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DOSSIER: CARE AND EMOTIONS: DISCOURSES, PRACTICES AND EXPERIENCES

PRESENTATION/APRESENTAÇÃO

Care and emotions: discourses, practices and experiences

Cuidados e emoções: discursos, práticas e experiências

Cuidado y emociones: discursos, prácticas y experiencias

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Abstract: This paper introduces the dossier "Care and emotions: discourses, practices and experiences". Its purpose is to discuss possible intertwinings between theses on care and the anthropology of emotions, focusing on the parallels between the tension care-control and the micropolitical dimension of emotions.

Keywords: Care. Control. Micropolitics of emotions.

Resumo: Esse texto apresenta o dossiê "Cuidados e emoções: discursos, práticas e experiências". Seu objetivo é discutir os entrelaçamentos possíveis entre as teorias do cuidado e a antropologia das emoções, com foco nos paralelos entre a tensão cuidado-controle e a dimensão micropolítica das emoções.

Palavras-chave: Cuidado. Controle. Micropolítica das emoções.

Resumen: Este texto presenta el dossier "Cuidado y emociones: discursos, prácticas y experiencias". Su objetivo es discutir los posibles vínculos entre las teorías del cuidado y la antropología de las emociones, centrándose en los paralelismos entre la tensión entre cuidado y control y la dimensión micropolítica de las emociones.

Palabras clave: Cuidados. Control. Micropolítica de las emociones.

Introduction

This dossier draws inspiration from the panel titled "The care: practices, narratives and emotional grammars,," held during the 8th Congress of the Portuguese Association of Anthropology (Évora, September 2022). The panel aimed to delve into the intersections between theories of care and the anthropology of emotions, focusing on a common issue: the inherent asymmetry embedded within caregiving dynamics and the interplay between authority/power/hierarchy and specific emotions like gratitude, compassion, or contempt, among others.

Theses on care often refer to a tension between caregiving and its implications for power/control and authority. This tension arises from the inherent asymmetry created by the act of caring, distinguishing between the caregiver and the recipient of care. Concurrently, the anthropology of emotions, dating back to the early 1990s, has been attuned to the micropolitical nuances of emotion and the potential emotion has to dramatize, disrupt, or reinforce hierarchical macrostructures in which



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human interactions occur. Emotions such as gratitude, compassion, and contempt, along with others like humiliation, shame, guilt, and disgust, integrate the emotional repertoire capable of performing this role.

The call for submissions for this dossier prompted researchers to contemplate potential intersections between these two areas of research, centered around two overarching questions that permeate them both: first, the asymmetry inherent in caregiving; and second, the interplay between authority/power/hierarchy and emotional grammars. The aim was to pave the way for deeper explorations: on one hand, to foster reflections on the tensions between power and control inherent in caregiving; and on the other, to recognize the analytical fruitfulness that stems from an examination of the micropolitical dimension of emotions.

Therefore, the dossier focuses on studying how emotional grammar elicited by both the acts of caring and being the recipient of care facilitate a profound comprehension of the asymmetry thereby established.

Care and the production of inequalities

We can find reflections on care describing it as constitutive of relations and essential for social life since mythological texts of ancient Greece. However, following the work carried out by feminist academics who, starting in the 1980s, resumed a systematic reflection on the subject, we have witnessed a recent exponential development of studies on care in the fields of social and human sciences (Lima 2016). The current importance of the topic is expressed in the fact that most contemporary debates on social reproduction and the sustenance of everyday life are currently expressed in terms of care. "Care is everything we do to continue, repair, and maintain our world so we can live in it as well as possible." (Fisher and Tronto 1990, 40)

Care practices are traditionally performed by women and symbolically associated with acts of love and affection. Criticising the reductionist view of care as feminine love associated with

the family and domestic sphere in contrast to men's paid activities in the public sphere, feminist reflections draw attention to the interrelations between care and economic relations, shifting the issue from the private to the public sphere, and consequently endowing it with a new importance from the perspective of sociological, economic, and political analysis.

