Literary mediation as ethics of care in adverse contexts
Mediación literaria como ética de cuidado en contextos adversos

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Abstract

This article explores reading mediators' literary mediation in adverse contexts and unconventional spaces (such as camps, hospitals, community centres, and others) in Mexico and Chile. Through a deductive thematic analysis of 20 interviews, a relationship is established between literary mediation and Joan Tronto's (1993) four categories of the ethics of care (*caring about, caring for, caregiving*, and *care receiving*). It is concluded that literary mediation in these contexts takes the form of an accompaniment that is organized through an emerging methodology with communities. This methodology focuses on listening and is intuitively oriented and situated, which supports both recreational and diversion practices, as well as processes of self-knowledge and emotional containment. The discussion centres on how this mediation practice engages with both a humanitarian logic of care and with practices that decentralize the book's authority and stature to pursue other relationalities.

Keywords: Literary mediation; adverse contexts; ethics of care; reading; literature; bibliotherapy

Resumen

En este artículo se explora la mediación con textos literarios en contextos adversos y espacios no convencionales (tales como campamentos, hospitales, centros comunitarios y otros) por parte de mediadoras de lectura radicadas en México y Chile. A través de un análisis temático de tipo deductivo de 20 entrevistas se establece una relación entre mediación literaria y las cuatro categorías de la ética del cuidado que esboza Joan Tronto (1993) (*caring about, caring for, care giving* and *care receiving).* Se concluye que la mediación literaria en estos contextos toma la forma de un acompañamiento que se organiza a través de una metodología de trabajo emergente con las comunidades, centrada

en la escucha, orientada intuitivamente y situada, que apoya tanto prácticas de esparcimiento y distracción, como procesos de autoconocimiento y contención emocional. Se discute cómo esta práctica de mediación se involucra tanto con lógicas humanitarias de cuidado como con prácticas que descentran la autoridad y figura del libro en pos de otras relacionalidades.

Palabras clave: mediación literaria; contextos adversos; ética del cuidado; lectura; literatura; biblioterapia

Introduction

Literary mediation in educational contexts focuses on producing readers and is often organized around traditional ideas of literacy and reading. In this article, mediation practices are explored in so-called adverse contexts (such as camps, hospitals, community spaces, and others) as a way to expand and open mediation to political and affective relationships with reading.

The term 'adverse contexts' is treated with caution in this article since we see it as a word related to terms such as vulnerability, precariousness, and risk. Cole (2016) argues that these terms contribute to diluting systemic and structural injustices by situating the problem in particular populations. Likewise, grouping diverse populations and inequities as complex as state violence, wars, natural disasters, poor access to health, or education, among others, carries the risk of universalizing these groups under a common denominator of negative connotations and making them indistinguishable from political action. One of the most relevant criticisms of terms such as those indicated above is that, when identifying vulnerable populations, the immediate task is to provide help and relief. In this way, political action aimed at dismantling the conditions that originated vulnerability runs the risk of being displaced or appeased by initiatives aimed at providing paternalistic care (Butler, 2020).

The ethics of care is a philosophical proposal that comes from feminist epistemologies and can be understood as "(...) a system of concepts, values, and ideas, arising from the practice of care as an organic part of this practice and responding to its material requirements, notably the meeting of needs" (Bubeck, 1995, p. 11). In turn, care can be defined as: "(...) a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible" (Fisher & Tronto, 1990, p. 40). Tronto (1993) applies the philosophy of care to political theory, resulting in the articulation of four dimensions that make up an integrated act of care (*caring about, caring for, caregiving*, and *care receiving*). The ultimate goal to which the ethics of care aspires is human *eudaimonia*, flourishing, or prosperity, that is, a well-lived life (Annas, 2006); however, this principle is challenged in adverse contexts.

