental needs (HAMMARBERG, 1993), with no opposition between assistance² and education. Kuhlman Jr. noted, already in his 1998 studies of EI institutions’s history, this characteristic

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Translator’s Note: ‘Assistance’ (Port. *Assistência*) is one of the main words for ‘social welfare’ in Brazil. The author chose it, among other reasons, to exploit the word etymology following the article.

of educational thought, which dissociated education and assistance, denying the educative character of institutions connected to entities or programs of an assistencial nature, “as if educating was something positive, neutral or emancipatory” (KUHLMANN JR., 1998, p. 73). In addition, the fact that young children had their right to education recognized in the late 1980’s does not mean that educational institutions did not play an educational role before.

By disregarding the history of early childhood education and wrongly interpreting that day care centers used to be assistencial establishments before and are educative ones now, a false opposition is created between education and assistance. Day-care centers were not born assistencial institutions, because they manifest a 19th century assistance policy, which developed to privilege education offer to the poor, working population. (KUHLMANN JR.; FERNANDES, 2012, p. 33)

Considering that “assistance” means being together or being in a group, we defend the idea that education and assistance are actions that converge towards the same direction, since

[...] far beyond promoting the acquisition of systematized knowledge, educating is promoting socialization, fostering social bonds, ensuring that new generations develop behaviors that are characteristic of their culture. Education is a collective process, a form of social relation between generations of different ages, which doesn’t take place in opposition to assistance. (KUHLMANN JR.; FERNANDES, 2012, p. 33)

In this perspective, the opposition between education and assistance does not hold water, since both are important and complementary, albeit distinct, mechanisms for ensuring equality in access to universal rights. Moreover, one cannot deny the importance for children to be able to grow up in a safe environment, which means that children’s rights, in addition to the right to education, must go side by side with the other social rights.

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The procedure used to isolate women with children aged 0-3 was the following: first, we selected the female population, and then selected the category of women with children aged 0-3 using the 2010 Demographic Census’ V6660 variable, which refers to the age of a woman’s last child born alive until July 31, 2010.

METHODOLOGY

We used the 2010 Demographic Census (IBGE, 2010) as our source of data to obtain information about women living in the state of São Paulo with children ages zero to three years.³

For this study, we selected variables that allowed us to compare life conditions of mothers of children aged 0-3 who were served

by day care centers, and mothers of children who were not. These variables refer to general profile (age, color/race, education), family life (family structure, position in the family), professional life and income (occupation, income per capita).

The information obtained was organized in order to compare three categories of women: the first formed by women with children aged 0-3 who were enrolled in public institutions; the second, by women with children aged 0-3 who were enrolled in private institutions; and the last one, by women whose children did not attend EI.

It is important to consider that the 2010 Demographic Census makes no distinction between private EI institutions and private non-profit ones (community, philanthropic, or religious schools) like the School Census does. The 2010 Demographic Census questionnaire contains a question about school or day care attendance, and presents as possible affirmative answers the following options: 1) “Yes, public” and 2) “Yes, private”. For the purposes of this article, we consider that 2010 Demographic Census respondents classify a school/day care center as public when its service is free of charge for families, and private when families have to pay fees.

Another important observation refers to the option not to call EI institutions for zero to three-year-olds day care centers, as not all individuals within this group age are necessarily enrolled in day care centers; there are children who attend other types of institution, including assistance programs and preschools. Some studies have pointed to the existence of other forms of early childhood service equivalent to day care (CAMPOS et al., 2010, 2011), which draws criticism, whether because of their poor quality of service, or because they do not comply with educational norms and guidelines. However, that is not the focus of this article, although we recognize the subject importance and the necessity to determine and evaluate the effects of these different forms of early childhood service.