People claimed a total separation of sentiment and economics, while in practice, when asked how you know someone loves you, people described showing love by sharing food, money, clothing, access to credit, employment opportunities, labor, and childcare—which I saw as economic transactions—while they were reluctant to so label them. They also described these acts as gifts, without explicit need for remuneration, but they could, when pressed, reluctantly, make an accurate accounting of such gifts, and judge people's character on the basis of whether they gave as good as they got. (Rebhun 2007, 111).

Carol Gilligan's (1982) groundbreaking research on the ethics of care provides profound insights into the gendered dimensions of moral development and ethical reasoning. Gilligan's research illuminates how women's moral reasoning often emphasizes care and relationality, challenging the universality of male-centric moral frameworks. By emphasizing the significance of emotions, empathy, and interpersonal relationships in social life, Gilligan argues for the central role of care in ethical decision-making and moral agency.

Building on this analytical framework, Joan Tronto's (1987) seminal work lays the groundwork for understanding care as both a political and moral imperative, fundamental to social life. Tronto emphasizes that care is not merely a private responsibility but a collective obligation. She argues that care involves a range of activities aimed at maintaining and promoting the well-being of others. However, Tronto also acknowledges the power dynamics inherent in care relationships and how care practices can either reinforce or challenge existing structures of inequality and domination.

Analysing the interrelationships between care, gender and emotions control reveals the com-

plex dynamics of power and inequality inherent in sociality and processes of social reproduction. Silvia Federici's (1975) feminist perspective on reproductive labour adds another critical dimension to this intersection. Federici argues that women's reproductive labour, including caregiving, has historically been undervalued and exploited under capitalism, perpetuating systems of gender-based inequality and exploitation. Her analysis sheds light on how capitalism commodifies care, exacerbating existing social disparities and marginalizing caregivers.

Similarly, Nancy Fraser's (2016) critique of the gendered division of labour and the neoliberal commodification of care underscores the complexities of this intersection. Fraser highlights how market-based solutions, privatization of social services, and neoliberal policies intensify inequalities, disproportionately burdening women with care responsibilities.

Care needs and practices are perceived within a cognitive framework that dichotomizes individuals between autonomy and dependence. This dichotomy reveals fundamental divisions and exclusions, primarily based on gender and discriminating against dependency. By examining how care is socially organized, how responsibilities are distributed, and how care needs are understood, we can identify the multiple asymmetries that support and reinforce contemporary Western societies and the structures of differentiations, inequalities, and exclusion upon which they rely. Moreover, to use care as an analytic category is to recognize its centrality in understanding social dynamics, power structures, and systems of oppression.

The micropolitics of emotion: gratitude, sympathy, contempt

Georg Simmel founded his sociological program on the distinction between "form" and "content." Aiming for an understanding of society as "what exists when a number of individuals enter into interaction," Simmel proposed that every interaction comprises both a form and a content, rejecting the notion of an empty form or an

amorphous content.

While form and content are inseparable on the phenomenal level, it is crucial to differentiate between them on the conceptual level, as they serve as the foundational elements of the disciplinary distinction upon which sociology is built. Like Émile Durkheim, Simmel identifies psychology as the "other discipline" of sociology, with its focus on comprehending the human being through contents (or "motivations"). However, Simmel is resolute in asserting the following: sociology's primary concern lies in understanding the *form*.

This conceptual clarity is a characteristic of his programmatic texts. When Simmel (1955) examines specific phenomena, the picture becomes somewhat obscure. This is the case, for example, in his analysis of jealousy within the context of conflict, or even fidelity and gratitude, when exploring the emotional dimensions that contribute to the stability and cohesion of social life.

Simmel (1964, 387) understands gratitude as essential for the cohesion of social life, as it "establishes the bond of interaction, of the reciprocity of service and return service, even when they are not guaranteed by external coercion". Consequently, Simmel (1964, 38) suggests that gratitude serves as "the moral memory of mankind". When examining various forms of reciprocity, Simmel identifies gratitude as the driving emotion behind it, thus contributing to the stability and cohesion of bonds between individuals.

Furthermore, gratitude has the characteristic of being a feeling that can be morally demanded, an emotion which one cannot easily free oneself. In this context, it carries a sense of obligation or "taste of bondage" (Simmel 1964, 393). Simmel (1964, 395) concludes: "this atmosphere of obligation belongs among those 'microscopic,' but infinitely tough, threads which tie one element of society to another, and thus eventually all of them together in a stable collective life".

