“Taking care of” homes and public daycare centers: care relationships and interdependence among peripheries and state

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the relations of coexistence between informal care practices carried out in the peripheries in their interface with State administrations. The ethnography was carried out in a slum complex located in the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro. The analysis seeks to highlight the dynamics of interdependence between houses of slum dwellers who take care of “children” alongside public daycare centers. From the reflections on the care transacted in these spaces, we seek to reflect on the ideas of dependency, the provider state, sexuality and female reproduction. The complementary relationship between these places points to the existence of local care circuits in which relations of vulnerability, scarcity and demand for social resources are elements of dispute that refer to processes of stratified reproduction of historical inequalities of gender, class, sexuality, territory and race.

KEYWORDS

Homes, daycare centers, interdependence, care, gender

INTRODUCTION

In this article I analyze the dynamics of coexistence between two places that have childcare at its center: "taking care of" homes in *favelas*[2] and public daycare centers. The first place concerns an informal activity carried out by women who live in *favelas* and take care of neighborhood children in their homes. The second place concerns a formal public policy executed in institutions managed by the State.

The ethnographic work was done at the São Carlos Complex, in the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro, between the neighborhoods of Catumbi, Estácio, and Rio Comprido. The fieldwork was carried out in a multisided way from March 2014 to January 2016 and encompassed daily observation, conversation, and focal interviews. The material analyzed in this article refers to fieldwork done in tree *favela* resident homes and tree public daycare centers. I seek to understand the care dynamic in play in those places.

When I started doing fieldwork, I saw these spaces as opposites and endowed with relative autonomy. On the one hand, I had the impression that the daycares were hyper-regulated and, on the other hand, the "taking care of" homes were open and flexible towards negotiation. During the research, this idea held firm; however, I understood that beyond this distinction there is a mutuality relationship among the practices had that, in its turn, is fundamental for maintaining an unequal structure of access to social resources.

From the experience of the social subjects in those spaces, I show an essential complementary relationship to think about the borders between peripheries, State action, formal activity, informality, domesticity and institutionality. Anthropologists Veena Das and Deborah Poole (2004) remind us of the dangers of analyzing State action as a consistent order as this image implies that peripheries are places of disarray. Instead of identifying *favelas* as places where public policies lack, I am interested in understanding how these places are a target for state action. This conception allows us to understand how the idea of the absence of the State structures local dynamics that reveal relationships that are deeply connected with the deeds of public administrations.

From this perspective, we will see that both places have operating logics that are, in fact, very different but, at the same time, operate from situational differences that are complementary. This is possible through the maintenance of informality and vulnerability in "taking care of" homes, together with the continuous dynamics of production of scarcity promoted by public daycare centers. In the end, we will see that the complementarity between these spaces points to a broader circuit of precariousness and inequality in which childcare services are carried out mostly by women that live in the periphery through adjustments and workarounds that point to the exploitation, concealment and subordination of vast chains of care places.[3]

"Taking care of" home is a native category that concerns a set of gestures related to the universe of care. It refers to both positive dimensions of action (watching,

2 | Favela is a term related to certain poor territories in urban centers in Brazil. Currently, such locations are the target of state militarization (overt policing) as well as the intermittent presence of essential public services, such as electricity, housing, basic sanitation and security. Favela territories also have multiple social meanings, ranging from the idea of disorder and degeneration of the city to places of cultural and political resistance of black, poor and migrant populations. I decided not to translate the term to keep its complexity and multiplicity and to reinforce the importance the term has in Brazilian Portuguese.

3 | For a better understanding of "peripheral subject" and "peripheral territories" categories, see the analyzes by Tiaraju D`Andrea (2020) and Gabriel Feltran (2012).

monitoring, showing affection, feeding) and negative dimensions related to unpleasant, mandatory, or nasty tasks (cleaning, brawling, controlling, and educating). Recent research shows the polyvalent quality of said practices (Hirata and Guimarães, 2012; Debert, 2014; Molinier and Paperman, 2015; Sorj, 2016). These activities, services, and work span through different domains of human experience: love, affection, public, private, productive work, reproduction, help, paid employment, talent, and professionalization (Debert and Pulhez, 2019; Zelizer, 2009). Given the multiple meanings of "care", throughout this analysis, I chose to maintain the emic category "taking care of" since the meaning of this statement accurately refers to the games of power, control,0 and protection in which the subjects are involved in care activities.

In this sense, a joint analysis of the "taking care of" homes and daycare centers allows us to complexify specific sociological models that consider social life based on isolated social domains, such as in the view of "hostile worlds", a concept coined by sociologist Viviana Zelizer (2011).[4] This device also allows thinking about the pragmatic dimension of care management in public policies and access to social rights and resources.

In the context of the peripheries, the actions taken by women that figure the "taking care of" are part of what Vera da Silva Telles (2010) mapped in the configuration of contemporary urban scenes: life is made in the thin border between informal and formal. These practices involve decisions, arrangements, subjectivities, and expectations managed in the fringe of State administration. In another perspective, the "taking care of" practices held in the houses of women who live in *favelas* are a fundamental part of the social structure, in which the care for children, among the popular class, is historically produced in circulation, with extensive family models, an example are the practices analyzed by Claudia Fonseca (1995a). However, even if these practices are widespread in the peripherical sociability, it is important to say that from a normative perspective on laws and children and teens rights, said practices are considered illegal because they do not correspond to the educational and spatial criterion established by the formal definitions of the State.

