



CHAPTER 2

The Emotional Turn in Colombian Experiences of Violence

Myriam Jimeno

I INTRODUCTION

The emotional turn in the social sciences refers to the change of focus over the past decades that this field has placed on gaining a broader understanding of affective expressions and emotional states in socio-cultural contexts. Just as we speak of the “linguistic turn,” when we speak of an “emotional turn,” we are making reference to a burgeoning field of research guided by an increasing interest in a certain aspect of social life that has been traditionally overlooked or obliterated. Since many scholars have already evaluated this emotional turn and the reasons it has not received the attention it deserves, I will not rehearse these issues here. Rather, I will highlight the general lines of research that constitute it and discuss some of its analytical and methodological axes and presuppositions. From here, I will turn to a discussion about how I encountered this area of research, as I was

Translated by Catalina González Quintero.

M. Jimeno (✉)
Department of Anthropology, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá,
Colombia
e-mail: msjimenos@unal.edu.co

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not originally interested in emotions, but, as it were, encountered them in three different research scenarios throughout many years of anthropological fieldwork in Colombia and Brazil. My first encounter with them occurred in the 1990s, when I was studying the experiences of violence in low-income urban sectors in Bogotá and Tolima, Colombia. The second took place when I researched crimes of romantic partners both in Colombia and in Brazil from 1999 to 2000. My third encounter with emotions occurred in 2008, as I investigated the process of social restructuring of an interethnic population who suffered a massacre (the massacre of “el Naya”), perpetrated by paramilitary groups in 2001 in a rural area of Cauca, Colombia. Through these research experiences I advanced the concepts of emotional configurations and emotional communities, to which I will refer with more depth. But before getting into these matters, I will begin with a brief overview on the history of research on emotions.

2 AN OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF RESEARCH ON EMOTIONS

Among the works that historically trace the intellectual development of the discussion on emotions, the philosophers Cheshire Calhoun and Robert C. Solomon’s compilation *What is an emotion? Classic and Contemporary Readings* (2003) stands out. This early book discusses and contrasts two main tendencies in the definition of emotions: first, those that stress their sensorial and physiological character, and, second, those that emphasize their cognitive, intelligent aspect and the ways in which emotions help us understand a particular situation. Calhoun and Solomon note that this debate goes back thousands of years in Western thought, arguing that, “Twenty-five hundred years ago, Plato and Aristotle debated the nature of emotions, and Aristotle, in his *Rhetoric*, developed a strikingly modern theory of emotion that stands up to the most contemporary criticism” (2003, p. 1). Despite this long history—which includes not only the Ancient Greeks, but also the Roman Stoics—emotions, Calhoun and Solomon say, have not been considered an important topic in itself, in philosophy or in other disciplines, and has only been tangentially touched upon in relation to other issues such as mental and cognitive phenomena.

Keith Oatley’s work reminds us that although the emotions were discussed in the first known written texts, such as the Sumerians, they have been largely overlooked as object of study (Oatley, 2004). In particular, he emphasizes a curious status of emotions in that, on the one hand, they appear constantly in world-wide narratives from the very beginning of humanity, but, on the other hand, they are continually overlooked,

undervalued, and even despised. Great epic narratives such as the Indian *Gilgamesh*, or other Egyptian, Hebrew, Greek, Roman, American, and African traditional tales offer accounts of pain, anger, joy, compassion, love, and so on. Confucius wrote in the fifth century BC, about the emotions, just as the Mayans did in their codices. So, humanity has produced a vast emotional repertoire with deep social implications. Is it, then, Oatley asks, that humans really have a vision of things that is blurred by emotions? It seems so, given that, just as in the great Greek tragedies, we cannot see the most important results of our actions.

Calhoun and Solomon continue to trace this intellectual engagement with emotions, arguing that the previously mentioned two lines of research on emotions—those stressing their sensorial and physiological character and those emphasizing their cognitive aspect—are problematic. They offer a broad historical outline of research on the issue, compiling texts that include: Aristotle, René Descartes, Baruch Spinoza, David Hume, William James, Sigmund Freud, Walter Cannon, John Dewey, Stanley Schachter, Jerome Singer, Franz Brentano, Max Scheler, Martin Heidegger, and Jean Paul Sartre. Calhoun and Solomon contend that the theory that sees emotions as physiological reactions, inspired in Charles Darwin and formulated by William James in 1884 and C. G. Lange in 1885, is still prevailing (Calhoun & Solomon, 2003). Despite a long history that reaches back to Aristotle, the second line of research, which sees emotions as cognitive and evaluative phenomena, has been less predominant. The more recent “emotional turn,” takes place precisely at the divergence between the two camps and proposes a change of perspective that seeks to overcome the psycho-biological reductionism of the first trend, by opening a wide array of perspectives for the study of the emotions.

As a consequence of the “emotional turn,” research on the emotions in recent decades has been primarily transdisciplinary. Diverse perspectives work jointly to offer an understanding of the emotions as providing evaluative guidelines in particular contexts, that is, as giving us essential insight and guidance about what we consider important, valuable, and just for our lives. Emotions are understood, then, as both evaluative judgments and as forms of engagement with social action. Several scholars have pointed to the fact that they constitute motivations which orient people’s action (Castillo del Pino, 2000; Jimeno, 2004; Kandel, Schwartz, & Jessel, 1996; Oatley, 2004), and, in the words of Martha Nussbaum “Emotions [...] involve judgments about important things, judgments in which appraising an external object as salient for our own well-being, we acknowledge our own neediness and incompleteness before parts of the world that we do not fully control” (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 19). In this way, the emotional

turn involves understanding emotions as relational social acts, modeled by historical and cultural contexts, and constitutive of social hierarchies and relations.