PROFILE OF WOMEN WITH CHILDREN AGES ZERO TO THREE YEARS: AGE GROUP, EDUCATION, COLOR/RACE

Discussions based on the perspective of sexual division of labor have as one of their focuses questions related with harmonizing family and occupation, since women’s integration into the job market has not been accompanied by significant change in domestic duties (MONTALI; LIMA, 2013), resulting in double burden. What is more, there are no policies for family-work harmonization (SORJ, 2004).

Among the mechanisms that facilitate this harmonization, besides labor law, collective agreements, parental leaves (MONTALI;

LIMA, 2013) and income transfer programs, Sorj (2004) describes day care centers and preschools as effective means to promote balance between work and family demands, particularly in low-income families.

The impact of day care centers and preschools in women's participation in the job market, income and full time work occurs, in general, in every social class. But it's the poorer families who are most benefitted from this mechanism compared to higher income groups. (SORJ, 2004, p. 3)

Considering also that women with children aged 0-3 are situated in an economically active population group, we can affirm the importance of policies for collectivizing family responsibilities concerning child care, particularly to the poorest social segments.

In the state of São Paulo in 2010, most of the women with children aged 0-3, i.e., 69%, were in the 21-34 age group (Table A in the Appendix), which corresponds to approximately 1.2 million people. Of these women, 32% had children enrolled in EI institutions, with 22% in public institutions, and 10% in private ones (Table 1), which suggests that EI institutions also result in opportunities for women's integration within the economy.

Still in the state of São Paulo, we can see a significant percentage of women who postponed motherhood, one of the main likely reasons being their professional life: 20% of women with children aged 0-3 were in the 35+ age group, corresponding to about 360,000 people, 37% of which with children enrolled in early childhood education institutions. In addition, the fact that 17% of them, a higher rate than in the 21-34 age group, have children aged 0-3 in private early childhood education institutions seems to indicate a more stable work situation for women over 34 years old (Table 1).

In contrast, younger women, i.e., those in the 13-20 age group, are the category where the EI enrollment rate of children aged 0-3 is the lowest (Table 1). Indeed, there is a significant percentage of very young women (in the 13-20 age group) whose children are not enrolled in EI institutions; in the other age groups, the rate of mothers whose children do not attend EI institutions is below 70%; in the group of younger mothers, that rate corresponds to 83% (Table 1).

TABLE 1
WOMEN LIVING IN THE STATE OF SÃO PAULO WHO ARE MOTHERS OF CHILDREN AGES 0-3
ACCORDING WITH AGE GROUP AND CHILDREN'S ATTENDANCE IN EI INSTITUTIONS

AGE GROUP	CHILDREN AGED 0-3 ATTENDING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION INSTITUTION									TOTAL		
	PUBLIC			PRIVATE			NO					
	N	% C	% L	N	% C	% L	N	% C	% L	N	% C	% L
13 to 20	29,337	8	(15)	4,304	2	(02)	159,470	13	(83)	193,121	11	(100)
21 to 34	265,849	72	(22)	117,827	65	(10)	837,180	68	(69)	1,220,993	69	(100)
35 +	73,378	20	(20)	60,109	33	(17)	225,671	18	(63)	359,211	20	(100)
Total	368,564	100	(21)	182,240	100	(10)	1,222,321	100	(69)	1,773,325	100	(100)

N: absolute frequency; % C: column percentage; % L: line percentage

Source: IBGE, *Censo Demográfico 2010*.

The age groups described allow determining the stage of the family's constitution that concentrates children aged 0-3. In line with the findings of Montali and Lima (2013), they show some constraints experienced by women concerning their difficulty to harmonize work (and study, particularly for younger mothers) and care for their small children.

The education level of women living in the state of São Paulo is an interesting aspect to consider when establishing a comparison between them in function of their zero to three-year-old children's attendance to EI institutions.

Although in this state in 2010, 99% of women were literate, regardless of the conditions of access of their zero to three-year-old children to EI institutions, their education level indicates an important difference between them: women whose children attended private institutions were the most educated ones, i.e., 85% had completed at least secondary education. In contrast, among women with children in public institutions or who were not enrolled at all, there are similarities: there was a high concentration of women with no education or only basic education, 52% and 51%, respectively.