Public daycare centers are institutions financed by Rio de Janeiro's prefecture through the Education Municipal Office. The struggle to have access to daycare is a common reason in court, for example, with the lawsuits held by Public Defenders of Rio de Janeiro State, part of a bigger judicialization process, where municipalities are obliged to care for children beyond the capacity of the units (Finco, Gobbi and Faria, 2015). Annually, the press registers the alarming number of families that cannot get access to those institutions. In 2019, "more than 36 thousand children are on a waiting list for daycare in Rio" as indicated by newspaper data.[5] Access to daycare centers is a structural problem of public administration. It causes lasting inequality concerning access to the labor market and professionalization opportunities, with substantial impacts on the trajectories of women, black people, and poor people. For this reason,

4 | Viviana Zelizer's research (2011) examines the interconnections between economic practices, intimate relationships and professional activities and talks about the vision of "hostile worlds", an idea that concerns distinct social domains in which borders must be preserved in order to avoid the degradation of certain principles, norms and moral values relating to each field of action. This conception considers the home and the family as pure spaces of affection and love, situated in opposition to the "public space" made up of institutions, which in turn would be a place free from feelings.

5 | Of this contingent, the North (29,946) and West (43,669) Zones of the city are the most affected compared to the South (3,352) and Center (3,549) Zones in relation to the number of children waiting for a spot (Morais, 2019).

this public policy is crossed by multiple social markers of gender, class, race, sexuality, territory, and age.

Daycare centers and "taking care of" homes are spaces confronted with the constant demand for childcare. In this context, these are places in which discourses, narratives, and accusations about an alleged irresponsible female reproduction occupy a central space in the explanation of certain "absences" of State responsibility. During my research, I witnessed a set of narratives made by other *favela* residents about the fact that poor women don't "use contraception" and "have too many children". In those local narratives, "they have one child after the other" and "the children are not wanted". Some narratives associate this fact with "violence", identified as a broad phenomenon in society: "the child born out of time grows without structure and later becomes an outcast", as one of my interlocutors commented. Another discursive line present in this reasoning states that "abandoned" youths become people "dependent on government help", as alluded narratives I heard during fieldwork. In sum, according to the interlocutors' narrative, the excess of people on the waiting list for daycare centers is explained by the "irresponsibility" of poor women who, by not planning their pregnancies, cause the crowding of public spaces and their consequent inefficiency.

This set of representations is also present in acts and narratives held by public administrators when they allude to women who "don't plan their children". As an example, I remember a particular occasion during fieldwork, when a high-ranking professional from the Municipal Secretary of Education stated during the inauguration of a new public daycare unit: "it is no use building more daycares, the more daycares the more children they will have", referring to *favela* residents. On another occasion, when commenting on the waiting list for spots in daycare centers, another manager of the Secretary of Education stated that "regardless of any action that the government may take in the daycare policy, nothing will change until there is birth control", when talking about the shortage of vacancies.

These brief passages are intended to demonstrate that, although in many cases professionals recognize that access to public policies depends on political investments of different orders, this recognition is never undone by the responsibility of poor women in terms of reproduction.

Despite the framing of high fertility and an "irresponsible" sexuality supposedly exercised by poor women and *favela* residents, statistical data on the birth rate of Brazilian women show that in each demographic census, families have fewer children. This drop in fertility is intensified in the poorest layers of the population.[6] Even so, during my fieldwork, the presence of a narrative on poor women's sexuality and reproduction is highly present and endowed with political efficacy. Such representation is similar to the image of "tropical sexuality" developed by anthropologist Adriana Piscitelli (2008a) when analyzing the trajectory of Brazilian women who migrate to richer countries. In the context analyzed by Piscitelli, the image of migrant women

6 | According to the last survey carried out by the Ministry of Social Development, from data collected from the National Survey by Sample of Households (PNAD), made by IBGE, "between 2003 and 2013, while the number of children up to 14 years old fell 10.7% in Brazil, the 20% poorest families of the country - population range that matches the audience beneficiary of the income supplement - registered a more intense fall: 15.7%. From the Northeast, in the 20% poorest, the fall was even greater, reaching 26.4% in the period analyzed" (Earth, 2015). Based on this research, other reports said that "Brazilian women are having less and less children": "the survey, of the Ministry of Social Development and Fighting Hunger, it also shows that the average of children per family has fallen. In 2003, it was 1.78. In 2013, it was 1.59 children per family" (Brazil Agency, 2015).

is associated with cleanliness, domesticity, propensity for care and sensuality. In representations about women from *favelas* and the suburbs, the notion of sensuality is maintained, although female sexuality is often associated with excess. Concerning the exercise of motherhood, such women are located as "young", "nervous mothers," or "mothers who abandon their children" in examples of deviant femininities that have a solid moral appeal. Therefore, statements of this order refer to lascivious, hyper-sexualized, and irresponsible women in the field of sexuality and reproduction. These dynamics of framing focus on different childcare models that operate in coexistence. For this reason, these are fundamental places to understand the relationship between sexuality, reproduction, gender, race, social class, and public policies

INFORMAL CARE MODELS? THE "TAKING CARE OF" HOMES AND CHILDCARE ASSISTANCE

The "taking care of" homes are places where women who live in *favelas* offer childcare services in their own homes. The activity is held in the home where the woman who "takes care" lives, where she is also responsible for taking care of her home and family. The women offer a set of solutions for the children's guardianship. The service has flexible shifts and works in the morning, afternoon, and night. In some houses, the women may even have the children sleep in their homes to accommodate night shifts or family leisure time. The age of the children varies; they attend from babies to 10-year-olds. Payment for this activity also varies according to each household, but women generally charge around R$ 200,00 a month to "take care of" each child.