Just like philosophy, anthropology and sociology have a long history of reflection on the emotions and have engaged in particular studies on specific emotional states. One example is sociologist Niklas Luhmann's 1982 book, *Love as Passion: The Codification of Intimacy* (*Liebe als Passion: Zur Codierung von Intimität*), in which he saw love as a means of symbolic communication, a code that makes possible the interaction between the self and others. In this book, he explores the historical formation of new codes of intimacy in Europe, as well as the different transformations of the code of love, from polite love to amour passion (passionate love), which emerged in France in the seventeenth century and involves freedom to choose a romantic partner (Luhmann, 1998, pp. 9–11).

Another, more recent, example is Marina Ariza's sociological approach to emotions in her 2016 work, *Emociones, afectos y sociología. Diálogos desde la investigación social y la interdisciplina*. There, she argues that, despite the important views on the issue of classical sociology authors such as Durkheim, Simmel, and Weber, it was Parsons's interpretation, according to which the function of emotions is limited to the maintenance of primary relations, which became mainstream in the discipline. In this way, Durkheim's view of emotions as forces of social cohesion, constitutive of a moral and symbolic order, was relegated and the idea that emotions are opposed to reason, and that reason alone is a civilizing power, gained ascendancy. Even if, Weber, for example, also gave great importance to the emotions in his analysis of charismatic power and in the formation of protestant ethics, emotions were generally neglected as object of sociological study.

Despite efforts like these, however, emotions have been usually studied either in a marginal way, in relation to other issues of more central importance, or, when they are touched upon, they are referred to as negative, irrational, and abrupt subjective forces. Fortunately, Sociologists and anthropologists from Durkheim, to the Culture and Personality Movement, to G. Bateson, V. Turner, and C. Geertz, studied affective states and emotional expressions in socio-cultural contexts and in relation to particular social processes, including activities furthering social cohesion and solidarity, rituals, communication, interactions involved in the social construction of meaning, and in the notion of personhood (Ariza, 2016; Barcellos & Coelho, 2010; Dias, 1986; Lienhardt, 1979; Lutz & Abu-Lughod, 1990).

Nonetheless, the study of emotions only gained prominence with authors like David Le Breton, Michele Rosaldo, Catherine Lutz, Lila Abu-Lughod, Fred Myers, and Geoffrey White, who began to speak about an anthropology of emotions (Jimeno, 2004; Lutz & Abu-Lughod, 1990; Reddy, 1997). Today we have a wide array of studies on the history of emotions (Reddy, 2008; Rosenwein & Cristiani, 2018; Vegetti, 2004), on the different approaches to their analysis (Ariza, 2016; Bolaños, 2016¹), and on the emotional life of different groups, for example, in Latin America (Calderón & Zirión, 2018). A work usually brought to the fore in this context is the pioneering research of Jean Briggs (1971), *Never in Anger: Portrait of an Eskimo Family*, who observed “the emotional behavioral patterns of the Utku in their daily life.” She examined the absence of anger among the Eskimos, who do not even have a word to designate this emotion. As a consequence, she provided ethnographic evidence against the idea that emotions and the vocabulary of emotions can be universal, and supports the view that socio-cultural life defines the meaning and force of emotional expressions.

More recently, Catherine Lutz challenged the assumptions of Western science on the nature of the emotions with her fieldwork, first, on the Ifaluk people, in the Western Pacific, and, then, in the United States. Lutz said that in the field, “I became aware of how emotional exchanges [...] are at the core of the community’s political and moral life, instead of being mere expressions or gestures of internal states in the psychological development” (Lutz, 2018, p. 44).² With her intention to understand the power dynamics that arose from emotional exchanges, her work became part of the anthropological turn that criticized traditional dichotomies—such as mind/body and reason/emotion—and universalistic assumptions drawn from psychological and neuroscience’s studies on the emotions. She also deplored the exaggerated importance given to reason and rationality in the analysis of human life, and, in contrast, advocated for an understanding of affects as the basis of creativity, in spite of the fact that it is object of ill-intended manipulation (Lutz, 2018, p. 45).

In a similar vein as Lutz, Sergio Moravia has argued that the delay in a historical and semantic understanding of the “passions” is due to their being influenced by primary and archetypal structures of the Western

¹ Bolaños presents a very complete state of the art of the debates on emotions in both disciplines during the twentieth century.

² My translation. The text was published originally in Spanish.

tradition, such as the division between mind and body. These archetypical structures gave rise to the idea that emotions are independent from social bonds, and, consequently, it became difficult to see them as the product of both a conceptual and affective sedimentation. Moravia continued arguing that we can only now appreciate that the study of the emotions corresponds to the field of hermeneutics, insofar as they are in essence a signifying apparatus. Only when we consider emotions in this light, does their semantic and historical significance becomes visible (Moravia, 1998).

As we can see from this historical overview on the field of emotions, the affective turn sprung from inconformity with a reductionist and non-historical approach to emotions, which involved that they were disregarded as a social force. Historical, hermeneutical, and ethnographic studies, to the contrary, revealed how emotions are culturally shaped, have a relational, intersubjective character, and are public phenomena, not merely internal psychological or mental states. This perspective took hold once emotions began to be studied in the context of social practices, values, patterns of actions—in other words, from the point of view of the cultural history of particular social groups. Let us now examine with more detail the main aspects of the emotional turn.