TABLE 2
WOMEN LIVING IN THE STATE OF SÃO PAULO WHO ARE MOTHERS OF CHILDREN AGES 0-3, BY EDUCATION LEVEL, AND ACCORDING WITH CHILDREN'S ATTENDANCE IN EI INSTITUTIONS

EDUCATION LEVEL	MOTHERS WITH CHILDREN IN PUBLIC EI		MOTHERS WITH CHILDREN IN PRIVATE EI		MOTHERS WITH CHILDREN WITHOUT EI	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
No Education and Incomplete Basic Education	101,325	28	9,551	05	331,936	27
Basic Education and Incomplete Secondary Education	90,058	24	16,513	09	293,622	24
Secondary Education and Incomplete Higher Education	149,268	41	70,238	39	465,756	38
Higher Education	24,058	07	85,224	47	124,420	10
Undetermined	3,856	01	713	00	6,587	01
Total	368,563	100	182,240	100	1,222,321	100

Source: IBGE, *Censo Demográfico 2010*.

With regard to ethnic profile, we can also see differences in this group of women when we analyze the race/color variable in the 2010 Demographic Census. In the state of São Paulo, the racial profile of women with children aged 0-3 is formed by 60% of white, 33% of brown, 6% of black and 1.2% indigenous or yellow women.

According to Leone (2010), the association between the gender and race dimensions contributes to identify the forms and intensity of segregation in the Brazilian job market. Matching information about race and zero- to three-year-old children's attendance to EI institutions is also an important indicator that signals the aggravation of inequalities around race/color in terms of children's access to day care centers and equivalent institutions.

However, as described in Table 3, when we focus on the race/color characteristics of mothers organized in two groups, i.e., those whose zero- to three-year-old children were enrolled in EI and those whose children were not. No significant difference was found between the rate of mothers who define themselves as black and had children enrolled in EI and brown or white mothers in the same condition (34%, 28% and 32%, respectively).

With regard to mothers whose children do not attend EI, it is noteworthy that, regardless of their color/race, access to EI establishments is very restrict (ou restricted), whether because of insufficient offer or the family's option not to enroll their children in educative units, since almost 70% did not enroll their children aged 0-3 in EI units.

TABLE 3
WOMEN LIVING IN THE STATE OF SÃO PAULO WHO ARE MOTHERS OF CHILDREN AGES 0-3, ACCORDING WITH COLOR/RACE, AND BY CHILDREN'S ATTENDANCE IN EI INSTITUTIONS

COLOR/RACE	CHILDREN ATTENDING EI		CHILDREN NOT ATTENDING EI		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
White	339,507	32	715,061	68	1,054,599	100
Black	36,392	34	69,235	66	105,661	100
Brown	167,728	28	424,490	72	592,247	100
Others	7,177	35	13,536	65	20,781	100
Total	550,804	31	1,222,321	69	1,773,155	100

Source: IBGE, *Censo Demográfico 2010*.

Attendance (or the lack of it) of children aged 0-3 to EI institutions is not a factor that differentiates. However, women, according with their race/color, enrolment in public and private institutions show a greater difference between these groups (Table 4): while white women's children in EI are more homogeneously distributed between public and private institutions, the enrollment of black and brown women's children is concentrated in public institutions.

TABLE 4
WOMEN LIVING IN THE STATE OF SÃO PAULO WHOSE CHILDREN AGES 0-3 ATTEND AN EI INSTITUTION, BY INSTITUTION TYPE, AND ACCORDING WITH WOMEN'S COLOR/RACE

COLOR/RACE	CHILDREN IN PUBLIC EI		CHILDREN IN PRIVATE EI		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
White	195,180	58	144,327	43	339,507	100
Black	29,928	82	6,464	18	36,392	100
Brown	140,473	84	27,255	16	167,728	100
Others	2,983	42	4,194	58	7,177	100
Total	368,563	67	182,240	33	550,803	100

Source: IBGE, *Censo Demográfico 2010*.