This kind of work allows many working families to have social mobility since their children are under the care of these services. It is noteworthy that this is a complementary care model to the one provided by the daycare centers, preschool, and family (grandparents and other relatives who stay with the children), indicating that even in a context where it is possible to resort to family members or institutions, other means of support are essential. An example of this situation is found in the fact that many children who spend time in daycare centers still need to spend a few hours in "taking care of" homes.

The women who "take care of" children have similar traits in their life trajectories. All of them started this activity to supplement their family's income, which, over time, became the primary source of livelihood for their family group. They were born and raised in *favelas* and have taken care of children for over ten years. One of them is a "single mother", as she identifies herself. Two of them are married, and their partners work, one as a janitor in an evangelical church and the other as a self-employed carpenter. In these last two cases, the income earned by the women is higher than the salary of men.

In the three homes where I did my fieldwork, other relatives also participated in care activities. All of them are older daughters and teenagers in charge of "helping" with the children's care, whether in feeding, playing, supporting bedtime, and other entertainment activities. In one of the homes, a grandmother also "helps" in the care routine. It is important to register this "help" from grandmothers, mothers, and daughters, as they point to the articulation between gender, home, and generation in daily life management (Carsten and Hugh-Jones, 1995).[7]

7 | "Help" is a category worthy of reflection throughout the analysis. In this sense, it is worth considering how the term condenses gifts and cash payments that also occur in other ethnographic contexts, such as the work of Guilherme Passamani (2017) and Adriana Piscitelli (2008a).

Silvana is a thirty-seven-year-old white woman, as she declares herself. When she recalls her trajectory, she says that she started to "take care of" a child who was "neglected and left by the parents". Over time, other children arrived in similar situations and what started as a one-off help became their primary source of income. Currently, she has been working with care for ten years. In her house, she has the "help" of her daughter Bianca in order to take care of ten children. Silvana explains that none of the children sleep in her home because, in her words, "it's important to have time for myself".

One afternoon, we were together; Silvana told the story of Thiago, one of the first children who were in her care and who later became her grandson. Lívia, the boy's mother, had no steady job and lived on odd jobs; she went through many difficulties in raising the child. Lívia and Bianca were friends and neighbors, and for this reason, Lívia started leaving the child to stay in Silvana's house under her care. Mother and daughter explained that the biological mother faced many difficulties and identified that she did not have "good conditions" to take care of her child. The child attended the house daily and, at a given time, began to sleep there during the night, staying longer than previously agreed. Little by little, the boy started to live with Silvana and Bianca, so the child became the girl's son until he lived permanently with his new family.

In another home, we meet Joane. She is forty-two years old and black, by self-declaration. She says she started taking care of children when she was a young girl: "ever since I could talk". She decided to open her home to receive neighborhood children because she felt the need to "help the household" as her partner only receives one minimum wage as a janitor at an evangelical church. Joane is evangelical, and she explains that every child she takes care of got there "sent by God". She calls her home a "little school" and calls her activity "Children of the Father".

In addition to the children she takes care of, she has four children of her own that live with her, two girls and two boys. Both boys have disabilities. During their childhood, the brothers had many epilepsy episodes. Joane recalls that her children needed many doctors – speech therapist orthopedists, neurologists – but the difficulties in receiving adequate medical care in the public health network dragged on for many years due to the slowness of the health services the children were left with lifelong sequelae. The brothers are twins and have neurological injuries that impede fluency of speech and some body movements. As in Silvana's house, the girls help with tasks, take care of other children, give baths, food, and play games.

Joane was one of the interlocutors who spoke about the fear of State inspections. She explained that her house does not have "adequate conditions" to accommodate the children. Therefore, she lives in fear that the Tutelary Council might knock at her door or "any other government agency". When she talked about this fear, she showed me the physical conditions of her house, narrating the problems she identifies: peeling walls, humidity, water restriction, a mix of household appliances in the same room, in addition to the coexistence with children "who are not normal", as she explained.

Given the conditions of poverty and adversity in accessing childcare by some families, Joane sometimes has different prices for women in difficult situations. Flexible negotiation occurs in all "taking care of" homes, as needs are identified and negotiated between mothers and housewives. Siblings or mothers identified as single moms may have more flexibility towards payments and prices. I want to emphasize that access to care in these homes is based on adjustments, and negotiations can be made case-by-case.

When talking about her fears, Joane recalled an occasion when a woman in the neighborhood told her about the gossip "going on around your name in the *favela*". She explains that disagreements occur when people disagree with practices she judges to be correct. An example of this kind of situation happened when she was being gossiped about as a form of retaliation by a woman who owned her money. The woman could not afford the monthly expenses for having her child taken care of ate Joane's home; this fact triggered the child's removal from the "taking care of" home. Joane was still charging the woman for her services. The woman spread gossip about the fact that there are different prices charged to mothers at Joane's home.