This article weaves together the ethics of care with concepts from Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy to argue in favour of a literary mediation located in Latin America, which opens up possibilities for work in adverse contexts. Incorporating Freire allows for the conceptualization of mediation in adverse contexts, making it distinct from welfare perspectives and humanitarian logic, which focus on providing aid. Instead, mediation is seen as a way to assist people through mutual growth, where the other is conceived as an agent of change rather than an object of action (Freire, 1970). Ethics of care shares this aspect with critical pedagogy, in the sense

that the former is a skill that "is exercised on the materials of life" (Annas, 2006, p. 522), instead of a fixed and essential criterion of correct actions. This article assumes that mediation uses a logic of horizontality and non-authoritarian encounter, that is, as Freire's praxis has been described: based on solidarity, love, and trust in human beings (Barrera, 2015). Ethics of care also resonates with interconnected ways of living (Fisher & Tronto, 1990) rather than individual improvement practices. Similar to Freire's critical pedagogy, ethics of care situates interdependent community action at the centre of change.

In addition, this paper assumes that cultural mediation practices have the potential to create spaces of refuge, resignification, and support for populations in crisis contexts (Petit, 2009), which intensifies the affective and political potential of their relationship with literature. Reading as a space of resignification also resonates with Paulo Freire's idea that reading is an act of rewriting one's life and experience. Reading is a relationship with the world and a critical approach to it promotes a process of conscientization and reinterpretation (Freire, 1991).

The main question of this article is how literary mediation is expressed, and how it can be used to promote the ethics of care in so-called adverse contexts? To answer this question, interviews with reading mediators in Mexico and Chile are used. From the analysis of these interviews, an argument is made to explore how ethics of care can provide a theoretical framework for literary mediation practices with populations in so-called adverse contexts.

Methodology

This study was developed with an interpretive qualitative methodology, and the data was collected through semi-structured interviews that lasted 45 minutes. The questions asked about the mediators' experiences: their trajectory, relationship, and conceptualization of mediation; the contexts in which they work; their views on the role of gender in this work; and their assessments of the literature. The interviews were conducted in Mexico in 2018 and in Chile in 2019. In Chile, face-to-face interviews were done, and in Mexico, they were carried out remotely. The reason for the latter is the geographic dispersion of the Mexican sample. In the case of Chile, all interviews corresponded to the Metropolitan Region, which concentrates around 50% of the country's population. These samples are not considered representative of the mediator population in both countries since qualitative methodology focuses on small data sets that, due to their diversity or depth, allow for the communication of significant aspects about certain individuals (Cohen et al., 2007).

Participant Selection

In Mexico, ten interviews were conducted with people who had been trained in the "Reading with migrants" program. This program was implemented in Mexico between 2016 and 2017. A second selection criterion was to select people who worked in adverse contexts, mainly hospitals, shelters, and foster homes, or with a population whose rights have been violated: migrants, LGBTQI +, indigenous, among others.

The Chilean sample also includes ten interviews. The selection criteria for this sample are based on the contexts in which the mediators work and the people with whom they work. As in the Mexican case, they were interviewed by a single interviewer.

Analysis

The analysis was done once the audio recordings of all participants were transcribed. A deductive thematic analysis was carried out, guided by theory (Braun and Clarke, 2006), in order to investigate how the interviewees conceptualize and understand their mediating practices. The contents of the interviews were organized in relation to the categories of ethics of care proposed by Jean Tronto (1993). The units of analysis correspond to complete paragraphs of the interviews, which were manually coded and grouped into the four categories described below.

Ethics of Care Categories

Tronto (1993) proposes four dimensions that make up an integrated act of care. These categories can be understood as an evaluative framework on the adequacy of certain practices (Bozalek, 2011); however, in this article, they are not used to evaluate reading mediation but to explore the performativity of care in this practice (De la Bellacasa, 2017).

- *Caring about*: noticing people's needs and recognizing that there is a need for care that needs to be met. The corresponding moral element is *attentiveness*. The antithesis of this state is ignorance, which is understood as an active state, different from negligence.
- *Caring for*: once the need is recognized, a group or an individual needs to take *responsibility* to ensure that the person's needs are met and determine how to respond to that need. The corresponding moral element is responsibility.
- *Caregiving*: someone has to do the work of caring, and this job must be done competently. *Competence* is a moral quality that assumes knowledge and resources, but it also implies having the resources to care for someone competently.
- *Care receiving*: implies responding to the care that is given. The moral element is *responsiveness*. The evaluation of whether the care has been effective or not is implicit in this category. For example, in the educational case, one must assess whether students have acquired the knowledge or attributes they seek.