The distinction between white, black and brown women with children aged 0-3 attending public and private institutions is relevant: while 58% of white women's children enrolled in EI institutions were in public establishments, for black and brown women, this rate was above 80%.

LIFE CONDITIONS OF WOMEN IN THE STATE OF SÃO PAULO: FAMILY STRUCTURE, INCOME AND OCCUPATION

In highlighting the importance of access to EI, Montali and Lima (2013, p. 10) point out that there is

[...] a positive relationship between the quality of the integration of married women and of female heads of single-parent households

into the job market, in household structures with children under 10 years old.

To analyze groups of families who are more vulnerable to impoverishment, family structure composition and the family life cycle are key information. Vulnerable families, as found by Montali (2008), have the following composition: family structures headed by a couple aged 34 or under, with children and/or relatives; family structures headed by a couple aged 34 to 49, also with families and/or relatives; and female-headed families, with children and/or relatives.

These household structures show distinct compositions, and experience different moments in family life cycle, but they have in common a composition that is unfavorable to its members' integration into the job market or into income generating activities, due to housing children and adolescents or elderly, which is expressed in comparatively lower income generation figures. They show an average family per capita income that is lower than in other household structures, and below regional average [...], they have the highest concentration among the lowest family per capita income deciles, and score the lowest family income generation figures. (MONTALI; LIMA, 2008, p. 214)

Sorj (2004) noted some changes within the composition of families in the 1980's and 1990's, particularly concerning growth of female-headed family's number with children and without a spouse (female single-parent families). Likewise, she noted the massive entrance of women into the job market, which was more significant in the case of single female heads of household with at least one dependent child, which showed "higher job market participation rates (79%) than married women with children, with or without relatives" (SORJ, 2004, p. 25). However, their entry into the job market expresses the precarious life conditions of female single-parent families, as they are subject to a severe degree of poverty: families formed by women with children and without a husband represent the highest percentage of poor people in the country, i.e., around 50% (SORJ, 2004).

In the state of São Paulo, the existing family structures were observed by means of information about the position of the women in the family (household head's wife or partner, household head, household head's daughter), as well as family size and constitution in function of EI attendance (or the lack of it). Family structures were chiefly formed by nuclear and extended families, which totaled 84%. About 60% of families living in the state of São Paulo were small, i.e., with three or

four individuals. It is also noteworthy that the composition of families was predominantly formed by a couple and children (60%).

Although the majority of women (56%) with children aged 0-3, either enrolled in EI or not, were wives or partners of male household heads, it is significant that approximately a quarter of them were household heads.

TABLE 5
WOMEN LIVING IN THE STATE OF SÃO PAULO WITH CHILDREN AGES 0-3, BY TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP WITH HOUSEHOLD HEAD, AND ACCORDING WITH CHILDREN'S ATTENDANCE TO EI INSTITUTION

RELATIONSHIP WITH HOUSEHOLD HEAD	CHILDREN IN PUBLIC EI		CHILDREN IN PRIVATE EI		CHILDREN WITHOUT EI	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Household Head	106,651	29	45,901	25	274,072	22
Wife or Partner of Male Household Head	187,190	51	112,755	62	692,723	57
Daughter of Household Head	51,007	14	16,972	9	166,385	14
Others	23,715	6	6,612	4	89,140	7
Total	368,563	100	182,240	100	1,222,321	100

Source: IBGE, *Censo Demográfico, 2010*.

