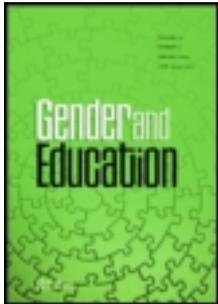


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### Tronto's notion of privileged irresponsibility and the reconceptualisation of care: implications for critical pedagogies of emotion in higher education

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## Tronto's notion of *privileged irresponsibility* and the reconceptualisation of care: implications for critical pedagogies of emotion in higher education

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This article takes on some of care theorist Joan Tronto's ideas on care and responsibility and asks what implications they have for critical pedagogies in higher education. The authors argue that Tronto's political ethics of care framework enriches the transformative potential of critical pedagogies, because it helps expose how power and emotion operate through (ir)responsibility. In particular, Tronto's notion of 'privileged irresponsibility' is analysed in relation to the gendered and emotional ideologies and practices that are constructed discursively and materially. It is argued that critical pedagogies of emotion grounded in Tronto's political ethics of care provide the concepts and openings to critically explore the emotions arising from failing to recognise different teachers' and students' needs and from engaging in practices of privileged irresponsibility. Also, critical pedagogies of emotion encourage students and educators to be attentive to their own emotional positions and practices with regard to caring responsibilities and (gendered and other) privileged irresponsibilities.

**Keywords:** privileged irresponsibility; emotion; critical pedagogy; Joan Tronto; care; higher education

### Introduction

Since the 1980s, feminist writers have alerted our attention to caregiving as a gendered form of labour (see e.g. Collins 1991; Finch and Mason 1993; Fisher and Tronto 1990; Glenn 1987, 2010; hooks 1984; Noddings 1984, 2002; Waerness 1990). Among these writers, Tronto's (1990, 1993, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2012a, 2012b, 2013) work is unique in that she has developed the political ethics of care as a theoretical framework, and more latterly, as a framework for democratic care. She sees care as both practice and a disposition – as an activity through which we maintain and repair our world so that we can flourish. Particularly, since her early work in the 1990s, Tronto has concentrated on the notion of 'privileged irresponsibility'. It is this notion of *privileged irresponsibility*, which focuses on how those receiving caring services for their needs do

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not acknowledge that they are dependent on these services in order to live well in the world, that constitutes the major focus of this article. In particular, we explore how the concept of privileged irresponsibility helps us reconsider the notion of care, particularly in terms of the implications for critical pedagogies of emotion in the context of higher education.

The concept ‘privileged irresponsibility’ was first used by Tronto in 1990 in her address entitled *Chilly Racists* to the American Political Science Association. In considering the power that racism confers on a majority group, she coined this phrase to refer to the ways in which the majority group fail to acknowledge the exercise of power, thus maintaining their taken-for-granted positions of privilege. In her later work (2002, 2012a, 2012b, 2013), she views democracy as a system where caring responsibilities are allocated to some social groups (e.g. women, immigrants), while it allows others (e.g. men, majority groups) to ‘simultaneously rely on and disavow’ (Plumwood 2002, 4) the work of these groups, or in Tronto’s terms to exercise privileged irresponsibility. This view of democracy and care helps educators critique the narrow moral and political frame that underlies conventional divisions of labour including teaching itself and traditional caring roles. Most importantly, Tronto’s political ethics of care enables critical educators to be cognisant of and consequently to delve into the ‘difficult’ emotional knowledge arising from practices of privileged irresponsibility within or beyond the context of education – for example, feelings of moral indignation when caregivers are treated unjustly or inhumanely; or emotions of guilt and shame when care-receivers realise that they have been engaging in privileged irresponsibility.

Caregiving work that women and other less advantaged groups of people are engaged in frequently goes unnoticed, and is consistently undervalued or devalued in terms of material rewards and status. Women are still the majority in traditionally gendered and care-based careers such as teaching, nursing, and domestic care work and service and continue to carry the load of care in domestic and community contexts (e.g. Budlender 2007; Esplen 2009; Parrenas 2001; Razavi and Hassim 2006; Razavi and Staab 2012). In higher education and in schools in many contexts, women, particularly those who occupy marginal positions due to their misrecognised status (such as poor, non-citizen, Black women), engage in devalued practices, while men tend to dominate in management and/or research positions (see Bozalek and Carolissen 2012).