3 THE EMOTIONAL TURN: EMOTIONS AS RELATIONAL ACTS IN THE OPERATION OF SOCIAL STRUCTURES

One of the most important theoretical bases for this new approach to emotions came from a criticism of the naturalistic and ahistorical character of important modern assumptions, such as the notion of individual at the core of the concept of person. In 1939, Marcel Mauss presented the historical process that led, after many centuries of conceptual sedimentation, to the modern notion of person as a psychological being with an individual rational consciousness (Mauss, 1939). In particular, he showed that it was the Protestant thinkers of diverse denominations—Puritans, Wesleyans, Pietists, and Moravians—and not the Cartesians, who began to ask important questions about individual consciousness and freedom as well as an individual's right to have a personal relation to God. Through these interrogations, the notion of the person as an individual entity with an identity emerged. Beyond this, Mauss showed how Hume and Berkeley contributed to the understanding of the soul as a mere state of consciousness, Kant provided the view of individual consciousness as the sacred nucleus

of the person and seat of practical reason, and Fichte afforded the conception of the self as necessary condition for consciousness and science (Jimeno, 2019b, p. 149). In this sense, I agree with Brazilian anthropologist, Luis Fernando Dias Duarte's analysis—based on Mauss—of the representation of the person as a psychological entity. He claimed—supported by his fieldwork to study the character of the “nervous person” in low-income social classes in Brazil—that there was a repeated pattern of use of the notion of “psychological being” to explain this character, namely a being that contains an unknown and powerful interior space, where character disturbances arise due to the accumulation and conflict of thoughts and passions (Dias, 1986, p. 25; Jimeno, 2019b, pp. 150–151).

This notion of person, which was formed over many centuries, coincides with what Norbert Elias called a *homo clausus* (Elias, 1983)—a conception of person in which the mind/body divide is central and the emotions are reduced to obscure forces in opposition to reason. Norbert Elias was a pioneer in turning the attention to the sociogenesis and psychogenesis of this notion of person as an individual with a psychological inner self. Elias's novelty lay in putting European political structures in relation with the emergence of such psychological subject. In other words, he saw the *homo clausus* as a European historical product, tied to the political ascent of the bourgeoisie and to the creation of nation-states. For him, the *homo clausus* and its associated personality structure reflect the socio-political modern arrangement, so that human emotions and their self-control mechanisms have a historical relation with economic and political structures in modern society (Elias, 1983, p. 9). He also pointed to how sociology committed to the idea of a *homo clausus*, according to which a person is understood as an isolated individual. All other individuals are also *homo clausus*, enclosed in their psychological inner life, and isolated from the rest of human beings (Elias, 1983). For Elias, the sociologist Talcott Parsons accurately illustrated this view with the metaphor of a black box, in whose interior occur all sorts of individual psychological processes (Jimeno, 2004). Elias studied the historicity of this model of an isolated, self-controlled individual, which must master some emotional expressions and incorporate others, and showed how this conception corresponds with the emergence of modern states and their monopoly of violence. In this way, he questioned the narrow and asocial conception of emotions and was able to relativize the notion of a self-controlled individual. At the same time, he highlighted the historicity of emotions—he showed the values attached to emotions in particular periods of time and

how they play a role in social hierarchy and power dynamics. Thus, Elias offered important conceptual basis for restructuring the research field on emotions.

An innovative approach is also offered by Michel Foucault in working out a genetic history of discourses concerning madness and the abnormal, institutions such as prison, and the very notion of the subject in relation to the exercise of power (see particularly, Foucault, 1991). His work undermined the naturalization of historical dispositives aimed at social control and allowed an examination of their internal mechanisms. Exploring the social history of the emotions, he also helped in opening a research field that examined established notions about social hierarchies and power interactions.

4 BODY AND SOUL IN TRANSDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

As we just saw, there is a deep transdisciplinarity of the emotional turn. As a result, sciences such as neurobiology, neuropsychology, and ethology began to collaborate with philosophy and the social sciences in unexpected ways. Since the decade of the 1970s, for example, research in neurosciences laboratories has questioned some of the main assumptions of the traditional view on emotions, particularly three of its central dichotomies: material versus immaterial (or, body vs. soul), reason versus emotion (or cognition vs. feeling), and genetic versus acquired (or inherited vs. socially constructed features). A similar deconstruction has been made by anthropologists, sociologists, and historians, who contribute to experimental research with the examination of social practices, cultural meanings, and historical and social structures. Beyond these general overlaps, we see specific examples of convergence and divergence throughout the natural and social sciences, of which I will outline some of the most notable.

Biochemist Eric Kandel, cellular physiologist James Schwartz, and psychiatrist Thomas Jessel experimentally investigated the cognitive means (beliefs, value judgments, and perceptions) by which individuals perceive emotional states and, how desires and emotions also influence behavior. They concluded that thought and feeling are parts of the same mental processes, which are very complex insofar as they relate different functions and parts of the brain (Kandel et al., 1996).³

³Kandel received the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 2000.

Another contribution to this debate came from neurologist Antonio Damasio, in 1990, with the book *Descartes's Error*, which aimed at undermining one of the most deeply rooted cultural ideas of Western thought about the mind: dualism. Researching patients with neuronal damage in the prefrontal lobe, Damasio noted that they experience serious emotional distress as well as great difficulty in planning everyday ordinary tasks, especially when these tasks involve other people (Oatley, 2004). Given this, the brain injury seemed to also cause emotional damage in these patients. For instance, Elliott, the main subject of Damasio's studies, lost the capacity to emotionally engage with everyday events of his life, seeing them instead with indifference and detachment. Things that moved him before, no longer did. And, with the loss of his emotions, he also lost social relationships, commitments, and the ability to make plans and attain his goals. Descartes's error, Damasio argued, was to separate body and soul. While Descartes thought that the mind (soul) was immaterial and substantially different from the brain or material body, Damasio claimed, to the contrary, that since when the material brain is injured, not only is the mind harmed, but also the person's identity and relationships with others, then material and immaterial aspects of the human being are tightly related (Oatley, 2004).

Neurologist Roberto Mercadillo Caballero is among many researchers working in this area in América Latina. In particular, Mercadillo Caballero questioned another Western presupposition—the deterministic interpretation that originated in William James, who reduced the emotions to physiological responses to external stimuli. He maintains that it is precisely the study of the biological processes of emotions that breaks with this idea. As such, biology is not deterministic (Mercadillo, 2016) and a new science—social neuroscience—should attempt to relate social dynamics with the cognitive modeling. Of course, this idea is not a novelty for social sciences, such as anthropology and sociology, since they have always related cognitive and social functions. What is novel, however, is the assertion that social dynamics influence the anatomical and physiological substratum of cognition, namely, the nervous system. The challenge for this new science lies in determining the cellular, functional, and behavioral mechanisms that allow for symbolic relations.