Women's responsibility for household, as pointed in Table 5, was slightly higher in the set of women with children registered in public EI institutions (29%), while female family heads which children in private institutions represented 25%. However, it is important to highlight that about 30% of female family heads with children in the private system had a per capita income above two minimum wages, while in the segments of women whose zero to three-year-old children were not enrolled in EI institutions (or whose children were enrolled in the public system) only 4% of each of these two groups had a per capita income above two minimum wages (Table A in the Appendix). This agrees with data from the studies of Montali and Lima (2013) and indicates the necessity to reinforce investments in public policies for child care, as the possibilities of women's integration to job market are related with their responsibilities for children and with their children's access to early childhood education. Moreover, such access has positive effects, with "consequences to the family structure types identified [...] as most vulnerable to impoverishment, as well as to income inequality between municipalities in São Paulo metropolitan area" (MONTALI; LIMA, 2013, p. 10).

Although the great majority of women do not have their zero- to three-year-old children enrolled in EI and live in the nuclear families, when we isolated the female family head category from the others in terms of family structure, and matched the new variable with

occupation and income, the rate of female family heads with no formal employment is higher than in other family structures. In addition, the rate of women with children aged 0-3 and formally employed (i.e., not in a precarious job situation), whether as family heads or in another family structure, was above 45% when their zero- to three-year-old children were enrolled in an EI institution. This contrasts with the rather lower rate (25%) of women, either family heads or not, whose children were not attending an early childhood education institution (Table D in the Appendix). Thus confirming studies that indicate a combination of factors that aggravate poverty conditions, among which: low income, restrict access to health, education and leisure services, and precarious occupation (BRUSCHINI; RICOLDI, 2009; LEONE, 2010; MONTALI, 2012; MONTALI; LIMA, 2013; MONTALI; LIMA, 2008; SORJ, 2004, 2013).

By investigating the question of household income, we obtained important information. Initially, regardless of color/race, we observed an expressive difference in average per capita income between women with children attending private institutions and the other two groups. This differentiation became more pronounced when we analyzed average per capita household income associated with the race/color of groups: white and yellow women whose children were enrolled in private institutions had an average per capita income of 4.2 and 4.8 minimum wages, respectively, while black and brown women, 1.9 and 2.0 (Table 6).

We also observed that, regarding women whose children were not attending EI institution, the average per capita household income dropped significantly in the white population.

TABLE 6
AVERAGE PER CAPITA HOUSEHOLD* INCOME, IN MINIMUM WAGES, OF WOMEN LIVING IN THE STATE OF SÃO PAULO WITH CHILDREN AGES 0-3, ACCORDING WITH COLOR/RACE AND CHILDREN'S ATTENDANCE TO EI INSTITUTIONS

COLOR/RACE	PUBLIC EI	PRIVATE EI	NOT ATTENDING EI
White	1.1	4.2	1.5
Black	0.8	1.9	0.8
Yellow	1.3	4.8	2.3
Brown	0.8	2.0	0.8
Indigenous	0.6	2.6	0.9
Total	0.9	3.8	1.2

(*) private households

Source: IBGE, *Censo Demográfico 2010*.

Race, as highlighted by Leone (2010, p. 8), “structures the division of labor among more socially devalued, fewer paid occupations where black people concentrate.” In this respect, black women suffer a double discrimination, according to the author.

Women were grouped by per capita household income (Table 7), and the information obtained did not allow different conclusions than those already known: higher-income women tend to enroll their children in private institutions, while public ones were predominantly used by children from homes with a low per capita income.

TABLE 7
DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN LIVING IN THE STATE OF SÃO PAULO WHO ARE MOTHERS OF CHILDREN AGES 0-3, BY PER CAPITA HOUSEHOLD INCOME SEGMENT, ACCORDING WITH CHILDREN'S ATTENDANCE TO EI INSTITUTIONS

PER CAPITA HOUSEHOLD INCOME (IN MINIMUM WAGES)	WOMEN WITH CHILDREN AGES 0-3		
	PUBLIC EI	PRIVATE EI	NOT ATTENDING EI
Until 0.5	31	6	33
0.5 to 1.0	38	13	35
1.0 to 2.0	24	27	21
Over 2.0	7	54	11
Total	100	100	100

Source: IBGE, *Censo Demográfico 2010*.