Results

Caring about

This category focuses on the ability to recognize a need for care that needs to be fulfilled. Its corresponding moral element is attentiveness. According to interviews, the recognition of the needs of others is based on situated knowledge, which changes according to the context; as a result, general scripts or plans are of little use. The identification of the needs of others appears to be a contextual experience. Academic preparation and methodologies are not seen as useful

since they carry the risk of producing an epistemological place that makes it more difficult to get to know the other. As one of the mediators points out, the work of *caring about* involves:

> Entender que el otro es diferente; que no son mis niños, mis migrantes. Que el otro tiene una capacidad importante de decisión; de asumir qué le gusta leer, qué no le gusta. Que va a ser totalmente distinto a lo que tú piensas o crees que debería leer (Interviewee 1, México).

Accordingly, another interviewee indicates: "Las estrategias tú las bajas en manuales y 100, 200 estrategias, entonces, esa no es la clave de la mediación, no es tener un corpus de 100 estrategias; es cómo la estrategia que escojo es la apropiada para cada público" (Interviewee 7, Chile). Similarly, another interviewee comments on the relationship between formal education and mediation, stating that: "Conocer de libros, tener conciencia de lo que estás haciendo, ojalá ser lector, no tienes para qué estudiar nada, o sea si eres buen lector te das cuenta de lo que ha significado la lectura en tú vida" (Interviewee 3, Chile). In this way, mediation does not use academic logic, instead it "propiciar una experiencia para colaborar juntos" (Interviewee 7, Chile).

The people interviewed commented on how important it is to prepare each session; at the same time, they warn that this planning must be flexible because the needs of the group can change, and it is important to adapt to these. Attentiveness is not only linked to the ability to attend to the needs of others through the act of listening, but it is also connected to adapting to the situations that occur in the moment. In this sense, the needs of the groups with whom the mediators work are conceived as emergent.

It is striking how little reading is mentioned as a need of the groups with whom these mediators work. One mediator mentions that she works with groups that have not had access to reading while another mediator states that it is important to ask the groups what topics they are interested in to be able to select books for an upcoming session; however, the vast majority of mediators talk about the groups' emotional needs. In this way, the mediators allude to the difficulties in the daily lives of the people in the groups and how fiction would allow them to "seguir hablando, quieren seguir compartiendo" (Interviewee 9, México). Thus, the practice of mediation indicates that the needs of groups in critical situations and positions of social exclusion, far exceed their material needs and that these needs seem to be invisible to the more formal institutions that serve these communities.

Caring for

According to Tronto, the moral element corresponding to the *caring for* dimension is *responsibility*. In reading mediation, it is the mediator who assumes the responsibility of *caring for* or, in the words of a mediator, the decision is made to:

> (...) hacerse cargo finalmente, en ese tipo de temas, por eso esta visión de conocer en qué están (...) estar preparados para una conversación de verdad, porque también eso pasa en la mediación, que hay que enfrentarse a una conversación literaria es súper desafiante (Interviewee 3, Chile).

Responsibility implies that mediators must recognize their ability to do their job (have time and resources) as a privilege, but they must also understand that this responsibility has limits.

This recognition is succinctly summed up by a mediator as: "entender es responsabilidad con el otro" (Interviewee 1, México).

The interviews yielded a series of steps in the process of taking responsibility and organizing the practical aspects of accompaniment: when it is going to happen, what resources to use, and how to give it continuity. In an interview, caring was described as a methodology for working with those who have experienced difficult situations. As this same interviewee indicates, the first step that must be taken is to listen attentively and respectfully to the other: "(...) tú ves cuando le das atención a la gente y el tiempo, y más cuando son niños... es demasiado motivante (...)" (Interviewee 6, México).

This is consistent with the previous category, which highlights the importance of getting to know the group before getting involved. The interesting thing is that this process of knowledge is carried out through words and books.