Mercadillo Caballero's study on the neurocognitive basis of compassion as a moral emotion, based on MRI results of the participants, led him to affirm, along with other studies, that the relationship between activity in certain areas of the cortex and the system of "mirror neurons" allow for us to experience empathy with the emotional states of others. However,

we must note that the empathic connection with the pain of others varies according to cultural factors and the corporal experience of every individual, even if it has at its basis the same cellular mechanism.

In a similar vein, Debra Niehoff (1998) found in her study on the biology of violence that the neuronal basis of behavior encompasses much more than a mere genetic programming or assassin instinct. While noting the historical reasons for the social scientist's distrust in biology—namely, the opposition of society and nature, and the dichotomy of social and biological approaches—Niehoff argues that today's advances in the understanding of the brain's functioning allow us to affirm that social and physical environments model the nervous system even before birth. Inversely, the innate characteristics of the brain orient the ways in which everyone perceives and reacts to the environment. The astonishing plasticity of genes allows us to say that behavior is the result of a permanently moving process (Niehoff, pp. x). Violent behavior, just as other types of behavior, is neither a preestablished program nor a simple reaction, but rather a complex process in which the brain maintains a “politics of open doors that invite external influence” (p. 32). Even the coldest-blooded and most sadistic assassin was a child, so internal (genetic) factors along with external influences (education, moral values, mass media, stress, etc.) interacted in complex ways to bring about his violent tendencies. It was precisely from the study of violent action that I approached the field of emotions.

Let us take a moment to summarize the main points of the discussion up to this point: the emotional turn arose from a deep discomfort with the reductive, ahistorical, approach to emotions and its disregard of their social function. In response, sociology, anthropology, history, psychology, and philosophy began exploring the historical, relational, and intersubjective character of emotions and the great variety of cultural nuances in their expression. In this way, emotions were taken out of the narrow limits of individual psyches and moved to the public sphere, where they began to be understood as social phenomena.

In the development of this new approach to understanding the nature of emotions, important and deeply rooted dichotomies were criticized: public versus private, individual versus group, reason versus emotion, mind versus body, inheritance versus environment, subject versus structure. The emotional turn aimed at overcoming them by converging social sciences and neurosciences. Beyond this, the emotional turn conceptualized emotions as encompassing a broad range of phenomena—like reactive emotions (anger, fear, etc.), moods, affective attachments, and

feelings—that were products of socio-cultural processes of modeling and, even if not explicit, are essential for the operation of social structures (Oatley, 2004). In light of this, emotions can be understood both as a constitutive aspect of social action and as part of the experience of each individual subject. Scholars such as Oatley (2004) argue that emotions are the springs of social action, since at least three processes converge in them—our evolutive history as a species, our cultural differences and processes of learning, and our understanding and assessment of the environment. And thus, as both personal and collective motivating factors, emotions structure our social relations.

In conclusion, we can say that emotions are irreducible to cognitions, even if they involve mental processes and operate as evaluations of our environment. They both shape and are shaped by the moral valuations of each culture, and constitute essential parts of our engagements with ourselves and others. Now I will turn to my experience with this field of research, by describing how I began to be interested in this aspect of social life and how I approached it.

5 FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH EMOTIONS: PARENTAL PUNISHMENT AS A WAY TO CORRECT BEHAVIOR AND TEACH RESPECT

Between 1992 and 1993, I worked with an interdisciplinary group investigating the experiences of violence among people of low-income groups, in Bogotá and the region of Tolima (Colombia). The group was made up of three anthropologists, three psychiatrists, and a statistician. We asked the study's participants how they defined violence and which violent experience they identified as the most important in the lives, placing special emphasis on understanding their most significant personal narratives of violent experiences. In order to contrast it with how the subjects of the study defined violence, we created a methodological definition, which described "violence" as: "a type of social action whose most important characteristic is the intention of harming others or oneself." With this in mind, in the first phase of the work, we conducted over 300 structured interviews and, from those, we then selected life-stories about specific cases. Collecting statistical data during this first phase, then, was guided by the general principle of gaining an understanding of how people describe violent actions they have suffered, which we examined more deeply in the

qualitative analysis of the life stories. The methodological design sought to obtain information about the people's immediate interaction networks, thinking structures, motivations and assessments, and how these were all connected to the wider social structure. What do people understand as a violent experience? How do they narrate it? What relations can be established between these experiences and the general characteristic of the social structure in which they take place? These were some of the questions we attempted to answer.

Our first significant finding was that people privileged domestic experiences of violence above all others. Most of the interviewees were, at that point in time, over 20 years old and their appalling life-stories mostly described violent events from their childhoods involving their parents, which revealed a perdurable mental mark of the violent actions that they understood as severe abuse. In fact, most participants told detailed stories of parents responding to their acts of disobedience or to their impertinent answers by beating, insulting, and humiliating them as well as forcing them into confinement. Also, 70% of the women in the study told similar stories of abuse from their romantic partners in their adult lives.

In listening to these stories, we noticed two important things. First, people were visibly altered while conveying their experiences: they shivered, cried, nervously paced, and their voices changed. In other words, they experienced an affective shock while recalling the episodes of violence. Second, their emotional expressions also affected us, the members of the research team. We empathically connected with the interviewees, feeling pain and impotence as we recognized that we could not alleviate their suffering. This was an important finding, because it illustrated what psychological and sociological literature confirms—that violent experiences are profoundly emotional and durable. But still more important than this was that these emotional expressions led us to want to explore more carefully the emotional aspect of violence.