As Joane elucidates, such disagreements can "make you the talk of the town" and be converted into accusations about the precarious conditions of the houses and alleged negligence. The woman talked throughout the *favela* about how the children were alone in the company of "sick" children (Joane's children with disabilities). Joane explained that this gossip could come in the form of an accusation of "pedophilia" to the local drug cartel, a disconcerting fact given the complex insinuation that such a threat represents.

On one occasion, I followed a situation of intense conflict involving Joane and a mother who left her children on the night shift to study for the ENEM (Brazilian SATs). Joane had decided that the time the children spent under her care was excessive, and for this reason, she said that she could no longer stay with them on the night shift: "What will happen if everyone here decides to study?" she said, scolding the woman. This event caused the mother to leave the children on the street playing while she studied; the fact raised gossip from the neighborhood about her children who were considered to be "left alone" by her. Ultimately, a woman mother who decided to arrange the care of her children while having a schooling project was framed as "selfish"

and "irresponsible" for local morality.

In another house, we meet Neli, a sixty-nine-year-old woman who declares herself black. She took care of three generations of people. Sometimes I have witnessed parents who were also cared for by Neli as children come to her gate to pick up their children. During the holidays, Neli takes care of about fifteen children. The work she does is the primary source of income for the family so that she can support two unemployed adult daughters. Her house has a lot of arrivals and departures traffic. Because the house is busy, some people in the community comment that she "makes a lot of money with children". This statement is also conveyed in the daycare center by education professionals.

At her house, I understood that the issue of sharing social goods does not limit itself to children but involves other social resources vital to living. Neli and her neighbor share water access. The São Carlos Complex suffers from water shortages resulting from the inefficiency of the public policies of basic sanitation in *favelas*. The water is shared through a hose that comes from Neli's house and goes to the neighbor's house. The children explained that the neighbor is jealous of Neli's job and because the house is always "full of children". The plethora of kids in Neli's house is socially understood as wealth, and Neli is seen as a prosperous person.

In all the homes where I did my fieldwork women seek solutions to unexpected problems that come from vulnerable situations. For children who don't have diapers or don't bring food for the day, these urgent issues are solved by sharing. Siblings who need to be taken care of get discounts on the monthly fees. Children who suffer from family conflicts, for example, in situations where the couple is in a violent dynamic or if a family member dies, get more attention and are protected by the women. I emphasize these actions to register that there is always work to be done. This extra work is something like a surplus of care relations, something that is not "part" of the job, that is not counted in, and that, even so, gets incorporated as something that needs to be done (Weber, 2009). The off-the-books surplus is not a part of a utilitarian economy of social relations, and at the same time, materializes the base of care work. It is a multifunctional and diverse activity that is socially debased in a political and economic sense, even though it involves moral flexibility, emotional engagement, and bodywork.

All these women's work revolves around "helping". Payment is important but does not constitute the only form of retribution for their services. Trust, favors, and solidarity must be constructed and sustained at all times, as the neighbors who share the water even when they have a personal conflict with one another.

The existence of the "taking care of" homes in peripherical communities is related to a long-term historical practice. In other words, thanks to these forms of care, generations of workers had access to social mobility and had the possibility of making a family in a context in which care management within the popular classes is often a matter of public scrutiny. In structural terms, there is a national imaginary that refers to

values about an ideal family, considered a sign of modernity. Although fictional, these values inform normative models of care and public policies that inspire individual model behavior and populations: the nuclear couple, the planned pregnancy, reduced offspring, the obligation of having a home and work as means to beginning reproductive life. Said elements figure as representations of the family, at the same time that, they organize expectations related to the State's public policies.[8] These elements are part of the planned pregnancy ideology, which in turn, operates in a highly normative way that does not correspond to the diversity of sexual and reproductive trajectories and family configurations that scape this fabulation.

8 | As indicated by studies by Edlaine de Campos Gomes and Luiz Fernando Dias Duarte (2008) and Claudia Fonseca (1995b) on the theme of kinship, family assemblages of the working classes imply thinking about dense relations of territoriality and parenting in which networks of interdependence form the subjects as moral persons.

In the context of the Brazilian elite and middle classes, the elements considered as signs of modernity narrated above can only be sustained through heavy investment in privatized and personalized models of childcare, that is, dependent on the work of poor, black, and racialized women who perform services as nannies, maids, cleaners and day laborers. This is a "stratified reproduction" model that unevenly distributes the possibilities of families to offer affection, security, time, and protection to their own children (Colen, 2007). It is noteworthy that many women who need to leave their children in the "taking care of" homes and public daycare centers work as maids, nannies, subordinate and outsourced occupations. Therefore, looking at the centrality of these homes alongside the precariousness of the public service offered in early childhood education is to pay attention to the forces of reproduction of gender, race, class, and territory inequalities that modulate possibilities of making a family, having childhood experiences and producing social mobility.

RIGHTS AS PLIGHT: THE DAYCARE CENTERS AS CARE SPACES AMONGST SCARCITY

On an afternoon of fieldwork at a daycare center, a professional told me about the day she went for a walk "inside" the *favela*. As she recalled, despite working at an institution located at the entrance of the *favela*, she had never walked through the community. She said that that day she was perplexed with so much "disorganization". She described her journey in great detail: clothes hanging out of the windows, garbage at the doors, tangled electrical wires, unfinished constructions, sales that offer everything, and a thousand and one other details were narrated as a shocking experience. When commenting on these aspects, she gestured and tried to explain the "horror" and "confusion" found in the route taken, while at the same time pondering the difficulties that the population was going through and that somehow justified the supposed "chaos".