In this article, we take on some of Tronto’s ideas on care and responsibility and ask what implications they have for critical pedagogies of emotion at the higher education level. ‘Critical pedagogies of emotion’ (Zembylas 2013) refer to the pedagogies that engage students and educators in a critical interrogation of the intersections among power, emotion, and praxis in society and education. Thus, we argue that Tronto’s political ethics of care framework enriches the transformative potential of critical pedagogies of emotion in higher education, because it helps educators expose how power and emotion operate through responsibility – that is, how responsibility is connected with the meanings and practices of power and the place of emotion in caring practices. For example, critical pedagogies of emotions raise and address questions such as: how do feelings of ‘disgust’ towards the ‘other’ (e.g. migrant), often concealed under false claims of empathy and caring, objectify and sentimentalise the other? How do claims of empathy and caring in fact perpetuate privileged irresponsibility and social inequalities? Working from the assumption that critical pedagogy (Giroux 2004; Kincheloe 2005; McLaren 2003) in diverse and ever-changing societies must engage the terrain

of difficult emotional knowledge in ways that have not been sufficiently addressed by the critical pedagogy discourse so far, we explore the political ethics of care as a valuable contribution towards this effort (see also Ellsworth 1989; Seibel Trainor 2002; Worsham 2001; Yoon 2005).

### Tronto's definition of care and its relevance for critical education

It is now 20 years since Tronto's (1993) book *Moral Boundaries* was published, in which she argues for the moral arguments of care to be included in a political context. Our paper focuses on Tronto's recent work, through which she has more fully developed her ideas of democracy and citizenship in relation to care. These ideas can be used as a normative framework to judge the adequacy of care in education policies and practices from critical perspectives (see Bozalek and Carolissen 2012). But before discussing the relevance of these ideas for critical education, we briefly go back to the original definition of care.

In *Moral Boundaries*, Tronto and Fisher defined caring as follows:

On the most general level, we suggest caring be viewed 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. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web. (Fisher and Tronto 1990, 41)

Although some authors have found the definition to be too broad (see e.g. Groenhout 2004; Held 2006), we find this definition to be very useful for thinking about care in the context of critical education for a number of reasons.

Firstly, it is inclusive of self-care, which we regard as essential for thinking about gender and education, but which other definitions of care either tend to minimise or to omit altogether. Caregivers, such as teachers and others involved in hands-on caregiving processes can be so focused on others that they do not pay enough attention to making sure that their own needs are cared for. So, for example, in higher education, it is often women who are engaging in meeting students' needs while men get to the important business of publishing (Bozalek and Boughey 2012). As Tronto (2012a) reminds us, it is important to be self-reflexive about our own needs for care and ensure that the self not be subsumed in the caring relationship. Monchinski (2010) also comments that, 'to fail to care for oneself impairs one's capacity to function as a fully responsible moral agent' (98). Importantly, being self-reflexive about our own needs for care is a deeply emotional process that highlights the entanglement between reflection, emotion, and care of the self (Holmes 2010).

Secondly, the definition is important in that, unlike other more limited definitions of care, it extends care beyond human beings to incorporate the environment. This means that it is not only human animals but non-human animals as well as the social, natural, and built environment that are covered by this 'post-humanist' perspective which decentres the human and incorporates the values of an enlarged sense of community including environmental and ecological connections (Braidotti 2011, 2013; Wolfe 2010). For example, Woodward (forthcoming) writes about critical pedagogies of emotion and discomfort in relation to the interconnections between animals and human suffering in post-apartheid South Africa. Feminist pedagogies, like the ethic of care, allow us to see interconnections between human and non-human animals as well as between humans and the environment more generally (Plumwood 2002).

This is important in developing imaginative and inclusive ways of thinking about relationality, connectivism, and attachments (Braidotti 2013) in pedagogical contexts.