Reading accompaniment is assumed as a responsibility, as shown in the careful planning and flexibility that the interviewees report. First, the objectives of the mediation must be established, which, among others, have to do with literacy and personal growth, highlighting the culture of the participant, or "como si estuviera abriendo un mundo" (Interviewee 1, Chile). The next step is to find the appropriate tools for the specific context to carry out the accompaniment, in this case, stories, books, images, and activities such as dialogue, games, or drawings. When making this selection, responsibility is related to knowing what issues can be discussed (including the decision to address difficult issues): "pa que conversemos, pa que cuestionemos, pa que nos encontremos a nosotros mismos, para que sepamos para dónde vamos, y para que dejemos de ser máquinas también po" (Interviewee, 8 Chile). Responsibility also involves recognizing when participants are overly tired, depressed, or when they need support.

The interviews show that the process is iterative, and therefore this dimension overlaps with the elements of the other ethical categories: attentiveness, competence, and responsiveness. As Tronto indicates, the concept of responsibility requires constant evaluation (2005, p. 253), and in the case of mediation, it is reflected in the interviews that highlight a continuous observation: listening, and getting to know and recognizing the user, the context, and the difficulties. Doubts and questions appear as part of this aspect of the ethics of care because it is not always clear to what extent mediators should or can take responsibility for people in the group. In addition, there is a call to recognize their limitations and be humble, so they do not act beyond their abilities: "yo siempre digo que si tú abres una puerta tienes que hacerte cargo de todo lo que vas a abrir, y muchas veces la soberbia del mediador es abrir más puertas de las que pueda hacerme cargo" (Interviewee 7, Chile).

Likewise, responsibility implies that the mediator is self-aware:

> Si no lo resuelves entonces lo único que voy a hacer es como trasladar mis emociones hacia el otro y hacer interpretaciones y darle como más peso a algo. Que no estaría escuchando al otro sino estaría como proyectando mis emociones en él (Interviewee 1, México).

Finally, responsibility extends to observing and listening to colleagues who work in mediation in critical contexts and supporting them when they need it. The *caring for* dimension and the responsibility element help us understand why mediators get involved and offer their time

and energy, in the case of Mexico, without remuneration. Performativity of care involves a systematization, or series of steps, as well as practices and decisions that are made about books and other tools or activities. Responsibility as a value guide helps to understand how the mediator positions herself/himself in the accompaniment.

Caregiving

This category refers to the *competent* delivery of care (Tronto, 1993). We consider that there are two central elements of literary mediation: one, the resources that mediators have or develop to carry out their work, and two, how books and reading are shaped around mediating competence.

Regarding the first element, mediators use versatile resources that are fun and expressive to promote participation, involvement, and motivation. These resources are used for affective purposes, in order to involve participants of different nationalities and include activities that involve typical foods, national anthems, and ludic repertoires such as board games, costumes, and puppets, among others. Competition seems to be associated with the mediators' ability to use a wide range of potentially significant resources, particularly at the cultural level.

Other types of resources are made up of those that are used for emotional support. An important part of the competence in care involves, according to the interviews, the ability to provide a space of support and manage negative and excessive emotions. The responsibility of the mediators includes knowing how to deal with difficult issues that can re-signify episodes or destabilizing events and, at the same time, being aware of the need for them to be supportive. This implies distinguishing between therapy, bibliotherapy, and accompaniment as well as working on their emotions so as not to project themselves onto the other: "Decir yo tengo empatía por él y me pongo en sus zapatos está muy canijo (complicado). No es fácil ponerse en el zapato del otro. Más bien verlo y decirle bueno aquí estoy para lo que tú necesites" (Interviewee 9, México).

Perhaps this is the reason why many statements on the part of the mediators involve emotional self-management skills: "se te olvida que estás acompañando y a riesgo de que el mediador acabe llorando con el migrante o con la persona con la que está" (Interviewee 1, México).

