**THE RELATIONSHIP OF CARE IN THE FAMILY**

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Developed countries are increasingly concerned on a progressively aging population (UNFPA & HelpAge International, 2012) and manifests greater risk of becoming dependent (Badia Llach, Lara Suriñach y Roset Gamisans, 2004). The absence of generational change (Para, 2012) is added to the perspective of a young generation whose lifestyles and values seem to be distant from the idea of caring (Fernández Muñoz, 2000).

The renewed interest of States in the family as caregiver seems to stem from the logic of cost-benefits which in depression times looks for saving in health services (Rivas, 2013). But even “familiar countries" (Gans y Silverstein, 2006; Kim y Wilcox, 2013) point to the impossibility of this system of informal care based on family solidarity (López de Ayala Genovés, 2000). The family also faced in recent decades a process of deinstitutionalization, result in part of the so-called "pluralization of family forms" (Donati, 2014) that questions the validity of the "traditional family" and its functions (Del Campo, 2006).

Caring seems to be one of those functions that other social systems could play. However, the aim of this thesis has been to show that caring comes alive in the supra-funtional reciprocity relationships, typically familar (Elizasu, 1999). It is an exchange based on the symbolic giving and receiving aimed at the welfare and happiness of the people, beyond the purely healthcare function (Marías, 1987).

At the same time, a sociocultural phenomenon arises offering a negative vision associated with dependence and economic cost care, social imbalance and family burnout occurs. Another aim of the thesis has been to explain that being dependent is a natural human condition, always needy and vulnerable in his development (MacIntyre, 2001). Dependence is not a problem itself, but so are its consequences. And when in fact becomes problematic, shows the lack of capacity, training and resources from the family as caregiver to face unforeseen changes and take on challenges that threaten their life cycle and life project. Whit this a key idea of the thesis is pointed out that: being dependent and require care is natural, but it varies in degree and intensity throughout life; and actually points to a supra-individual reality that involves relationships and in consequence family and society.

But functionalist sociology that guides Welfare States can’t explain or justify issues of deep social significance: What does family as caregiver mean? Is the same thing attending than caring?, Which social system must and can take care?, Is caring something useful?, Why caring for those who are no longer productive?, Does our society value and promote caring?, Is it necessary to educate for caring?, Is it possible to learn from caring experiences?, Which benefits does society get from this?

Caring means talking about family and relationships. Pierpaolo Doanti’s Relational Sociology (1996) introduces an original approach that allows us to observe, analyze and interpret social phenomena as different ways of relating relationships. Thus, the caring relationship and its impact on the family and in society are taking on a new perspective, identifying in the family as caregiver a generative potential that can humanize relations of a society increasingly focused on the relevance and usefulness (Donati, 2009).

Using a descriptive and analytical-interpretative methodology, the thesis has been structured into four chapters. In the first one is presented the relational sociology as a theory that allows establish the family, dependency and caring issue from the relational point of view. In the second one put the attention on three key concepts of relational sociology: relationship, relational rationality and reflexivity. In the third one family is analyzed as a sociological problem and relational reality. And in the fourth one reflects on the family caregiver, dependency and caring relationship.

The final conclusions are intended to provide guidance for future research lines and social educational proposals to the attention, personalized support and training for caregiver families. This thesis has pretended to justify theoretically and from a sociological and relational view a key idea from an educational point of view: caring relationships enclose itself a potential learning and growth for individuals, families and society in general that needs to be discovered, put in value and used in the socialization and education of new generations. The family as caregiver has an added social value due to the fact that relationships that it creates can be the seed of a caring culture increasingly useful in individualistic societies focused on the utility of things and people.