Gratitude thus creates asymmetric bonds, with the one expressing gratitude placing himself in a servile position before the recipient of his gratitude. As Miller (1993) asserts, echoing Thomas Hobbes: gratitude is the sentiment that attests

to the impossibility of retribution and, therefore, the state of perpetual servitude.

In a similar vein, Candace Clark (1997) analysis the rules governing the feeling and expressing of compassion in contemporary United States in her book "Misery and Company".³ As a notable contribution to the sociology of emotion, influenced by interactionist perspectives, the book meticulously maps out the circumstances that engender compassion and the individuals who evoke or offer it, aiming to unravel a kind of "grammar" of compassion. However, her work extends beyond a mere examination of these codes per se, seeking to address them also in their micropolitical dimension and focusing on the intricate ways in which they work in either reinforcing or subverting macro hierarchies in everyday contexts.

Clark argues that the relation between society and emotion is a "two-way street", where emotions are socially shaped while also participating in shaping social structure and analyses the set of rules governing acts of giving and receiving compassion. For her, compassion is part of the set of feelings that establish bonds between people, being socially valued in Western culture as a "response to others' misery". However, not everyone is equally worthy of receiving compassion in situations of distress. This grammar of compassion defines boundaries between groups, demarcating "the line between 'us' and 'them'" (Clark 1997,19).

Clark suggests that compassion as an inherently asymmetrical emotion, one that is simultaneously influenced by and reinforces the social positions occupied by individuals. This mutual relationship between compassion and social status perpetuates and magnifies the existing asymmetry between the giver and the receiver of sympathy. It is precisely this asymmetrical dynamic inherent in compassion that inspires Clark to explore the concept of "emotional micropolitics".

Even when sympathizers do not consciously intend it, giving sympathy can have micropolitical consequences. Ironically, a sympathetically transacting in the socio-emotional economy may bring people closer *and* at the same time to identify the social gap between them. (Clark 197, 228).

William Ian Miller (1997) a perspective of emotion analysis permeated by concern for its micropolitical dimension, undertakes an examination of contempt as an emotion of status demarcation. His analysis of contempt focuses on the role it plays in the "production/maintenance of social hierarchy and political order". For him, contempt is a mechanism simultaneously creating and contesting hierarchies, therein lies its political importance.

Miller elaborates on his analysis through a comparison between two forms of contempt: "downward" and "upward". The former involves an individual feeling superior on a particular social scale, directing contempt towards someone perceived as inferior on the same scale. Conversely, "upward" contempt reverses this dynamic. Miller's interest lies in the role of "upward" contempt within three distinct societal frameworks: heroic, ancient régime, and modern democracies. His hypothesis is that that modern democracies favor the emergence of "upward" contempt, while simultaneously imposing constraints on the expression of "downward" contempt without guilt. In a somewhat ironic twist, Miller suggests that democracy fosters an environment conducive to what he terms "mutual contempt".

The explicit adoption of a micro-political perspective when studying emotions is evident in Miller's emphasis on the pivotal role of analyzing contempt to comprehending social organization:

Contempt is the emotional complex that articulates and maintains hierarchy, status, rank, and respectability. And differentiated status and rank are the eliciting conditions of contempt. So what we have is a kind of feedback loop in which contempt helps create and sustain the structures which generate the capacity for contempt. And there is good reason to believe

³ In this brief overview of Clark's ideas, we draw upon certain concepts elucidated in a review of her book featured in *Revista Brasileira de Sociologia das Emoções* (Coelho 2004).

that the particular style of contempt will be intimately connected with the precise social and political arrangements in which it takes place. (Miller 1997, 217).

The dossier

The papers in this dossier have been organized according to the diverse contexts of caregiving. Our sequence begins with an examination of State care, encompassing institutions and public policies. Subsequently, we delve into caregiving by healthcare professionals. Following this, we explore hybrid forms of care, where healthcare professionals collaborate with family members within networks that may also involve the recipient of care in a form of self-care. We then transition to the exclusive care provided by family members (mothers/fathers and parents/older children/younger children). Moving forward, we discuss the involvement of volunteers in caregiving (highlighting yet another hybrid form of care involving volunteers and the State). Finally, we conclude with an analysis of caregiving as a service provided as a market transaction.