In addition to corporal manifestations of their emotions, people recounted detailed and vivid stories of the events involved and how they felt at the time of the event as well as in the present. To the question about how they explained why their parents treated them in a certain way, they gave elaborate responses that had a common, complex, rationalization: their parents loved them and they thought that this was the best way to correct their behavior and teach them not to disrespect their authority. This reasoning, however, was accompanied by expressions of anger, pain, and fear. Most of the interviewees affirmed that they were constantly

“nervous” and “sad,” as a consequence of what had happened to them. They also said that they avoided the contact with neighbors and other people from their community because they were distrustful of their reactions.

Finally, to our questions about institutions such as police, laws, and tribunals of justice, their answers expressed distrust. We understood, then, that their experiences of domestic violence made them construct a representation of authority, both domestic and civil, as arbitrary and frightening. Authority was not recognized for its persuasive force or protective capability, but only for its tendency to overreact and use violence at the smallest manifestation of disobedience. This, in turn, produced an attitude of general distrust of the social environment. The notions of correction and respect organized the cognitive frame of reference with which the interviewees sought to explain their suffering, but they were also indistinguishably infused with contradictory emotional evaluations, particularly, with pain, fear, and anger. Parents, the symbol of authority, were, thus, simultaneously the object of love, fear, and anger.

In this way, we could understand how these violent interactions were part of a complex socio-cultural model about the exercise of authority. This model is characterized by ambivalence, since in the name of paternal love, parents correct their children through the infliction of pain and secure their children’s respect by imposing force, which produced physical and emotional harm. These emotional valuations are contradictory and long-lasting; they leave painful scars on the psyches and bodies of those who experience them. Moreover, the household’s and society’s hierarchical structures are woven with the same affective and evaluative threads.

Very often experts and activists disregard subjective experiences of pain, fear, and love, or reduce them to structural features, particularly the precarious living conditions of those who are in low-income stratas. In the process, emotional experiences get flattened by unidimensional explications of social phenomena, which tend to appeal only to general conceptions of oppression and poverty. In these approaches, emotions are mere circumstantial byproducts, relegated to the corner of personal data, rather than constitutive elements of violent structures and actions. Given this conceptualization, the subjective impact of violent actions along with its psychological and affective effects on the development of social life are judged irrelevant. All these complex phenomena are disregarded in favor of a macro-structural analysis of patriarchal or social-class conditions.

Let me be clear, patriarchal and social-class conditions do comprise the wider structural framework of domestic and other forms of violence. But dissociating structure from social life operations and society from individuals prevents us from understanding emotions as powerful and active social structuring forces. As Bourdieu demonstrated with his notion of *habitus*—a notion that Norbert Elias had already coined in 1939—what we call “social structure” is not an empty and rigid entity, but rather, is a complex of forces, institutions, subjective acts, emotional attachments that all converge in social action.

To conclude this description of my first encounter with the field of emotions, I want to stress that these investigations conducted in Bogotá and Tolima showed the political projection of emotions that appeared in experiences of domestic violence, perpetrated by parents to children. These emotions negatively influence people’s performance in common life and social relations, because the arbitrary and violent exercise of authority is emotionally projected in a twofold mistrust: mistrust of all forms of authority, which questions their social legitimacy—namely, the symbolic bond on which these authorities exert their power—and mistrust of others, which accounts for a breach in all social relations and makes an adequate collective functioning difficult. More specific research is needed about the way in which culture and politics influence each other to produce this mistrust, a political emotion, as Martha Nussbaum would call it. In fact, “All societies [...] need to think about compassion for loss, anger at injustice, the limiting of envy and disgust in favor of inclusive sympathy” (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 2).

6 SECOND ENCOUNTER WITH EMOTIONS: *EMOTIVE CONFIGURATION* IN CRIMES OF PASSION

In the introduction to the book *Cultura y violencia: hacia una ética social del reconocimiento* (2019),⁴ I discussed the results of the research conducted between 1999 and 2001 on crimes between romantic partners in Brazil and Colombia. Unlike in the previous study, in this research emotions were an intrinsic part of the study’s objective from the outset, as it can be appreciated from its very name in ordinary language—“crimes of passion.” It was, then, necessary to engage with the ways in which

⁴ Culture and Violence: Toward a Social Ethics of Recognition in English.

emotions shape this type of violent action and how they are viewed and dealt with socially.

The study's central finding was that violence in this particular context was framed as what I called an emotive configuration. With this, I meant that crimes between romantic partners are not, as they are usually conceived, isolated and pathological acts—like an expression of excessive romantic love. Rather, they are actions that result from a complex tapestry of convictions and feelings, emotions and ideas about relationships, love, femininity, masculinity, and honor (Jimeno, 2004). I called this tapestry an emotive configuration because it has a particular, tangible, and operational role in the formation of sociocultural structures.

I approached the study through various cases in Brazil and Colombia. In particular, I examined three kinds of narratives—those of the individuals involved in the homicide (and sometimes also those of their relatives),⁵ those in the corresponding judicial files, and those on the broader juridical dispositions of each country. Based on these narratives, I reconstructed the context and dynamics of each relationship, the internal logic of the judicial processes, and their normative orientation. How did the three levels of the case—the subjective, the relational or intersubjective, and the institutional or normative—connect? What role did the emotions play in each of these levels? What oriented the narratives involved in each of them?

My study aimed at overcoming the traditional dichotomy between what is given, structural and objective, and the individuals' agency, their subjectivity, and interests.⁶ Thus, I adopted the point of view according to which the meaning of a fact or action makes part of the very constitution of social processes and structures. In the words of Marshall Sahlins (1985), an occurrence becomes an event when society gives it a particular meaning and there is a new relationship between the social structure and the particular occurrence. The ethnographic approach allows us to gain access to this meaning and understand the discursive practices and activities of social subjects involved (Jimeno, 2019a, p. 196). In other words, structure and every-day practice are connected in social life such that the relation

⁵I talked to 14 murderers in prisons both in Brasília and in Bogotá, to whom I asked the way in which the event occurred, the reasons they had for committing it, and their relationship with the victim.