She concluded, in the end, that it was poor people's incompetence in organizing their own space. Later, I understood that other residents share similar views. When talking about garbage accumulation in the ditch located in a central region of Morro da Mineira, the President of the Resident's Association explained that it was useless

to clean the space because, in his words, the residents "are not polite and the next day they will throw garbage there again", saying that in that circumstance "the garbage problem is the residents' problem". When commenting on the garbage issue, other residents also reinforced this view and emphasized the role each individual has in managing their own garbage.

The chaotic stereotype imprinted on *favelas* and *favelas*' residents is not new and is part of a historical perspective that considers these territories as places of disorder (Birman, 2008). In the context of this research carried out in daycare centers, I observed that part of this chaos imaginary is attributed to the practice of "taking care of" children held by women, despite their fundamental role in nurturing a generation of workers. In addition to the idea of confusion and disorganization attributed to the *favelas*' residents, there is an attribution of responsibility to the subjects for the various social ills that affect these places.

In opposition to the flexible negotiations based on each family's specificities, we move on to a place where children's care is provided through an institution mediated by rules and formalities. A space crossed by specific rules and procedures: entry and exit times, access criteria, work organization principles, safety, hygiene and educational pedagogical guidelines. However, even in this highly regulated environment, there are elements of precariousness that do not undermine the understanding of this entity as the appropriate space for early childcare education. During the fieldwork, I observed how the daycare centers are described as ideal and a good place for the children. At the same time, it is a fragile place regarding aspects such as physical facilities, human resources, and management mechanisms of public equipment. These dimensions point to a series of vulnerabilities related to the general conditions of early childhood education offered to the population living in peripherical territories.

Given the responsibility they have because of the public they serve, a set of surveillance devices restricts the actions of professionals, such as cameras in the classrooms or the demands for a clean environment. During my fieldwork, I understood that this space entails a significant workload on the entire professional team. Therefore, we will see how the imaginary of the *favela* as chaotic is managed within the institution to maintain the image of order and smoothness attributed to daycare centers, as order is fundamental for preserving the image of the State as a cohesive entity.

One of the main problems that affect public daycares centers concerns access to spots for children in the institutions. To enter an early childhood education unit, it is necessary to participate in a public drawing held annually by the city hall. In addition to the raffle, people are also evaluated according to care criteria that point to specific vulnerabilities: imprisoned family members, teenage pregnancy, family members with chronic diseases, among other aspects that count as priorities in the dispute for a spot.

The waiting list for a spot at each daycare unit can reach 200 children per unit. The list is a document that materializes the return of the State's responsibility for

caring for families. Through the list, the State exempts itself from an obligation established by law. The restitution of responsibility to people who do not get the spots will be arranged at the time of "viração"[9], in many cases, in the "taking care of" homes, in which adjustments and resistance will be produced daily. This element is essential to establish a complementary familiarity between the homes and daycare centers, as it is from the lack of spots in daycare centers that the homes are indicated by the professionals, despite the informality surrounding the practice.

Accessing a public daycare center means increasing the possibilities of social, economic, and professional ascension for poor women and families. In addition to feeding and educating children, the institutions favor access to a series of other social resources that are the subject of intense disputes among the popular classes: registration in the Bolsa Família Program[10], vaccination, Carioca Card Program[11], access to DNA testing, among other resources. Furthermore, it should be noted that access to daycare is a historical claim of the feminist movements. In Brazil, during the 1970s and 1980s, important struggles for the right to daycare were produced; the feminist movement played a decisive role in this fight among other social movements, such as unions and workers sectors. The slogan "The child is not just the mother's" was one of the cries of the national movement for daycare centers and mobilized important achievements recorded in the 1988 Constitution, such as the consolidation of public daycare centers as a fundamental right, alongside paternity leave and expansion of maternity leave to one hundred and twenty days. Therefore, the struggle to guarantee these spaces involves both feminist demands for collective spaces of care, as well as the movement for children's rights through education.

In daycare centers the presence of scarcity is linked to the precariousness of the work conditions. The tasks and functions overload produce tension in daily life among teachers, directors, kitchen, and cleaning auxiliaries. The intense work rhythm impacts the kind of care offered to the children. The lack of teachers in the public daycare centers network occurs due to the lack of investments in public tenders in the area, entailing in a situation in which classes that two teachers and two auxiliars should teach have only half the staff. In management, directors accumulate management and educational functions so that management is done in between routine tasks imposed by senior management, the registration of families in social benefits, referrals for DNA tests, food order supervision, in addition to the daily issues that arise. In addition, some of the institution's problems are resolved with "out of pocket money", when everybody chips in to pay for repair services, internet, cleaning materials, or even garbage collection.

The emotional intensity of care work is present in the sound atmosphere of the daycare centers. During the first weeks of fieldwork, I would leave the institution in the afternoons with severe migraines. Over time, I got used to it and naturalized them. The subject came back to my attention when, months later, I noticed that many professionals used medication for headaches frequently. In addition to this type of medication,

9 | "Viração" is a category that informs about informal survival practices such as workarounds and others. It is related to informal work in its multiplicity of forms and relationships, as well as to experiences in which subjects negotiate in a precarious, sometimes flexible ways, with a range of daily adversities. As it is a native term with complex meaning I decided to keep it in Portuguese.