Thirdly, the definition is attractive to us, as it views care as an ongoing social, political, and emotional practice – referring to Marx’s notion of humans as species beings engaging in life and labour activities (Tronto 2012a). In other words, care is not just a disposition, as some authors have referred to it, but is a laborious activity which is ‘crucial for human life’ (Tronto 2000, 267), and involves several aspects including thought, emotion, action, and work. Seeing care as a social, political, and emotional practice means also that, as a practice, it is constituted within a specific context and therefore it cannot be simply viewed as a particular gender or race’s responsibility to be carried out. This understanding of care is relevant to writings in critical pedagogy (e.g. Ellsworth 1989; Yoon 2005) that highlight how some caring practices may be superficial and sentimental, if they do not challenge inequalities. Therefore, Tronto’s political ethics of care is particularly valuable for those educators who want to interrogate the intersections among power, emotion, and praxis in society and education.

The fourth aspect of the definition which is important is the idea that care involves repairing ‘our world’ in order to live in it ‘as well as possible’ – this incorporates a notion of human flourishing. Care is thus seen as essential for human and environmental survival and flourishing. Critical education is infused with notions of social justice which see human flourishing as its ultimate goal (e.g. see Nussbaum 2010). This definition of care, then, is very much aligned with the vision of those critical pedagogies which emphasise practices of ‘how to live a better life by embracing rather than glossing over feelings’ (Cvetkovich 2012, 5). ‘Glossing over’, says Cvetkovich, implies a superficial engagement with the emotional complexities of living practices such as those of caring and responsibility; what is required is a much deeper and emotionally challenging engagement that redefines our relationship with the world.

Finally, the definition sees care as a general activity which includes collective care, rather than a dyadic one existing between two people – a caregiver and a dependent care-receiver – which Carol Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (2002) envisaged as being emblematic of the caring relationship. Tronto (2012a) observes that caring very rarely happens only between a single caregiver and a receiver, but is more complex, even in the space of the family, where multiple people are caring for each other. In the context of education, Fisher and Tronto (1990) broader definition of care provides a perspective which sees value in collaborative teaching and learning practices (Engelman 2009). This understanding of care is important for critical education because it acknowledges both the relational and political aspects of caring responsibilities. For example, the idea of the political ethics of care implies not seeing the educator as expert but engaging with many and different sources of authority in epistemic communities that are defined by shared meanings of the world – meanings that challenge hegemonic views on care (Collins 1991; hooks 1994).

### **Tronto’s phases and elements of a care ethic**

Tronto’s (1993) earlier work is important for its elaboration on four moral elements associated with the different phases of care. These phases and moral elements of care have been used as an evaluative framework to make judgements about the adequacy of caring practices in social policy and other fields of practice (see Bozalek 2011a; Sevenhuijsen et al. 2006). In her current work, Tronto (2013) has added a

fifth phase and element of care, which we include in our explication here of the phases and their relevance for education, especially at the higher education level. The phases and their corresponding moral elements are as follows:

- *Caring about* – noticing people’s needs and recognising that there is a need for care to be addressed in the first place. The corresponding moral element is *attentiveness*. The antithesis of attentiveness would be ignorance which Tronto (1993) views as an active state, rather than a benign neglect, since the ignorance of needs serves to reproduce the status quo and maintain conditions of inequality (Tronto 2012a). For example, in education, inequalities are maintained by ignoring the needs of differently positioned institutions and individuals (e.g. see Bozalek and Boughey 2012 for a discussion of how these forms of ignorance play out in the higher education sector in South Africa).
- *Caring for* – once the need is recognised, then a person or group of people need to take responsibility to ensure that people’s needs are met and determining how to respond to the need. This goes beyond obligation and duty, focusing on what is done or not done in a particular situation (Tronto 1993). The corresponding moral element is *responsibility*. In her more recent work, Tronto (2012a, 2013) has given a great deal of attention to thinking about the importance of responsibility in relation to democracy and care. Other authors writing about care and social justice such as Walker (1998, 2006), Young (2011) and Esquith (2010) have also written extensively about responsibility, and their ideas are also of relevance for education. For example, Monchinski (2010) provides a useful application of Walker’s and Tronto’s ideas in critical educational theory. We will elaborate on responsibility and privileged irresponsibility later in the article, as we see these moral elements as being crucial to understandings of care ethic in education.
- *Caregiving* – once a need has been recognised, someone has to do the actual hands-on work of caring for people. The corresponding moral element to caregiving is *competence*. As Tronto (2012a) points out, competence is not just a technical consideration, it is also a moral quality. Learned incompetence can be a way of avoiding menial caring tasks; for example, a man can claim incompetence at washing dishes so that it is easier for women in the household to do the task than to tolerate the incompetence. Or a male teacher can claim or assume incompetence at dealing with feminised tasks such as engaging in the pastoral aspects of school life or higher education. Competence also assumes that the person has the knowledge and resources to do a good job. This is very important in the field of education, as it is usually those who are privileged in the first place that have access to resources, and have, for example, low staff–student ratios, so that they can do their jobs competently.
- *Care-receiving* – responding to the care that is given by the caregiver. The moral element here is *responsiveness*. Responsiveness entails assessing whether care has been effective or not. In education, for example, it would be seeing whether students have managed to gain the attributes and knowledge that they set out to acquire. Caring entails continued responsiveness as once a need is met the conditions are changed and there are always more needs. This can be equated with lifelong learning where learning is a continuous process.
- *Caring with* – this is the fifth phase of care which Tronto (2012a) has recently added. It refers to the reiteration of the process of care, where habits and patterns

of care emerge through time and where the moral qualities of *trust* and *solidarity* are developed. Conditions of trust are created where reliance can be developed through the caring practices of others. The moral qualities of trust and solidarity are important in the field of education, as they can be used as points of departure for struggles against different practices of privileged irresponsibility.

The descriptions above incorporate five phases of care – all of which are seen as important to judge the adequacy of public care, citizenship, and democracy. Tronto reminds us that in order for good care to take place, it would need both each one of these phases and all of these phases to be done well – this is what Tronto (1993) refers to as ‘the integrity of care’. These phases of care inevitably involve conflict as not all needs can be met adequately and imbalances in one phase would impact on another (Tronto 2001) – for example, a caregiver or a teacher may be given inadequate resources by management and may not be able to perform her/his work competently.

While acknowledging the importance of all of the phases of care and their corresponding moral elements of care for the integrity of the caring process, we wish to foreground the second moral element of care – that of *responsibility* in the following section of this article, as it is this element to which Tronto (2012a, 2012b, 2013) has turned most of her attention to in her considerations of democracy, citizenship, and care. After considering responsibility, and the ways in which responsibility is avoided through privileged irresponsibility or what Tronto (2013) calls ‘passing’, in the final part of our article we discuss, ways in which privileged irresponsibility can be contested through critical pedagogies of emotion in higher education.

### **Responsibility and privileged irresponsibility**

Both those involved in public caregiving and those involved in unpaid, often invisible caregiving in the household and within global neoliberal frameworks more broadly, are seldom recognised for their contributions to society (Bozalek, forthcoming; Razavi 2007; Razavi and Staab 2008, 2012; Reddy et al., forthcoming). Attention has been directed to the way in which normative gender roles and the gendered division of labour, intersecting with other forms of inequality such as class, citizenship, age and ‘race’, serve in contemporary global capitalist contexts to bolster existing inequalities, within societies and in global contexts. Thus migrant women workers from poorer countries fill the care gaps in wealthier countries (Bakan and Stasiolus 1997; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002; Parreñas 2001; Tronto 2013) and in many countries this continues to reproduce the ultra-exploitability of poor women, while allowing middle-class parents to be released from their own care responsibilities to pursue more lucrative economic activities (Ally 2009; Bozalek 2010; Cock 1980; Fish 2006; King 2007; Sevenhuijsen et al. 2006).

Much of the work of care has historically, and in many contemporary contexts, been relegated to marginalised groups of people based on social markers of gender, race, class, and so on. Another way in which responsibility is avoided by powerful groups of people is by absenting themselves from discussions about responsibilities. The continued erasure of the hidden costs for certain groups of people who across global contexts, carry the burden of care, often displacing responsibility from both the state and those privileged, reflects in Tronto’s term ‘privileged irresponsibility’, where those receiving caring services for their needs do not acknowledge that they are dependent on these services in order to live well in the world. In her latest work, Tronto calls

this getting a ‘pass’ out of responsibility, which is similar to what she means by privileged irresponsibility.