⁶I follow in this regard the indications of Hans Medick (1987) in a provoking dialogue between anthropology and history. I have referred to this in more detail in the chapter, "El juego de las emociones: de la pasión al feminicidio" of my book *Crimen pasional: con el corazón en tinieblas* (Jimeno, 2019b).

between affective subjective meaning, social meaning, and normative, institutionalized expressions is precisely what anthropological interpretation seeks to unveil.

To this particular relation between the different socio-cultural levels that can be found in the murder of a romantic partner, I called emotive configuration. An emotive configuration is a configuration because the different social levels that give rise to this type of violent action overlap and intertwine in complex ways. This particular configuration is articulated by three symbolic axes: first, beliefs about love as a romantic bond and the practices related to them; second, beliefs about violence as an act of “madness”; and, third, the deeply rooted divide between reason and emotion. Each one of these axes has, as we saw at the beginning of this article, a traceable social history. They pertain to a modern European construction of the subject, of love relationships, of the social role of women, and of the constitution of nation-states. In this configuration of thoughts, convictions, feelings, and institutions, violence has the central function of ensuring the continuity of the patriarchal model of romantic relationships. In fact, gender hierarchies are sustained by forms of violence that range from explicit and brutal physical abuse, to disguised and veiled linguistic or symbolic denigration (Jimeno, 2004). Latin American cultural formations are hereditary of these symbolic axes and their normative constructions.⁷

The first axis relates to the romanticizing of love, which refers to the historical process of cultural sedimentation that produced the particular way of considering romantic relationships between adult men and women in contemporary Western societies. I will not detail here the process that Foucault revealed in *The Will to Knowledge* (1998), where he related institutions and discursive formations (family, sexuality, school, prison, psychiatric hospitals, etc.) with specific social and normative structures of control, in order to resituate interpersonal relationships. Neither can I delve here into the many socio-historical studies on the issue. But I should highlight Niklas Luhmann’s view that the high value given to individuality and self-control in the eighteenth century in Europe produced a new form of

⁷Elias and Foucault are, to my eyes, the most important thinkers of this social tapestry, with their conceptions about, on the one hand, power, discourse, and the subject, and, on the other hand, the correlation between the historical and political structure and the personal psyche, in what Elias called the civilization process.

intimate communication which constituted a new semantics of love and friendship (Luhmann, 1998).

Unlike the medieval courtly love, the modern code of conduct describes love through symbols, and the most important of these, which organizes their semantic structure, designate love as a passion. In this way, the idea appeared that a person who loves suffers some radical experience that she can neither modify nor explain. Although, as Luhmann affirms, there are very old references to passionate love and to love as a sickness or madness in literature and history, the shift that operated in modernity culminated in the generalization of this symbolic means of communication, which unfolds and manifests in both corporeal and intellectual processes, reorganizing sexuality and marriage. In this way, passionate love became the goal of personal self-fulfillment in the unity of sexuality, love, and marriage. These are the historical bases of the aspect of this emotive configuration that I have called the romanticizing of love.

To clarify, I am not referring here to romanticism as the cultural movement, which, of course, made important contributions to our inherited concept of love. Instead, I am referring to the particular meaning that became attached to the concept—its understanding as an indivisible and perdurable relationship, involving the full surrender of one to the other and the concealment of all sorts of differences and conflicts. The visible meaning of this concept is the idyllic representation of the bond, while its implicit meaning is the appropriation of one individual by the other (“she is mine, he is mine”), which is especially strong in male-female romantic relationships. In this context, infidelity, separation, or abandonment seem to be unthinkable, because they imply tearing up the ideal; and all sorts of cultural circuits, such as parental advice, literature, film, music, mass media, and social jokes, feed and adorn with many variations this idealized love, as a source of self-fulfillment or personal failure, as either happiness or tragedy. Despite the pervasiveness of this ideal, however, it is gendered in that it is permissive for men and punitive for women. And, it is at this point that the romanticizing of amorous relationships and violence meet, given the culturally established role according to which men ought to punish both real and imaginary breakups, and legitimately reaffirm their wounded pride through the use of violence, as most perpetrators and defense lawyers tirelessly repeat.

The second crucial element in the emotive configuration of the crime of passion, which is also pervasive in the use of violence in general, is the social assimilation of violence with a pathology or an act of “madness.”

This conception began to develop at the beginning of the twentieth century, with the European criminology studies that established a correlation between biological characteristics (physiognomy, inheritance, etc.) and criminal behavior (Jimeno, 2004, p. 197). “Madness,” as well as the presence of perturbing emotions, became a source of juridical non-responsibility. This pathologizing of violence, then, developed as yet another cultural mechanism to attenuate guilt for the transgression of the principle of not to kill, particularly when committed by men. It is easy to observe how in Brazil and Colombia, even today, many years after this research, between seven and eight out of ten crimes against a romantic partner are perpetrated by men. This shows the close connection between masculine identity and the use of violence, which continues in these societies today. The cultural and judicial protection of masculine pride continues to play a role, although more timidly expressed.

By understanding homicide of a romantic partner as a form of transitory madness—as it is usually discussed in tribunals of justice—significant aspects of the crime, like its high propensity to be committed by men, the particular history of the relationship, the detailed preparation of the crime, and the deliberate intention to murder are usually disregarded. In other words, considering this violent action as a pathology results in overlooking its motives, the specific emotional configuration in which it occurs, and the chain of interactions, social values, and types of environment that incite it.