There are times when a limit to mediation is established and, sometimes, this limit is configured as disciplinary: "y la sala de lectura es un espacio que favorece la intimidad para crear un espacio seguro donde hablar del tema, el mediador requiere del apoyo de un psicólogo durante la sesión" (Interviewee 10, México), particularly when the issues go beyond the logic of cultural mediation, as in the case of child sexual abuse or drug addictions. The limit of mediation capacity is clear for this interviewee:

> "Nosotros no somos terapeutas, y si lo eres además, genial, pero el objetivo de la mediación no es hacer terapia, es acompañar un proceso de autoconocimiento humano desde una forma integral, artística, social o desde el ángulo que te toque trabajar, pero efectivamente, donde la literatura es una herramienta que te permite contener y conocer procesos de otros (Interviewee 7, Chile).

Accompaniment, therefore, arises as a competence that is established not from psychotherapy but from mediation:

> (...) yo me di cuenta de la importancia del acompañamiento, de que te vayan conociendo y sepan que tú vienes incondicionalmente a estar un rato aquí... —¡ah! Y traes libros—. O sea es... el acompañamiento en qué se diferencia de los otros acompañamientos, que los hubo, en que tú vas con libros... tú vas con libros (Interviewee 5, México).

Even so, another interviewee establishes a relationship between the reading mediation experience and the mediator's ability to deal with issues that are difficult or traumatic, thus projecting a certain therapeutic capacity to the practice of reading mediation:

> Cómo yo logro que la persona se conecte con su trayectoria de vida y entienda todo lo que ha significado la ausencia o presencia de mediación lectora en su vida, o de un buen mediador, o la ausencia de uno también, porque no siempre se trata de acordarse de las cosas bonitas, sino que también tomar conciencia de por qué le tengo tirria a ciertos temas, por qué hay otros que no me atrevo a abordar, o por qué no me gusta la lectura (Interviewee 7, Chile).

In this reflection, the taste for reading is thus linked to the ability to deal with more complex issues related to life experiences.

Regarding the second element of this category, several interviewees agree that narrative, whether oral or written, is an essential tool of mediation skills. In this sense, it is not only the materiality of the book but the oral or performative capacities of the mediators that are valued as resources. Reading is signified as a space or an instance, even an atmosphere, with therapeutic potential but, more than anything, as an instance to share life experiences. In this sense, the literary quality of books is not as relevant:

> (...) miren que divino cuento, es fabuloso, ganó el Premio Nobel el autor—. ¿A quién le importa? (...) A mí me importa del cuento que sea en un momento determinado disparador de posibilidades donde cada quien se conecte a partir de un filón de su propia historia (Interviewee 5, México).

What is relevant is the capacity of narratives and mediation to connect on a personal level with individuals: "un espacio emocional que les permita conectarse, conversar, disfrutar, pasarlo bien" (Interviewee 3, Chile).

Some of the interviewees link this ability to connecting on a personal level to a form of love. What we have seen as care, then, also appears to be linked to love for the other. In Mexico, we find this definition presented in a Cerlalc-Unesco document that gives testimonies that define the mediator as a person who is capable of:

> (...) sharing a passion, building bridges, being a link, accompanying, facilitating, generating situations, enjoying being with others, learning from others, observing and listening, creating possibilities to train as a reader, loving people, enabling the exchange of experiences and knowledge, creating from reading, learning and building with others, reading and seeing ourselves, opening the possibilities to reinterpret the world (Mediators of México, collective production, audio, cited in Schmidt et al., 2018, p. 69)

Care receiving

According to Tronto, to ensure that the care provided has been adequate and effective, it is essential to consider the fourth dimension: *care receiving* along with *responsiveness*, its

accompanying moral element. Another word used to translate responsiveness into Spanish is *sensitivity*, which reflects one of the fundamental qualities of this element, especially given the imbalance that tends to exist between whoever offers and whoever receives care in adverse contexts. In the mediation cases analysed here, this asymmetry is made more obvious by the privileged position of the mediator. In this sense, responsiveness presupposes an attentive attitude to avoid possible abuses of power.