Privileged irresponsibility arises from ‘the unbalanced nature of caring roles and duties in our society’ and means that ‘[t]hose who are relatively privileged are granted by that privilege simply to ignore certain forms of hardships that they do not face’ Tronto (1993, 120). Another way of looking at this are situations where the services of the other are used to serve the privileged person’s needs while dependency is denied, and the contributions of the caregiver are trivialised and ignored (Bozalek 2011b). Responsibility, in the way that Tronto (1993) describes it in her second phase of care, requires that we actually acknowledge that there is a problem that must be taken care of. Privileged irresponsibility means that the needs of the other are ignored or denied. This is particularly so when it comes to the actual hands-on work of caregiving.

As Tronto (2013) notes, care responsibilities are bound up with gender and privileged irresponsibility and are powerfully shaped by dominant constructions of masculinity and the binaries of gender and also race. Drawing on Connell’s (1987, 1995, 2000) notion of hegemonic masculinities, widely theorised and debated (see Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Hearn et al. 2012), Tronto (2013) argues that although men can and do care, ‘the *image* persists that what it means to be a man is not to care, or, at least, not to care well’ (68, original emphasis). Critical men’s studies bring a valuable feminist lens to unpack social constructions of masculinity and how men and boys perform masculinities (see Connell 1987, 1995; Hayward and Mac an Ghail 1995; Hearn 1987; Kimmel 1987). Such studies may assist in unpacking the complex enmeshment of privileged irresponsibility with hegemonic masculinities, that is, those forms of masculinity that are idealised, normative, or natural in a particular society or cultural context. Although researchers in critical men’s studies foreground the historical and contextual nature of hegemonic masculinities, as well as their multiplicity and fluidity, the conflation of masculinity with notions of strength, resilience, and independence persist, and is in opposition to vulnerability and care seeking. In this respect, contemporary empirical research with boys, men, and care continues to highlight the way in which care remains feminised, presenting particular challenges for boys and men in giving and receiving care (e.g. Cross and Bagilhole 2002; Davies and Eagle 2010; Morrell and Jewkes, forthcoming; Shefer, forthcoming; Simpson 2005).

Tronto (2012a) describes a number of ways in which privileged groups get to excuse themselves from responsibility:

- *protection* – this comes from a feudal view of men who see themselves as protectors of women. Although the protector presents a more benign view of masculinity, protecting the vulnerable from harm, the logic of masculinist protectionism also presupposes feminine subordination and deference, as well as an inclination to service the protector’s needs. Policing can, according to Tronto (2002, 141), be seen as a form of masculinist ‘non-caring’ care or a form of protection (Tronto 2013).
- *production* – the privileged groups are involved in the important work of acquiring economic resources and thus argue that they should be exempted from caring responsibilities. This is a more prevalent rationalisation in neoliberal times.
- *caring for my own* – this constitutes a parochial version of care which justifies a lack of social responsibility by claiming that one’s close relatives need one’s

attention first. As Tronto (2002, 136) notes privatisation or caring for one's own

creates the conditions for an 'epistemology of ignorance' around the exploitation. In general, people do not like to view their activities as exploitative toward others. The only way, often, to engage in such exploitation, then is to remain wilfully ignorant of the damage one is doing to others.

- *personal responsibility* – this assumes that we all have the same opportunities to take care or not, and if you do not have these opportunities it is because you have not taken them up. Personal responsibility embodies the moral values of the neo-liberal position as, for example, extolled by George Bush (Tronto 2013). It holds that we are all personally responsible for the circumstances in which we find ourselves and that it is our own responsibility to care for our well-being and that of our children and our communities. Tronto (2013) sees the notion of personal responsibility as anti-democratic as it takes no account of the impact of historical inequalities and exclusions on public life.
- *charity* – people claim that they are already fulfilling their caring responsibilities by giving to charities of their own choice, which is much better for them and if they were forced to join with others this would be a moral harm.