According to data in Table 7, we can see the significant rate (about 70%) of women with children not attending EI who live in homes where the per capita household income was a minimum wage or less. This situation requires a study to determine why the children from this group women are not connected to any EI institution. As a hypothesis, besides family option, we highlight the huge deficit in early childhood education offer for children aged 0-3, particularly in great cities.

With regard to work life, we also found significant differences. Harmonizing domestic and work life, as studies in gender area have shown, has been a challenge for women, mainly for those with small children (SORJ, 2004).

By investigating the profile of families whose children attended EI in 2001, therefore, when six-year-olds were still enrolled in this education level, Sorj notes that:

In approximately 39% of Brazilian households, children until 6 years old attend day care or preschool. In these households, per capita family income is approximately 50% higher than in households where children don't attend day care. Mothers of children attending day care have a higher job market participation rate than women whose children don't attend day care or preschool. These mothers can work one hour and a half more compared to those who work while their children are at home. Their wages are also 55% higher. This evidence that day care is an efficient mechanism for harmonizing family and work, as besides enabling mothers to work, it allows them a better integration into the job market. (2004, p. 50)

Sorj (2004) assessed EI's importance, mainly to low-income families, as access to day care centers and preschools had a greater weight in this category than in families with a higher income, in terms of wage improvement and women's participation in the job market.

Particularly with regard to occupation of women living in the state of São Paulo who are mothers of children aged 0-3, we can see that virtually half of them had only one job (Table 8).⁴

The information that the children of 80% of the women who were not working were not attending EI institutions allows indicating the possible relationship between the EI enrollment of zero to three-year-olds and maternal employment. In contrast, we found that, among the groups of women with one or more occupations, these rates were below 60% (58% and 48%, respectively).

It is also worth stressing that, while approximately 43% of women whose children were not enrolled in EI had at least one occupation, in the other groups, i.e., women whose children attended public or private institutions, the rate of women with at least one occupation was 65% or above.

TABLE 8
DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN LIVING IN THE STATE OF SÃO PAULO WHO ARE MOTHERS OF CHILDREN AGES 0-3, ACCORDING WITH OCCUPATION AND CHILDREN'S ATTENDANCE TO EI INSTITUTIONS

OCCUPATION	PUBLIC EI	PRIVATE EI	NOT ATTENDING	TOTAL
None	(15)	(05)	(80)	(100)
	35	22	57	48
One	(26)	(15)	(58)	(100)
	63	73	42	50
Two or More	(26)	(26)	(48)	(100)
	2	4	1	2
Total	(21)	(10)	(69)	(100)
	100	100	100	100

Source: IBGE, *Censo Demográfico 2010*.

However, the expansion of EI offer has been restricted in relation to poorer families, where women either do not work or have precarious occupations, as already observed in Montali's (2012, 2013) studies. According with Sorj (2004), 35% of single female household heads with at least one dependent child did not have formal employment.

These jobs are considered of lowest quality in the whole job market. These occupations are not regulated by labor law, and social benefits are not guaranteed, but in many cases, due to a greater informality, hours can be more flexible, which allows harmonizing job and domestic life. For the same family structure, but with the presence of relatives, this rate drops to 29%, which makes us assume that the presence of relatives allows a better

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Table 8 indicates whether a woman works or not, and whether she has one, two or more occupations.

It shows that only 2% of total women with children aged 0-3 were involved in two or more jobs, and a good part of these women are likely to be in more precarious occupations.

This table presents two percentage lines for each qualified category: the first indicates the percentage of each professional category in relation to children's attendance to early-childhood education, and it should be horizontally read. The second line refers to the percentage of occupation categories in relation to the others in each segment of children's attendance. This means, for example, that: 21% of women with children aged 0-3 had their children in a public institution; 35% of these were not working; 63% were in one job, and 2% had two or more occupations.

quality of integration the job market. (SORJ; FONTES; MACHADO, 2007, p. 591)

Thus, we conclude that in order for women to harmonize work and family life, they need to occupy more precarious positions. In addition, mothers of children attending day care or preschool have a higher job market participation rate and can work for one and a half hour more than mothers who work while their children are at home, and their wages are 55% taller (SORJ, 2004).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Our analysis reaffirms long-observed phenomena, evidencing that problems persist and that social policies, particularly educational ones, have an important role as a mechanism for mitigating the effects of inequality, as the lack of access to EI contributes to reproduce poverty and vulnerability situations.