One of the processes of being cared for is to evaluate if the care has corresponded to the needs expressed and/or perceived in the previous dimensions to understand whether the care has been effective and whether it continues to be necessary. In the aforementioned mediation contexts, the formal evaluation is usually carried out at the institutional level, but the mediators themselves tend to ask questions in a less formal way, for example, during the closing of the session: "¿cómo te sentiste? ¿cómo estuvo este rollo?" (Interviewee 5, México).

Tronto warns us that understanding the needs of the other does not mean to assume that we can be in their situation, but to consider their position as it is expressed. By being attentive to assessing whether the needs are adequate, there is a continuity between *caring about* and *caregiving*, but given the asymmetric conditions already mentioned, the mediator must attend to subtler non-verbal cues in the assessment. Due to the age, language, or health of the participants, in both contexts in this study it is likely that the participants were not able to formulate exact opinions or express their exact needs so that the success of mediation tends to be interpreted not only by the verbal responses but also by meeting the perceived needs of the group:

> (...) cada contexto es distinto, cada lugar es diferente... y un poco tratar de responder eso (...) Por cierto, uno de esos días que llovió, hizo un frío infernal y yo nada más había llegado (...) Estaba lloviendo y el frío, horrible... (...) Pero así estaban todos (los niños) como yo ahorita que... todos entumidos, sí sí. Y luego yo soy muy mala, por ejemplo, para las cancioncitas pero... ahí me tuve que acordar de una... de muévete... este es el juego del calentamiento... no sé qué, porque en verdad estaban entumidos y yo igual con ellos ¿no? Pero vamos, que son cosas como de que pronto hay una necesidad... o sea, tienes que también como que activarlos ahorita (Interviewer 5, México).

These oral or bodily expressions are a gratifying measure to assess whether the need for accompaniment is being met; furthermore, they are the responses that motivate the mediators to continue:

> (…) lo que tú te llevas de ahí es impresionante, o sea, las sonrisas de los niños, el ver a un niño como recostado, así triste, o a veces adolorido, y como tú te vas (y) te hace señas sentado y te dice cuándo vas a venir de nuevo. Eso es súper gratificante, ¿ya? Y eso es algo que te hace volver una y otra vez. Uno recibe mucho más de lo que tú das, es bien impresionante (Interviewee 2, Chile).

In many cases, the interviewees mention this response to care as the reason that motivates their work, which many do without receiving payment, while others receive some type of payment, but it is always very low. Responsiveness implies being prepared to modify the strategy or activity immediately when a change in the need of the person receiving care is perceived. In this way, the practice of mediation is a circular process because care involves continually evaluating whether conditions have changed to adapt to new needs.

For mediators working in healthcare contexts, responsiveness is expressed as:

> (…) estamos muy pendientes de la respuesta de ellos. Si vemos que se nos está apagando, que se nos está queriendo quedar dormido o que el cuento no le interesó, no le gustó, lo apuramos, ¿ya? Lo cantamos más rápido. Entonces, en este caso si vemos que todos están fascinados escuchando la lectura, continuamos con la lectura (Interviewee 2, Chile).

As indicated in this quote, in many cases this responsiveness is closely related to the selection of texts and resources to mediate: what the mediators try to determine is whether the reading has managed to captivate the group to which it is addressed. If that link has not been achieved, the mediators seek to change the strategy.

Conclusion

In this article, the practice of reading mediation in so-called adverse contexts is analysed, in order to elaborate it as a relationship with others that responds to an ethic of care. Based on the interpretation of the interviews, the first conclusion is that literary mediation practices respond to various logics: a humanistic logic that focuses on providing help and support, and a care logic, where the mediators are involved in relationships of responsiveness, responsibility, attentiveness, and competence.