Tronto (2013) reiterates the point that privileged irresponsibility allows those who benefit from being in superior positions in a hierarchical system to remain oblivious about the part they play themselves in maintaining the system. This ignorance or misperception of how caring is unbalanced in society will not change unless the whole nature of social caring and its centrality to our lives changes. Those who are privileged will continue to rationalise their position by maintaining that everybody is benefiting from it; wives benefit from their husband's being the primary breadwinners, domestic workers benefit from receiving a salary, no matter how paltry it is and so on. In educational settings, female teachers benefit from working with young children on the assumption that this is their vocation as women. Breaking these inequalities will require a sense of our collective social responsibility for care.

### **The potential of Tronto's political ethics of care for critical pedagogies of emotion in higher education**

What would critical education look like from the perspective of Tronto's political ethics of care in the context of higher education? In this last part of the article, we make an attempt to sketch some ideas that address the implications of Tronto's political ethics of care in the context of critical pedagogies of emotion in higher education. First, it needs to be clarified that the term 'critical pedagogies of emotion' has originated in the context of exploring the role of emotion in critical pedagogy discourses (Zembylas 2013). As it is explained, some of the existing literature in critical pedagogy has been critiqued, particularly in the way it has tended to overlook or downplay the strong emotional investments of difficult knowledge (e.g. trauma, oppression, racism). Therefore, it is suggested that critical pedagogical spaces are needed for understanding the entanglements among emotion, structures, and inequalities in more nuanced terms.

As noted earlier, privileged irresponsibility essentially involves a 'violation of all the moral elements of care: the harm of inattentiveness, irresponsibility, incompetence and unresponsiveness' (Tronto 2000, 270). We can also now add lack of trust and

solidarity to the list of violations (Tronto 2012a). Where there is privileged irresponsibility, some groups of people are obliged to pay a lot of attention to their caring responsibilities, while others can afford to ignore these responsibilities, at the same time as taking it for granted that their needs will be serviced (Tronto 2000, 269). In the context of higher education, for example, this is shown in the ways in which inequalities are maintained by ignoring the needs of different institutions and individuals (Bozalek and Boughey 2012).

We further argue that the harm of inattentiveness, irresponsibility, incompetence, and unresponsiveness is also deeply emotional and thus it has to be attended to. Critical pedagogies of emotion grounded in Tronto's political ethics of care provide the concepts and openings to critically explore the emotions arising from failing to recognise different teachers' and students' needs and from engaging in practices of privileged irresponsibility. For example, consider the emotion of moral indignation experienced by female teachers who are treated badly or unfairly by those who exercise privileged irresponsibility (e.g. other colleagues or students). Tronto points out that people who are the beneficiaries of privileges do not recognise the privileges or the emotional consequences on caregivers as a result of ignoring others' needs as well as their own privilege. Without deliberately doing so, care-receivers may feel no responsibility for their own privilege or the lack of privilege of others. More importantly, when women caregivers express their indignation of being treated unjustly, men care-receivers dismiss this anger as irrational, thus rationalising women's subordination (Bartky 1990; Campbell 1994, 1997; Spelman 1989). Critical pedagogies of emotion enriched by Tronto's ideas can assist educators and students in higher education to examine how caregivers construct anger, what the consequences of such feelings are in everyday life, and how privileged irresponsibility may be legitimated and maintained by care-receivers' dismissal of such feelings.

Furthermore, grounding critical pedagogies of emotion in Tronto's political ethics of care links the concepts of responsibility, power, and emotion to social and economic structures and socially constructed identities that shape how individuals and groups make ethical and political decisions to allocate caring responsibilities. Exploring the emotional consequences of privileged irresponsibility for different social groups offers the potential to develop critical conceptions of responsibility that urge us to reconsider existing policies and practices of care. For example, consider the emotions of shame (as a social response) and guilt (as a personal response), when care-receivers acknowledge their privileged irresponsibility; these feelings can be paralysing and unproductive (Kosofsky Sedgwick, Frank, and Alexander 1995; Probyn 2005). However, critical pedagogies of emotion provide the space to explore questions such as: How does the ideological role of schools and other societal institutions seek to eradicate shame via an erasure of histories of privileged irresponsibility and the sanitisation of wounds inflicted on marginalised groups? In which ways can critical pedagogy address these wounds as well as the paralysing aspects of shame and guilt through a different understanding of shame, a potentially *productive* one? (e.g. see Zembylas 2007). A productive engagement with shame and guilt, for instance, would be one that urges those who recognise the exercise of privileged irresponsibility to use those emotions as points of departure for critical reflection and renewed action towards relational responsibility and attentiveness. In a higher educational setting this would imply a critical and sustained engagement of educators and students with such feelings and their consequences and the exploration of alternative kinds of action that would not be paralysed by the difficult knowledge of the past (e.g. oppression, discrimination,