Data from the 2010 Demographic Census allow to establish that the great majority (69%) of women living in the state of São Paulo and with children aged 0-3 do not have their children enrolled in EI units, whether a day care center or an equivalent institution. Even though the enrollment of children in this age group is not mandatory, and considering that the family decides whether or not to enroll their child in an EI institution for children aged 0-3, we must always bear in mind that access is still very restrict (ou restricted), particularly for the lower-income population, due to the shortage of places offered by the government.

As we analyze access in terms of attendance to public and private institutions, we can see that differences between women by age, race/color, family structure, income and profession become more pronounced, indicating that the economic question is a decisive aspect. Economic factor seems to pervade EI policies: the highest concentration of children of black and brown women attending EI is in public institutions; the per capita income of black and brown mothers whose children are in private institutions is much lower than the income of white mothers; mothers whose children attend private institutions are the most educated ones; and having a job is associated with children's attendance to EI. Corroborating gender studies, it is worth highlighting that EI is an effective mechanism to promote balance between work and family demands, resulting, particularly for women, in an opportunity of integration the job market. And the lack of a family or domestic structure that allows women to exercise their labor potential, as well as a restricted EI offer, end up exerting pressure on educational systems, since there are women who need a place for their children in public

institutions, as already demonstrated in studies (MONTALI; LIMA, 2008; SORJ, 2004).

There is a lack of policies to foster harmonization between household and work life, among which are EI-related ones. Data allow us to affirm that EI policies are an important ally in the context of social policies, as they benefit poorer families and favor an increase in female participation in the job market, a fact already observed in studies (SORJ, 2004).

EI policies, which are a social right foreseen in the Brazilian Constitution, have an important role in ensuring that women, in particular. They can be integrated the job market with better pay conditions, availability for more work hours, and formal employment rather than precarious jobs (MONTALI; LIMA, 2013), as well as ensuring children an adequate space for their full physical, affective, cognitive and social development.

In this perspective, the expansion of EI offer, particularly in day care centers, would contribute the effectiveness of social protection policies, as access to EI is associated with a better socioeconomic situation of families. Therefore, our analysis reaffirms phenomena pertaining to social inequalities, which aggravate in gender and race/color relations, evidencing this differences in terms of access to EI institutions. However, it is also noteworthy that, although questions of race/color are important, the income of families seems to be the predominant factor that causes inequalities to reproduce and aggravate as we analyze variables related to race/color and EI access. In view of this data analysis, we question the way education has shifted away from other social policies, particularly social assistance ones, in a pursuit to affirm its specificity through a fragmented understanding of its field of action. This phenomenon is evident in EI, which dissociates the dimensions of educating and caring, and claims that EI units are educational rather than assistencial establishments, as if assistance did not have its role in child development.

Of Latin origin, the word "assistance" means *being together* or *being in a group*. It's an action that converges with education, since, far beyond promoting the acquisition of systematized knowledge, educating is promoting socialization, fostering social bonds, ensuring new generations develop behaviors that are characteristic of their culture. Education is a collective process, a form of social relation between generations of different ages, which doesn't take place in opposition to assistance. In fact, we believed that the effort of early childhood education should not be to shift away from assistance in order to affirm its educative character, but rather to promote the expansion of this bond so that the other education levels can also

be imbued with this conception. We believe so not only because there are children also in basic education – who are often forgotten by those who defend early childhood education – but because the young also need the guidance of older generations and to feel well received in school environments. (KUHLMANN JR.; FERNANDES, 2012, p. 33, italics by the authors)

There is a historical mistake in the idea that EI is educational now, and used to be assistencialistic before, because EI institutions have always had an educational purpose. In addition, if we conceive education in a humanistic perspective, it is committed to human beings' real life conditions, and opposes phenomena that hinder their emancipation, such as social inequality and forms of discrimination and subordination, which means that education is a wider process and does not oppose care and assistance practices.