In their paper titled "The Political Work of Emotions: Care, Pandemic, and Protest in Spain," Sílvia Bofill-Poch and Raúl Márquez Porrás examine the repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic on elder care systems in Spain, particularly within the residential model. They focus on the hardships stemming from the lockdown measures imposed by care homes to comply with pandemic containment protocols, which effectively severed contact between residents and their families. This situation led to a scenario of confinement for the elders, at times without adequate care, while their contact with family members was abruptly interrupted. The analyzed data stem from in-depth interviews conducted with relatives of these elders, particularly their daughters. Emotions such as guilt, grief and anger were reported by the interviewees, reflecting the suffering experienced. However, the paper transcends a mere examination of these "emotional grammars", aiming to articulate the private dimension of these feelings and their public manifestation through organized protests

denouncing the abandonment of elderly family members. The authors highlight the presence of an ambiguity in public protests and in the politicization of these emotions, suggesting the coexistence of two concepts of care: as a societal duty and as a familial obligation (as evidenced by the guilt aroused by the inability to provide care amidst the pandemic). Thus, the paper underscores the interconnectedness among public policies on elder care, emotional grammars, and collective mobilization, emphasizing the acute relevance of this connection amidst the pandemic.

The second paper, titled "care and gratitude in relationships with healthcare professionals", written by Claudia Barcellos Rezende and Waleska Aureliano, synthesizes findings from two research projects conducted with healthcare professionals: obstetric teams and physical therapists. Data analyzed comprise Instagram posts wherein users recount their encounters with these professionals. The first project deals with women's narratives concerning their childbirth experiences, wherein expressions of *gratitude* towards the professionals are commonplace. The subsequent analysis delves into complimentary posts regarding the services of physical therapists (particularly those specializing in respiratory physical therapy for children). In addition to gratitude, sentiments of love and trust are prevalent and deemed crucial for ensuring effective treatment. The authors scrutinize how these emotions—gratitude, love, and trust—are part of professional caregiving relationships, thereby complementing the transactional nature of paid services. They highlight a noteworthy distinction: in what concerns the strictly expert dimension of medical services, payment performs the role of retribution in a conventional market logic. Affection serves as a form of compensation beyond the confines of the contract: an affectionate and attentive service, devoid of "contractual clauses", is perceived as indispensable for quality care provision. It is within this context that gratitude works operates as a form of "payment" for this non-contractual dimension of services delivered.

In his text titled "Affection and care services in

the process of dying" Lucas Soneghet presents an ethnographic exploration of household visits conducted by a household assistance service provided by a federal public hospital. The service caters to palliative care patients and individuals requiring ongoing care despite not being hospitalized. As such, the focus is on a form of "shared care" involving both family members and hospital staff. The analysis delves into the dynamics of affection and its place in healthcare arrangements, centered around two pivotal scenes: two household visits made by a psychologist to patients receiving palliative care. The first scenario revolves around the patient's expression of sadness, while the second entails insights gleaned from a family caregiver (the patient's wife), particularly regarding feelings of anger. A notable ethnographic moment arises during the administration of a questionnaire, wherein the patient is asked to rate what she feels—pain, tiredness, sadness—on a scale from 0 to 10. The psychologist is astonished when the patient rates her sadness at a maximum 10, thus prompting a "recalibration" to 6. Subsequently, in a conversation with the ethnographer, the psychologist elucidates that the scale serves not exactly to quantify suffering, but to establish a channel for its expression. Furthermore, the author identifies an inherent asymmetry between specialized medical knowledge and household knowledge (of family members and patient). This asymmetry shapes the circulation of affections, thus facilitating the management of "unequal vulnerabilities."