racism). Instead, the vision would be to create spaces and practices of transformative action that could interrogate the emotional consequences of privileged irresponsibility.

Furthermore, with regard to personal responsibility (Tronto 2012a), critical reflection on the emotions of privileged irresponsibility provokes educators and students at the higher education level to critique neoliberal notions that they are personally responsible for the circumstances in which they find themselves, especially in situations of inequality and exclusion. Those who seem to take more personal responsibility in the higher education classroom regarding their academic or school work, might be those who are well off and unencumbered with other caring responsibilities. A critique of personal responsibility (what Tronto refers to as a neoliberal version of care) allows one to see the danger of seeing responsibility as residing merely in the individual. This idea does not dismiss personal responsibility altogether, but rather it contextualises it within relational encounters and political circumstances. Critical pedagogies of emotion problematise the link between personal and relational responsibility by identifying and exploring explicitly how some emotions (e.g. guilt) may be used to instil personal responsibility in neoliberal terms.

What critical pedagogies of emotion do, then, is to help educators and students in higher education take a critical stance towards ideas and practices that fail to consider the emotional consequences of privileged irresponsibility for caregivers and care-receivers alike. The process of critical interrogation of how emotions are linked to caring responsibilities in different aspects of social life, including education, identifies and challenges the emotional burden of responsibility allocated to marginalised groups who have to deal with the choices made by privileged groups. In this manner, critical pedagogies of emotion in higher education expose how pervasive some dominant pedagogies of emotion are in universities and the society, that is, how some educational, workplace, and societal discourses and practices function in ways that sustain the forms and effects through which hegemony is lived and experienced (Worsham 2001). For example, the dismissal of moral indignation as a ‘feminine’ quality (compared to ‘men’s rationalism’) or the effort to eradicate shame via an erasure of histories of privileged irresponsibility establish hegemonic pedagogies of emotion. Critical pedagogies of emotion in higher education can make an important contribution by showing the link between hegemonic pedagogies of emotion and particular ‘regimes’ of caring responsibilities; that is, critical pedagogies of emotion can offer an analysis and action-oriented possibilities that challenge how privileged irresponsibility highlights some emotions and ignores other emotions and their social and political consequences.

In general, the critique of the entanglement between power, emotion and responsibility is one of the most important contributions of critical pedagogies of emotions in higher education. For example, throughout Europe and in the USA – and increasingly in more privileged countries in the global South as well, such as South Africa in relation to the rest of the continent – migration movement (for a variety of social, political, and environmental reasons) is an issue that exposes this entanglement most powerfully. Critical educators and students in higher education can take this issue as a departure point to address the inclusions and exclusions that are created for migrants and other marginalised groups from decision-making that is linked to caring responsibilities. This pedagogical challenge demands careful analysis of the power structures of migration, the new caring roles that emerge and the emotional demands that come with them, and how everything together creates conditions of inequality allowing for privileged irresponsibility (e.g. see Spyrou 2009). Critical pedagogies of emotion

grounded in a political ethics of care can be helpful in recognising that migration exists within a web of emotional and structural constraints, producing vulnerabilities and dependencies that determine how a political community takes care of its most vulnerable members (e.g. children and elderly people). The issue of migration, then, provides a valuable pedagogical space in which to examine how responsibility is differentially allocated and with what consequences in relation to perpetuating or challenging existing privileges.