Unlike a reading mediation in institutionalized educational contexts, the formation of literary competence and proficient readers is not at the centre of this mediating practice; rather, what is at the centre is a relationality that is formed as an accompaniment through reading. Accompaniment as a practice of the ethics of care is characterized by being culturally situated, in which reading is one of many other components. Accompaniment is an ethical stance that incorporates a methodology with literature, involves responsibility with others, attentive and close work with the communities to understand their needs, and an intention to position oneself not as a possessor of knowledge but as someone who establishes dialogues. This is a learning process because many of the interviewees conceptualize it as a state of openness to knowing what others need. Accordingly, the interviewees attach great importance to the ability to pay attention and understand how to listen, so that each mediation instance emerges from particular encounters. In other words, the emphasis is on the capacity of the mediators to promote a collaborative experience, rather than on conceiving the populations with whom they work as objects of care. In this sense, ethics of care is configured as a practice that provides assistance, instead of welfare, in the sense that it opens up spaces for alternative frameworks to humanitarian and paternalistic logics aimed at certain populations conceived as vulnerable. In this iteration, reading mediation is configured as a situated and flexible knowledge, which changes depending on the context and the potential relationships it offers, in contrast to a problem detection and resolution approach, for example.

Mediation as an ethics of care implies that those who mediate take responsibility for certain needs, mainly emotional, of the groups with whom they work. Many of the interviewees argue that the limits of responsibility are established in the face of psychological discipline, for example, in the sense that it is important to establish that the relationship is not therapeutic. In this way, caring can be understood as an ethical position not to do certain things, such as addressing traumatic processes, which require specialized intervention. Without disagreeing with this position, the status that many of the interviewees give to psychological knowledge is

interesting, producing a limit regarding mediation. The moral element of competence, therefore, is very important to ethically establish what can and cannot be achieved with reading mediation and to distance oneself, then, from using it as therapy. Even so, the comment regarding the difficulty of achieving this limit is recurrent, especially if the mediation practice focuses on providing support and emotional accompaniment.

In accordance with a mediation practice not focused on the formation of competent readers, the use of literature and narrative does not focus on their literary or aesthetic quality but on the ability of works to connect with people's personal experiences. In this sense, the mediator's competence unfolds to its maximum potential when the mediator finds a literary work that impacts the life history of the participants, with which an intimate bond or a certain resonance is generated. This de-centring of the author and categories of value as a literary canon is one of the aspects in which this type of mediation distances itself the most from that which occurs in school spaces. This does not mean that the school does not produce instances of ethics of care through culturally-situated practices, but rather that the mediation of literary texts is conceived there as a vehicle for the formation of literary and critical competencies.

The ethics of care in mediation in adverse contexts mainly recognizes the emotional and self-awareness needs of the populations and individuals with whom mediators work. In this sense, we are faced with logics that resemble humanitarian aid, aimed at providing support and relief. Perhaps this is the reason why there are no references in the interviews to uses of culture for the formation of political consciousness in the groups —following Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy — but, rather, they refer to the potential of the narrative for distraction, self-awareness, and emotional support. In fact, this mediation practice is explicit in protocols such as *La Fuerza de las Palabras. Protocolo para una intervención cultural en situaciones de emergencia* (Schmidt et al., 2018), that is part of the Unesco guidelines for the promotion of a global culture of resilience and Cerlalc, as a Unesco centre, which promotes contact with literature, reading, and narrative as a way to promote resilience in the face of the most frequent natural disasters in Latin America. In this way, although it is possible to suggest certain connections between the reading accompaniment practised by the mediators of this study and conceptions of reading as resignification, as well as situated and horizontal practices of relationality, the objective of the accompaniment is unrelated to collaboratively constructing a consciousness in the sense of articulating a policy for the emancipation or humanization of these communities. Liberation as a possible ethical repertoire of reading has been rearticulated as self-awareness in these interviews.

The interviews highlight, among other capacities, the ability to love. Despite the attention paid to affects and emotions in recent research in the social sciences and humanities, love is a feeling that is not addressed or is reduced to intimate and personal relationships, a private feeling (Morrison et al., 2012). Lanas and Zembylas (2015) theorize about love as a relational force and as a praxis that takes the form of care and responsibility for the other in educational contexts. In these interviews in which critical evaluations of work conditions seem to be absent and in which we do not observe greater reflection on structural inequities and injustices, care appears as an ethical and political practice of love. This relationship between care, love, and literary mediation needs more exploration in new studies, in particular its relationship with potentially problematic

practices of paternalism and humanitarian aid logics that do not recognize the political potential of the ethics of care (Bozalek et al., 2021).

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