In her paper "Teenage obesity: emotions and care in the weight loss process" Régia Cristina Oliveira investigates a cohort of adolescent girls engaged in a weight loss program aimed at combating obesity. The study underscores the interplay of two forms of care: familial care, primarily represented by mothers responsible for meal preparation and for monitoring their daughters' diets; and self-care, manifesting as efforts to adopt new eating habits conducive to weight loss. However, maternal care extends beyond the "practical" realm of food preparation and adherence to instructions: it also encompasses

emotional support and encouragement. This dual function situates the ethnographic context within the classic discourse surrounding the delicate balance between care and control, wherein love and authority coexist closely. Moreover, a pivotal emotion driving the initial motivation of these girls to join the program is the embarrassment they experience regarding their bodies. This sentiment aligns with Thomas Scheff's (1990) thesis on shame as an emotional tether linking adherence to societal norms—in this case, beauty standards against which these girls measure themselves. Thus, while the girls embark on a weight loss journey for personal reasons, the specter of societal expectations looms large, driving their actions in tandem with feelings of shame. Furthermore, the group dynamic proves crucial to adherence to the weight loss program. As aptly articulated by the author, they strive to lose weight "for themselves, for others, and with others".

The paper titled "Works of love and care: the emotional grammars of motherhood and maternal activity in networks", authored by Mayara Achilei de Freitas and Sabrina Finamori, integrates findings from two research projects devoted to exploring different facets of motherhood. The first investigation examines a virtual group of mothers who exchange accounts of their experiences caring for their children, while the second study is conducted among female activists and focuses on solo motherhood. In their analysis, the authors weave together insights from the realms of kinship, care, and emotions to address questions posed by women in both groups regarding the concept of "motherly love" and its various representations as "instinctive," "natural" or "spontaneous". The stories challenge the conventional belief in an inseparable bond between motherhood and maternal affection. For instance, one interviewee admitted to feeling guilty because she doubted her love for her son. Her partner, the boy's father, countered this by highlighting her devoted care as the ultimate evidence of her love. This narrative encapsulates the central argument of the authors: the articulation between family and parenting paradigms

with the distribution of caregiving responsibilities and the emotions elicited by the intertwining of caring/being a mother. In these narratives, love does not emerge as the sole guiding force in maternal relationships; rather, it often intertwines with feelings of guilt or regret. Through analyzing these accounts, the authors shed light on how discussions around emotions tied to maternal care can assume political significance, prompting a reevaluation of parenting norms and practices.

In their essay titled "Childhood, care, and emotions from the global south" Juliana Siqueira de Lara and Lucia Rabello de Castro delve into the caregiving roles undertaken by children, particularly concerning their younger siblings. Their study is grounded in an ethnographic exploration conducted within a slum in Rio de Janeiro. The authors explore the nuanced emotional experiences of children as caregivers, who oscillate between feelings of fulfillment stemming from familial trust and the sense of burden induced by their caregiving responsibilities. One ethnographic vignette stands out: the narrative of an 11-year-old boy tasked with escorting his younger sister on their daily home-to-school journey. Not long ago, he occupied the opposite role, being escorted by his older sibling. He expresses contentment with his newfound responsibility, which the authors associate with the implicit trust placed in him by his parents. Additionally, he reflects on feeling controlled by his older brother, though interestingly, he fails to recognize the parallels between his brother's actions and his own behavior towards his younger sister. However, the dynamic is not one-sided: the younger sister is far from being merely a passive recipient of care. She exercises a form of "power" over her brother by leveraging the threat of informing their father if he uses swear words. This interplay illustrates a familial distribution of care in a generational "succession" pattern, wherein children transition from being cared for to becoming caregivers, with trust emerging as a central emotional currency in the familial dynamic.

In his article titled "Suicide prevention in practice: the production of care at a distance Pedro