10 | It is a social income transfer program, aimed at families in poverty and social vulnerability. The program seeks to guarantee these families the right to food and access to education and health. In Brazil, more than 13.9 million families are part of the Bolsa Família Program.

11 | This is a social benefit created by the Municipality of the city of Rio de Janeiro, with the objective of supplementing the income of families residing in the municipality already registered and benefiting from the Federal Government's Bolsa Família Program.

there are constant complaints about stress, fatigue, and other mental health issues. I only realized that the noise and sounds indicate the precarious and exhausting conditions with which professionals and children live after a few months of fieldwork.

The unit's rooms have small windows, which must often remain closed due to the risk of gunfire caused by the police and militarized occupation in the territory. In a small classroom with eighteen children, the sound volume of screams, talking, and playing grows to the point of producing the professionals' physical and mental exhaustion. The noisy atmosphere is not a mere imbalance; it is an agent that shows the emotional and work conditions shared by children and professionals. We are faced with a sound atmosphere that literally screams the overload of this kind of intense and tiresome emotional work.

This aspect makes the boundaries between marginalized areas and state practices more complex because we can identify the presence of dissident practices in contexts projected as hyper normative. "Disorder" elements usually attributed to alterity, to what others do or fail to do, can be observed within institutions.

In public daycare centers, professionals are divided based on different qualifications and positions. Despite these differences, they all come from the poor class, and many live in peripherical territories. The professionals joined the public early childhood education service to have financial stability or even reach the dream of formal employment, in the case of outsourced employees. This information is critical to explain that, even though they are located in a different social position from the institution's users, the professionals and women assisted are crossed by the demand for childcare in a reality in which access to early education is highly disputed. From the standpoint of social and economic conditions, the professionals and families are very close to one another regarding childcare challenges and the burden of reproduction work distributed among families. However, this proximity does not undermine the hierarchies of power and social distance that pervade the interaction.

In the daycare centers, there are strong moralizations concerning female behavior that do not meet the expectations of what is considered a good way of exercising motherhood. These are marked in narratives that discuss examples of women who are the target of local criticism: "the mom who arrives in a bikini and dirty with sand to pick up her child on the way out", "the mother who does not take a look in the child's backpack", "the nervous mother", "the mother who is dying to drop the kid at the daycare", "the mother who does not show attachment", among others, are evocations that mark the fertility of certain narratives in regulating and projecting frozen images on the performance of women considered inadequate.

These markings have dramatic effects on the intra-gender relationship dynamics that, in the face of these comparisons, rank women inserted in the same context of dispute for social resources. In general, the references appear in a connective way, about other stories, which are glued to the statement: "Like this one... the mother

who abandoned the child". This statement fulfills a sociological and anthropological function: "Like this one" is the empirical demonstration that the social problem about which people talk has materiality and allows access to the moral of care while providing elements in the production of stigmas about certain women considered deviant or "wrong".

The routine at the daycare center shows a double morality operated by professionals regarding the "taking care of" homes. They simultaneously direct the children who do not have access to a spot at the daycare to these places; and they highlight the elements of precariousness and vulnerability present in these spaces. According to the professionals' narratives, the "taking care of" homes are not adequate places for childcare, as they do not have a good physical structure, they do not have food inspection, nor pedagogical goals for the children: "there, they are left unattended". They also mention the fact that children stay together in mixed-age groups and watch TV excessively. In addition to these aspects, a recurrent comment concerns the caregivers, seen as women who "make a lot of money from the children". Therefore, the activity of care in those homes is the target of gossip and rumors about supposedly significant financial income, which, in the context of poverty, stirs local imagination about profits and profitable work opportunities. The imaginary about the Bolsa Família Program is a signifier of these forms of social pondering. It is present in narratives that point to subjects identified as dependents and people who like and enjoy living in dependence.

These statements and narratives have a particularly perverse tone when many families, despite needing to use the "taking care of" homes, point to the daycare center as a preferential space for childcare, despite existing criticism. Therefore, this accusation and exploitation game can be even more poignant, given the fact that, while the "taking care of" homes are scrutinized, they are also pointed out as an alternative to meet the flow of children on the waiting list for daycare centers, and they are also requested by families while they wait to enter the fabric of state protection.

In this sense, it is worth recalling Vera da Silva Telles' (2010) words when she reflects on the urban, starting with the formulations about illegality coined by Michel Foucault. The author recalls that the "differential management of illegalty" is dedicated to understanding less how the law is obeyed and more about how the laws operate, in order to "stretch the limits of tolerance, giving ground to some, applying pressure over others, excluding one part, making another useful, neutralizing some, taking advantage of others" (Foucault, 2006: 227). In this sense, I keep the expression "taking advantage of" as a formula to understand one of the fundamental ways public administrations relate to the "taking care of" homes: taking advantage of them.

It is essential to understand that narratives, languages, and discourses establish legitimacy, disqualify certain subjects and modulate behavior seen as fair or unhappy. From these practices and narratives triggered by the professionals who work at the daycare center, there is a projection of a stereotype for women seen as usurpers, both

those who "have too many children" and those who "take care of children who are not theirs", as the native categories allude.