It is worth highlighting that to reaffirm the link between education and assistance does not mean that EI should be assistencialistic:

Assistencialism, as a vulgar word, points us to clientelist, personalist practices where social rights are covered up by policies that insinuate the value of paying back, situating relationships of a public nature into the private sphere, i.e., it's a prejudiced way of conceiving services in early childhood education when it comes to the population poorer segments. (KUHLMANN JR.; FERNANDES, 2012, p. 34)

Therefore, we advocate that the value of educative work lies precisely in the complexity that education represents to human being's formation. For this work to become firmly established as education, it is necessary, among others: a) to break sectorialist boundaries, because students' and children's life conditions are related to the experiences they have in their school trajectory; b) to overcome the simplistic dualism of education versus assistance, because assistance services can also promote human development; and c) to conceive education beyond school boundaries, seeking to understand its potential and the obstacles it faces in a bigger picture of social relations.

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APPENDIX

TABLE A

DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN LIVING IN THE STATE OF SÃO PAULO WHO ARE MOTHERS OF CHILDREN AGES 0-3, BY PER CAPITA HOUSEHOLD INCOME SEGMENT, ACCORDING WITH CHILDREN'S ATTENDANCE TO EI INSTITUTIONS AND WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE FAMILY STRUCTURE

PER CAPITA HOUSEHOLD INCOME (MINIMUM WAGES)	CHILDREN AGED 0-3 NOT ENROLLED IN EI			CHILDREN IN PUBLIC EI			CHILDREN IN PRIVATE EI		
	FAMILY HEAD %	OTHER %	TOTAL %	FAMILY HEAD %	OTHER %	TOTAL %	FAMILY HEAD %	OTHER %	TOTAL %
Until 0.5	54	31	33	36	31	31	17	5	6
0.5 to 1.0	30	35	34	40	38	38	25	12	13
1.0 to 2.0	13	22	21	20	24	24	27	26	26
Over 2.0	4	13	12	4	7	7	31	58	56
Total	92,239	908,686	1,000,925	14,251	292,890	307,141	13,218	144,081	157,299

Source: IBGE, *Censo Demográfico 2010*.

TABLE B

DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN LIVING IN THE STATE OF SÃO PAULO WHO ARE MOTHERS OF CHILDREN AGES 0-3, BY JOB CATEGORY, AND ACCORDING WITH CHILDREN'S ATTENDANCE TO EI INSTITUTIONS AND WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE FAMILY STRUCTURE

JOB CATEGORIES	CHILDREN AGED 0-3 NOT ENROLLED IN EI			CHILDREN IN PUBLIC EI			CHILDREN IN PRIVATE EI		
	FAMILY HEAD %	OTHER FAMILY STRUCTURES %	TOTAL %	FAMILY HEAD %	OTHER FAMILY STRUCTURES %	TOTAL %	FAMILY HEAD %	OTHER FAMILY STRUCTURES %	TOTAL %
Unemployed	45	57	56	30	34	34	17	23	22
Formal Employment	30	24	25	46	41	42	50	47	48
Military and Statutory Civil Servants	1	2	2	2	2	2	6	5	5
Work without Formal Employment	16	8	9	18	15	15	11	7	7
Self-Employed	7	7	7	4	7	7	12	13	13
Employers	0	1	1	0	0	0	2		4
Others	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
Total	92,953	916,293	1,009,246	14,338	293,927	308,265	13,846	149,729	163,575

Source: IBGE, *Censo Demográfico 2010*.