Fragoso Costa Júnior examines the care provided by the Life Appreciation Center (Centro de Valorização da Vida - CVV), a support service offering assistance via telephone and, in exceptional cases, in-person consultations for individuals in distress. CVV assistants are volunteers who undergo a rigorous recruitment and training process. However, this endeavor is not solely voluntary; it has garnered support from the Ministry of Health, which facilitated the expansion and national integration of the hotline. This expansion enables users to access services even in areas where physical CVV offices are absent. Data for analysis were derived from semi-structured interviews and a focus group involving volunteers from the unit located in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. The support provided by the CVV fosters a "helping relationship", emphasizing the interaction between the volunteer and the "other person" (OP). The term "other person" is deliberately chosen to underscore the non-hierarchical nature of the helping relationship, emphasizing "empathic understanding". At the core of the care model lies the concept of the "Bermuda triangle", with its vertices representing the *individual* (the roles the OP plays in daily life), the *problem* (the underlying cause of distress prompting the call), and the *person* (an individual endowed with inner strength capable of overcoming suffering). The service prioritizes the person over the problem, aiming to help the OPs understand their emotions. Data analysis also highlights the prevalence of loneliness as a form of suffering, which may manifest even in the desire to share joyous experiences, such as personal achievements or the appreciation of poetry written by the OP. Furthermore, the CVV tackles strategies to address volunteers' concerns, which may be elicited by reports of criminal intent, conversations with sexual content, or narratives mirroring the volunteers' own experiences. Throughout the process, empathy remains central, with CVV's practice defined by the act of *accepting* the OP's emotions and perspectives, instead of *agreeing* with them.

The article "Selling emotions in professional care: discourse analysis of home care companies

in the Lisbon district", by Sara Canha, delves into another dimension of caregiving: that provided by home care companies. From the onset, the article makes a significant contribution by sidestepping the conventional State-family dichotomy often prevalent in caregiving research. This dichotomy typically pits the warmth of familial care against the perceived detachment of State-run services, thus creating room for the commercialization of care. The analysis draws upon discourses and visuals sourced from 71 company websites in Lisbon, focusing on two primary aspects: service description and caregiver portrayal. A key focal point of the examination lies in understanding the role of emotions in professional caregiving: affection, care, and love emerge as central elements in marketing the services, positioned as essential competencies. Additionally, the analysis of imagery reveals other facets of emotional engagement, such as happiness, joy, and joviality, often depicted through broad smiles exchanged between caregivers and recipients of care. The deliberate use of feminine imagery is not arbitrary; it underscores the association between caregiving and the feminine. This association is twofold: firstly, between the care being marketed and familial care; secondly, between femininity and emotions such as affection and love, echoing Catherine Lutz's seminal discussion on the association between emotions and femininity in its characteristic empathy.

Within this diverse spectrum of caregiving practices, a multitude of emotions become intricately interwoven with the act of caring. These emotions manifest in various ways: they can serve as driving forces, motivating individuals to engage (or not) in caregiving activities, or they may be evoked as a direct response to the act of providing/receiving care (or to its absence).

Within this collection of analyses encompassing diverse forms of caregiving, a broad spectrum of emotions emerges. Some emotions manifest in isolation, such as (without any intended wordplay), the loneliness observed in the care administered by the Life Appreciation Center, or the sorrow depicted in an ethnographic portrayal of home

care. Conversely, other emotions intertwine in intricate complexities marked by ambivalence. Consider the children as caregivers who oscillate between feelings of happiness stemming from the trust vested in them and the overwhelming burden of responsibility they shoulder. Similarly, the blending of love and authority in the role played by mothers in their daughters' adherence to weight loss programs, or of love, guilt, and regret, such as found in experiences of motherhood. Guilt can also become entangled with indignation, in a nuanced sense of ambivalence, for these intertwining prompts critical reflections on the allocation of caregiving responsibilities—whether they lie with the State or within familial structures. This is notably highlighted in the analysis of the repercussions on Spanish care institutions during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Additionally, there are emotions that reflect adherence to social norms, such as the shame experienced by obese young women, which motivates them to engage in a form of self-care. There are also emotions that contribute to social cohesion, exemplified by the gratitude expressed by pregnant women and users of respiratory physical therapy services.

Furthermore, is it merely coincidental that emotions seem to be stripped of micro-political tensions only when the market enters the equation, as evidenced by the heartwarming depictions of love, joy, affection, and happiness in advertisements for care service companies?

The micropolitical dimension of emotions permeates all these caregiving dynamics, sparking discussions about the *responsibility* for care. This theme is central to comprehending a fundamental issue embedded within social theory: the nature of the social bond, manifested in its myriad of historically and culturally constructed arrangements.

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