These elaboration games about spaces and practices that are more legitimate than others connect to what Adriana Vianna and Laura Lowenkron analyze as "the double making of gender and State" (2017). These games produce gendered framings and allow the scarcity of state management to be explained by a supposed hypersexualized female behavior. It must be stated that, even in the face of informal practices, the "taking care of" homes are collaborating to make up for the inefficiency of public authorities and, in this sense, the stabilization of precariousness as part of what Timothy Mitchell called a "State effect" (2006). According to the author, the apparent distinction between State, Economy, and Society as separated realms serves to maintain a given economic and political order, extremely useful in the fruition of financial and social resources. These processes are efficient for diluting tasks, delegating budgets, and assigning responsibilities, obligations, and management. These boundaries concern institutional expedients and procedures that aim to stabilize certain limits between powers, such as the executive, legislative, judiciary, and the sphere understood as civil society. Based on his analysis, we can say that, by creating a separation between institutions and "taking care of" homes, there is a projection of the public entity as a more capable place, to the detriment of others, identified as less capable. Simultaneously, the institution takes advantage of the precariousness of others – this precariousness which, in turn, is intimately constituted in the interface with the administrations – to supply, dampen or alleviate a demand that it is not capable of meeting.

In this sense, "the State", as narrated in the narratives I presented, whether of *favela* residents or agents who work in the institutional network, is not "absent" but reveals itself as the very absence that creates, sustains and takes advantage of these particular forms of *viração* and informality. For this reason, it is necessary to emphasize that there is a powerful agency in the so-called "statelessness", which should not be understood as a lack or incapacity, but as a conscious action endowed with substantial effects in people's lives. The "absence of the State" makes certain things happen, so that this supposedly "invisible", disembodied, and disfigured element is the driving force for the *viraçõe*s, the help networks and the precarious situations attributed to both "taking care of" homes and deviant maternities. The argument expressed here is that even when State actions are absent, the State is acting, meddling in everyday life's silent, solitary, and energetic processes, very palpable in how people will settle, arrange, and make their worlds.[12]

In this sense, the daycare center is a "State that works alongside the "taking care of" homes", pointing not only to a distinction between two autonomous realms, but also it is a privileged locus to follow what this "State" produces as alterity, by framing women as unifying figures of social and sexual excess. If the daily narratives held by professionals say the "taking care of" homes are not ideal places for childcare, in

12 | It is worth emphasizing that this reflection stems from the analysis of anthropologists Adriana Vianna (2013) and Antonio Carlos Souza Lima (2002) about the processes of State. From different contexts, the authors and many of their respective advisees, among other researchers, analyze "the State in action", following the pragmatic and representational dimension of the ways of governing. Within the limits of this article and given the impossibility of mentioning a wide range of research in this area, I indicate the discussion about public daycare centers in which I point out some of the works developed in the field of Anthropology of the State.

practice, "the daycare directs children to the "taking care of" homes", even though they disprove these places as inadequate. Therefore, it is by its own precariousness and incapacity to tend to the demand that daycare centers become a fundamental apparatus of the preservation of the State's image. In this way, the idea of the State as a provider is maintained and legitimized, "the State that takes care of other people's children", even when this entity depends on the work of women in subordinated conditions.

Therefore, through a false image of a provider State, these discourses reinforce the idea that the government takes over responsibility. The work carried out in the "taking care of" homes dampen the inaction of the daycare center, of what this device cannot "take care of", being sometimes a rejected space, sometimes designated, depending on the occasion. This apparent paradoxical aspect dissolves into its contradiction when we understand that here lies one of the elementary and primordial ways of doing State practices, namely, in rejecting the living matter on which it depends to produce itself as a supposedly autonomous and superior entity.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

By analyzing the trajectories of women who migrate from economically peripheral countries to richer and more industrialized regions, sociologist Arlie Hochschild (2000) developed the concept of "global care chains". In search of paid employment, poor and racialized women leave their children in the care of other poor women to work in the homes of foreign families in need of a reproductive workforce. This migratory flow unveils networks of interdependence in which the care of some is offered through the precariousness and subordination of other families. These transnational networks involving money, attention, reproductive work, and social mobility are linked to the experience of race, ethnicity, sexuality, and gender.

Based on Hochschild's proposition, when analyzing the complementarity between daycare centers and "taking care of" homes, we found the presence of local care chains related to the agency produced among the poorest populations of the city in the interface with State administrations. Most women who leave their children in "taking care of" homes and daycare centers work in the scope of domestic service as nannies, cleaning workers and daily housekeeping, in addition to other occupations in commerce and the service sector. Therefore, these are crucial places to identify the centrality of the reproductive work of care in exploring the living conditions of the peripheries in circumstances of proximity and social inequality.

The constitutional obligation to care of children is the subject of questioning about the State's duties. Depending on how each government administration deals with this public issue, investments in daycare centers imply discussions about the limits of State action and the social and economic costs involved in maintaining these institutions. Given the considerable demand for spots in public daycare centers, the

presence of the "taking care of" homes is essential for serving poor families. These homes allow us to understand a form of government based on absence. From this perspective, governing is not doing. The existence of the "waiting list" posted on the walls of all public daycare centers is the hallmark of government through inaction. It is, above all, an indicator that the responsibility for care has been devolved to family members. Once on this list, they will be the ones to improvise their *viração* and their care networks. However, it is worth identifying that the waiting time is not a dead time. Still, it is a profoundly active element that speaks of an intense agency of the actors, of the hesitations and arrangements that must be made in order to deal with the urgency of care (Vianna, 2015). It is, in this sense, a gendered time since it will be resolved by a primarily female network that makes "taking care of" possible (Fernandes, 2018).