The last component of the emotive configuration of this violent act is the dichotomy emotion versus reason. In the text above mentioned (Jimeno, 2019a), I argued that, throughout the twentieth century, Latin American societies witnessed a progressive positive valuation of the role of reason in human action, accompanied by the view that emotions are irrational, pre-social, and dangerous forces that should be dealt with differently according to the gender of the agent. This higher valuation of reason over emotion rests on the broader modern representation of the subject, understood as only responsible for his or her acts insofar as they are done while in possession of their mental faculties. According to this conception, reason and emotions are separate compartments and, while reason represents civilization, emotions reflect what is primitive in human beings. This conception led to changes in the judicial codification of guilt in Latin America around mid-twentieth century that was essential to leaving pride or honor behind as the nucleus of violence against romantic partners and, instead, situating it in the irrationality of emotional life (Jimeno, 2004).

The replacing of the concept of offended honor with that of emotional exaltation as attenuating factor in the penal codes of Latin American countries brought about a legal resource to lessen the perpetrator's responsibility in this type of crime (Jimeno, 2004). Honor is a bond between an individual and the social group mediated by the respectability the group assigns to him or her, according to certain traditional patterns. As such, it depends in great measure on the opinion others have of the person in question. Given this, a culture based on honor relates social status and personal virtues. In this way, honor is not only an abstract code but a mechanism for organizing hierarchies of class, gender, race, and work (Lipsett-Rivera, 1998).

In contrast with a code of honor, the modern penal legislation places responsibility on the individual subject for his or her actions, such that if they are in their right mind, of legal age, and do not suffer mental disorders, they are seen as responsible for their own actions. In this context, emotions are classified as a type of mental alteration that influences the attribution of responsibility. Emotions interfere with reason—the mark of the modern, masculine individual subject—and, consequently, they are seen as attenuating factors. In this way, the perpetrator of a crime of passion no longer needs to resort to the notion of honor or to any other motive, but only to the abrupt feeling of anger, fear, or jealousy, in order to obtain this legal benefit. Moreover, since emotions are seen as residing in the individual self, rather than being culturally or socially constructed, the jury need only determine how the crime occurred according to forensic proofs and what the psychological state of the perpetrator was based on the technical report of the forensic psychiatry (Jimeno, 2004).

More recently, judicial changes have taken place in almost all Latin American countries such that what used to be called a “crime of passion,” is now understood as “femicide” in order to incorporate gender into the definition of the crime. These changes reflect greater ones in the symbolic construction of heterosexual romantic relationships and in the structure of gender relations. But how much have the basic elements of this emotive configuration changed? Judicial transformations reveal substantial rearrangements of social norms, both those formalized in laws and those that are informally inscribed in moral codes and behavioral expectations. However, the cultural changes that attempt to undermine gender hierarchies in heterosexual romantic relationships have not produced the desired effects and the central characteristics of this form of violence still hold. In the majority of cases, murder continues to be perpetrated by men who

want to punish women for abandonment, break ups, infidelity, or their refusal to perform loyal, patient, and submissive behavior. Emotions, or even better, the emotional outbursts that define violence as acts of “madness,” continue to be the main pretext for men to avoid legal responsibility for violent crimes against their female romantic partners. Perpetrators and defense lawyers still hide their clients behind emotions of anger and jealousy, which the law still considers motives that reduce penalties. Besides this, the representation of the act as a tragedy that tears up love in the midst of an emotional whirlwind, keeps producing a relatively benevolent attitude in the jury members, and, with this, the fact that the violent act sought to punish a feminine transgression of the established rules for a romantic relationship remains hidden.

Many still argue that violence is guided by the old opposition between economy and culture, substructure and superstructure, or structural violence and subjective violence. I disagree with this contention. This view leaves out cultural configuration processes that are important sources of action—that is, that relate to a particular individual’s deep motives to commit a crime—and turn the subject into a mere toy of economic conditions and forces: the substrate of a reductive conception of humanity. In contrast, my analysis sustains that the main emotional components of this emotive configuration operate as both cognitions—in the sense that they are means to evaluate the environment and orient action—and as moral commitments, either with the duty not to kill or with its defiance according to motivations that are gender-based.

7 THIRD ENCOUNTER WITH EMOTIONS: EMOTIONAL COMMUNITIES IN RECONSTRUCTING SOCIAL LIFE

In 2008 I began studying cultural processes at stake in both the subjective and collective reconstruction of groups of victims of political violence. In particular, I worked with a pluri-ethnic community from southwest Colombia (Cauca Department) who suffered a massacre perpetrated by a “paramilitary” group in 2001, whose purpose was manifold: to punish the community’s presumed complicity with guerrilla groups, to get the guerrillas out of the area, and to hijack the cocaine outlet to the Pacific. The study’s objective was attempting to answer these questions:⁸ How did the

⁸Two anthropology students from Universidad Nacional de Colombia were co-researchers in this research, Ángela Castillo and Daniel Varela, today in process of receiving their PhDs in the USA.

process that led to the massacre take place? How could the massacre be understood? What made the social reconstruction of these groups possible? What happened with the individuals who survived the event? Again, we focused on the narratives of people that described their actions in response of events that deeply changed their lives.

Our fieldwork in conjunction with both documental and visual data confirmed the identification of an affective, political, and cultural repertoire held by families that, instead of returning to the place of the massacre, decided to create a new community far away, in the town of Timbío (at the center of the region of Cauca). As centerpieces of this repertoire, we identified three core efforts. First, their struggle to obtain social recognition for the injustice occurred, and, hence, their self-identification as victims of violence. Second, their effort to regain the main elements of their ethnic identity. Third, the construction of a political-emotional bond, to which we referred as emotional communities.