Moreover, Monchinski (2010, 98) refers to Dewey, who ‘warned against the limits of compassion and its unintended effects on others; that compassion could work in a paternalistic manner to infantilise and objectify those we feel compassion for’. The limits of compassion rest in the moralisation of education that removes emotion from the call to action and frames the conversation on the basis of simplistic and essentialist moral categories such as that of ‘good’ versus ‘evil’ (Chouliaraki 2008). This moralisation takes place by resorting to a sentimental discourse of others’ suffering that evokes pity for the sufferers rather than compassionate action (Boltanski 1999; Cohen 2001; Geras 1999), leading students to voyeurism and passivity (Zembylas 2008). Charity, for example, as one of the ways privileged irresponsibility is manifest according to Tronto (2012a), can be critically examined for its emotional and political implications – i.e. to show how the sentimentalised feeling that caring responsibilities are fulfilled through charity might be complicit with a superficial perception of addressing social inequalities.

Finally, what we want to suggest here is the importance of acknowledging the emotional complexities of caring responsibilities in a globalised world. The value of this idea lies in its analytical implication, namely that the link between students’ compassion and action cannot be determined without an investigation of the differential emotional ways in which compassion is assigned for different regions and people of the world. Critical pedagogies of emotion in higher education pay explicit attention to the emotional complexities of the narratives of suffering that enter the classroom and interrogate in particular the trappings of narratives of privileged irresponsibility. As critical pedagogies, critical pedagogies of emotion engage in the interrogation of power relations by focusing on responsibilities and how they are allocated and can therefore make an important contribution in challenging the emotional patterns of privileged irresponsibility. However, critical pedagogies of emotion mark a valuable intervention in higher education by focusing more specifically on identifying and challenging the emotional investments and emotion-informed ideologies that underlie privileged irresponsibility and seeking to make a concrete difference in the lives of marginalised groups.

## Conclusion

In this article, we have made the argument that critical pedagogies of emotion in higher education can be regarded as practices of care that encourage students and educators to be attentive to their own emotional positions with regard to caring responsibilities and privileged irresponsibilities. Critical pedagogies of emotion alert students and educators to recognise which responsibilities are allocated to whom and with which consequences. For example, students and educators in higher education have opportunities to critically interrogate emotions of anger and resentment among caregivers and explore the consequences when one is allocated all the responsibility for care and the ‘passes out of responsibility’ are revealed. This exploration raises further questions such as: What is the

responsibility of those who have received privileges through social markers such as race, class, religion, gender in critical pedagogies? How will emotions such as indignation, shame, and guilt become the point of departure for trust, solidarity, and social change? The exploration of these questions will further contribute to the development of a democratic ethic of care in the context of higher education.

All in all, responsibility requires reconstruction through the lens of political ethics of care and critical pedagogies of emotion framed in social, ethical, and political terms that locate individuals and decision-making in emotional investments, relationships, and structural contexts. This renewed understanding of relational responsibility can turn our attention to re-evaluating the ways we understand caring for marginalised members of the society. One way in which this impacts on critical pedagogies of emotion is to alert us that caring is central to human lives since we are all vulnerable and relational beings. Such a framework makes visible the way in which caring is bound up with gender and other forms of inequality and serves to reproduce them. A challenge to gender inequality and other forms of social inequality is an implicit effect of the application of a critical pedagogy of emotion underpinned by a political ethics of care. By centring emotion and care in our critical pedagogies in higher education, we challenge both the binaries of masculinity and femininity (where emotion is devalued) and the denigration of care (and femininity) which allows privileged irresponsibility of men, citizens, and others in positions of power and privilege in particular social contexts, thus challenging the separation of politics, ethics, and emotion. The development of conceptions about social and political responsibility also offers an alternative emotional framework that challenges privileged irresponsibility and the ways in which privilege is rationalised and denied, and creates space for the transformative potential of reconstructing caring responsibilities for all citizens. Tronto's framework introduces a dynamic ethical and political dimension into critical pedagogies of emotion that strengthens the imperative to take action; at the same time, critical pedagogies of emotion enrich Tronto's framework by shedding light on the emotional investments and emotion-informed ideologies that underlie caring responsibilities, within education as well as in society as a whole.

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