As a supposedly ordered place, the daycare center is made up of outbursts of "disorder" present in its performance. The "disorder" produced in the institutional space is recognized and narrated as legitimate and, in this way, authorized and exempt. We can, therefore, ask ourselves: what kind of magical effect is operated in the fabric of State action that makes similar practices to be lived in a cursed way for some and legitimate for others? I believe that the discussion presented here points to how the processes of "making the State" are made through the processes of undoing the populations' good living conditions.

Facing the scarcity of care work in these territories, narratives about women who "have too many children" are present in both spaces and have force of action. However, more than analyzing potentially antagonistic sides, I tried to emphasize an interstice space where both places, and their relationship models, coexist and collaborate in creating borders. Garbage management, water sharing, and the shared childcare speak of state responsibilities turned into individual issues and internalized as such. The logic of transferred responsibilities states that each family must overcome a set of adversities that correspond to bigger exploitation dynamics.

Because of the "taking care of" homes children can grow up thanks to multiple efforts made by a network of support. Therefore, it is not hard to imagine the important role of "taking care of" homes in this context. It is the peripherical women, housewives, who, through informal work, meet the demand for childcare. However, even before the profound impact this kind of work has facing the childcare demand in popular classes, these women have no support from the government; differently, they work in informality, with all the emotional costs involved. The working conditions are precarious and are added by the threats about illegality, realized in the fears of receiving a government visit or from the tutelage council, as well as suffering from gossip and rumors from the local morality. Thus, because this practice is relegated as informal work, these women have no access to social benefits, pensions, or any other kind of support.

In the context of the discussions that took place in the 1980s about the policy of daycare centers, Fúlvia Rosemberg (2003) addresses the attempt to regulate these

spaces by the State and calls attention to the permanence of these practices as a reality in different regional contexts:

> This small childcare system is neither new nor specific to Brazil and developed countries. What is new is the dissemination of the program as the State's alternative solution to expand the number of daycare spaces (2003:69).

Criticism directed at the modality of "family day care" is extremely contemporary in the context of this research.

Both in the context of the 1980s as in the current scenario, several disarrays are pointed out in how the "taking care of" homes raise children. The main criticism is that they are dedicated to the exclusive function of "guarding", to the detriment of the "pedagogical and educational" character. Another criticism focuses on the "confusion" between the worlds of the family, the house, and the institution, in which "home and family are concepts that are not confused" (ibid.: 74). The family daycare would thus be designed as this space of "ambiguities" in which family pretensions are mixed with institutional pretensions, considered incompatible. Such "ambiguity" would be, for Rosemberg, characteristic of another confusion of the Brazilian State itself, which would be "lost" between the need to share the responsibility for caring with the families and, at the same time, take its political responsibility to share this role. The author states that "family daycare in the context of State action would be an attempt to act between the old and the new" (2003: 76), in an allusion to what would be a precarious adjustment between "life strategies" of the popular class with the modernization of the Brazilian State, represented, in this context, by the proposal to strengthen the daycare policy. It is important to point out that the search for strict boundaries between the identity of the daycare center as opposed to the "taking care of" homes is based on the need to take a stand in other burning discussions at that moment, which revolved around the threat of daycare centers placing themselves as "substitutes to maternal care". Such debates were not trivial and showed that the duty of care is updated in the fervent triadic dispute between families, "mother's role", and the State.

Almost three decades after the public administrations attempt to incorporate these homes, the coverage of daycare centers continues to be insufficient. However, the game of forces between the actions of the State and low-income families became denser; families are seen as "takers" of daycare services, mothers are seen as "irresponsible", and the poor are seen as producers of children at the "wrong time". The image of women identified as usurpers of daycare services reifies the female stereotype of the con-women, very present in popular discussions that criticize the Bolsa Família Program. From this perspective, public services registered as a right must be fought for. As fundamental goods for the social reproduction of human life, daycares and support systems are required through daily pilgrimages and martyrdoms, in a way that

updates the monotheistic and Christian ideas of sacrifice, pain, and sin in the sphere of female sexuality and reproduction.

In the "taking care of" homes, certain maternities have a polluting characteristic: "the mother who does not bring food", "the mother who abandons her child", "the mother who spends a lot of time away from her child", are all allegories that speak in about the correct and suitable way to be a "real" mother. Such representations are part of the set of stereotypes about black, racialized and poor women that, based on solid framings of gender, sexuality and race, allude to black, poor and *favela* women as having hot and uncontrolled sexuality (Carneiro, 1995; Moutinho, 2004; Correa, 2007). This game of insinuations and accusations has the effect of dehumanizing black and poor motherhood since it removes the legitimacy of women in the processes of making a family, giving birth, caring, and being a mother. I want to emphasize that such allusions are not reduced to mere lapses and discursive rhetoric. Still, they are ways of governing female bodies, distributing legitimacy, sexualizing behavior, consenting to violence, denying rights and perpetuating gendered racism.

In the contemporary scenario, if public administrations previously thought to incorporate these women somehow, whether through incentives, training, or public financing, nowadays, the municipal administration ignores the presence of the "taking care of" homes and acts as if they do not exist. While public action pretends that the housewives don't do what they do, the daycare professionals, who are at "the State end", continue to indicate the work of women in the neighborhood in the terrible battle for social resources that became the dispute for public places.

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