In April 2001, a paramilitary group called Bloque Calima forced the inhabitants of Alto Río Naya to flee from the region. Thousands of people went to lowland settlements, and, in response, organizations gradually appeared that reclaimed justice and care for the victims. In this process, a group of 57 families—some were peasants and traders, others had Nasa ascendancy—refused to return to their place of origin and demanded new territories as part of the restitution of their rights. While they waited for resettlement, they spent three years living in temporary refugee camps, and undertook a new process of social reconstruction, wherein they expanded their demand for ethnic identification as Nasa people to include a request for compensation of human rights violations resulting from the massacre. They organized, first, in a committee of indigenous and peasant victims of the massacre of 2001 and then as an indigenous assembly (Cabildo Indígena), and were able to obtain the solidarity of indigenous regional organizations such as CRIC⁹ and ACIN.¹⁰

Through ethnographic work, we were able to observe the refined ethnic and cultural policy of the indigenous Organization of Cauca, which involved appropriating the concept of a “victim of violence” who deserved justice and of reparation. Clearly, the ideological, organizational, and

⁹ Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (Indigenous Regional Council of Cauca).

¹⁰ Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del Norte del Cauca (Association of Indigenous Assemblies of the North of Cauca, which is a member of CRIC).

affective aspects of the indigenous movements of Cauca (and of other social organisms that use the category of victim to make public their losses and reaffirm their right to “truth, justice and reparation”) played an important role in this case. We witnessed part of the organizational process of the new community, who received a new territory in 2004, and named it “Flourishing Land” (Kite Kiwe) in Nasa Yuwe. Their social organization was based on an indigenous assembly (Cabildo Indígena) elected annually and they began to undertake their work in both communitarian and individual ways. Their political and identity symbols fostered a common Plan of Life, which functioned as the guide of their collective work. They also founded a bilingual and bicultural school and actively participated in political demonstrations and meetings of the indigenous organization Regional Indigenous Counsel of Cauca (Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca—CRIC).

Adopting the concept of victim within the larger legal context of the violation of human rights made their active interpellation to the Colombian government to obtain truth, justice, reparation, and non-repetition possible. It also helped them connect with other national and international victim organizations, and thus, to become literate in the language of human rights. In this way, their active demands and testimonies in courts of justice achieved condemnatory sentences for some of the perpetrators of the massacre who were part of the Bloque Calima paramilitary group, Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-Defenses of Colombia). Some of these sentences became part of the 72 that, up to 2010, have been issued by tribunals of justice under the Justice and Peace Law (2005).

The Kite Kiwe families, and the majority of those that returned to “el Naya,” benefited from economic reparations. Beyond this, in their demand for a collective territory, Kite Kiwe were granted additional lands from the original agreement and the afro-communities of “el Naya” were also given a collective title. Notwithstanding, there are still remaining reparations to be made, among them, legal punishment for those who acted as powerful instigators of the massacre.

Finally, I want to highlight the decisive impulse that the construction of a collective narrative gave to the individual and social reconstruction of this group. This narrative served as both incentive and effect of the process. It consisted in staging the massacre in their commemorating events before various local, regional, and national institutions, as well as international organization for human rights. In this way, it became an important part of their political acts demanding reparation (Jimeno, 2019a; Jimeno,

Varela, & Castillo, 2019). The public performance of their stories of pain, resistance, and reclaiming of justice involved dramatic reenactments of the massacre by school children, the silent exposition of the victims' possessions, songs, anthems, balloons, and displaying colorful papers, statistical and historical charts, banners, flags, and flowers. In a word, a diverse scenography was deployed to enhance both their testimonies and political demands.

These commemorations, as well as other special events, like victim's demonstrations, made it possible to link the massacre of "el Naya" with a larger process of remembering, in which certain characters and episodes of this group's historical struggle became iconic figures of resistance that continue to illuminate new paths for many communities to this day. In fact, this discursive performance allowed for their particular interpretation of the violent events to reach beyond their own community to other rural communities, State agencies, international organisms, and the general public, and invited them to feel solidarity with the claims of the victims through emotional identification. This active and participative process fostered ties within the community and with other audiences. I called this identification an emotional community, a concept inspired in Max Weber. In our analysis, these communities aim at helping the victims not to become fixated in their pain or trauma, by voicing and sharing their experiences of pain and loss, and by understanding them as injustices that ought to be repaired. Their narratives activate an affective identification, which is the basis of political and civic participation, and in which processes of subjective healing and social action interrelate.

We can argue, then, that the category of "victim" has been used in Colombia in recent decades to affirm civility and advance political struggles aimed at the recognition and reparation of the harm inflicted. In the case of Kite Kiwe, this category was structured by testimonial and reclaiming narratives that were inscribed into a long-term memory. These performed narratives offered an emotional language that communicated the truth of violent facts to different publics within broader civil society, and in this way helped the members of the communities to form important identity bonds and to transform themselves into political and strategic collectivities sustained by the moral principles of repudiation of violence. Emotional communities turn solidarity with victims into collective political action that seeks restoration of their human rights and dignity, and create an ethics of recognition.

Nineteen years after the massacre, Kite Kiwe has established itself as an indigenous territory and assembly (*cabildo*), achieved a slow, but secure, economic recovery and improved living conditions, and its people feel emotionally stronger. However, new community leaders have had to endure serious challenges, like coping with the murder of one of the young founders of the community and being the object of many threats from crime organizations and illicit drugs' traffickers in Cauca. But they see these difficulties as part of the road ahead.

* * *

To close this chapter, I can say that in these three encounters with emotions that I have described, I have studied violent actions from the voice and practice of the individuals involved—either as victims of a massacre, of parents, or as jealous partners—in order to situate their place in the larger socio-cultural structure. In this way, the often hidden connections between individuals and learned cultural schemes (such as the arbitrary exercise of authority in the household), the prevailing violent models of masculinity, the victimization of political opponents, and the role assigned to emotions can be revealed. Consequently, we can appreciate how violence is immersed in social hierarchies and the role of emotions in the particular dynamics of violent interactions. I learned in these encounters that, far from and being secluded in the personal psyche, emotions are part of the social tapestry; emotions have a historical relationship with cultural formations in modern society.

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