

Sociality and Care: Epistemological Dialogues Between Michel Maffesoli and Nursing

Socialidade e Cuidado: Diálogos Epistemológicos Entre Michel Maffesoli e as Teóricas de Enfermagem
Socialidad y Cuidado: Diálogos Epistemológicos Entre Michel Maffesoli y las Teóricas de Enfermería

RESUMO

Objetivo: Refletir sobre a interface entre a Sociologia do Cotidiano de Michel Maffesoli e teorias de enfermagem, destacando aproximações epistemológicas e implicações para o cuidado. **Métodos:** Estudo teórico-reflexivo, de abordagem qualitativa, fundamentado na análise de obras seminais de Maffesoli e de teóricas da enfermagem. O percurso metodológico envolveu leitura analítica, identificação de conceitos-chave, comparação dialética entre referenciais e construção de matriz de correlação teórica. Por tratar-se de pesquisa exclusivamente bibliográfica, dispensou apreciação por Comitê de Ética. **Resultados:** Evidenciou-se que a perspectiva maffesoliana amplia a compreensão do cuidado ao valorizar o cotidiano, a subjetividade e as relações afetivas, dialogando com modelos como adaptação, autocuidado, relações interpessoais e necessidades humanas básicas. **Considerações finais:** A integração desses referenciais fortalece a dimensão humanística da enfermagem, favorecendo práticas mais sensíveis à realidade vivida, superando abordagens estritamente tecnicista e valorizando a potência do cotidiano na saúde.

DESCRIPTORES: Sociologia; Teorias de Enfermagem; Humanização da Assistência.

ABSTRACT

Objective: To reflect on the interface between Michel Maffesoli's Sociology of the Everyday and nursing theories, highlighting epistemological approximations and implications for care. **Methods:** Theoretical-reflective study, with a qualitative approach, based on the analysis of seminal works by Maffesoli and nursing theorists. The methodological path involved analytical reading, identification of key concepts, dialectical comparison between references, and construction of a theoretical correlation matrix. As this was an exclusively bibliographic research, it did not require appreciation by an Ethics Committee. **Results:** It was evidenced that the Maffesolian perspective expands the understanding of care by valuing the everyday, subjectivity, and affective relationships, dialoguing with models such as adaptation, self-care, interpersonal relationships, and basic human needs. **Final considerations:** The integration of these references strengthens the humanistic dimension of nursing, favoring practices more sensitive to lived reality, overcoming strictly technical approaches, and valuing the power of the everyday in health.

DESCRIPTORS: Sociology; Nursing Theory; Humanization of Assistance.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Reflexionar sobre la interfaz entre la Sociología de lo Cotidiano de Michel Maffesoli y las teorías de enfermería, destacando aproximaciones epistemológicas e implicaciones para el cuidado. **Métodos:** Estudio teórico-reflexivo, de abordaje cualitativo, fundamentado en el análisis de obras seminales de Maffesoli y de teóricas de la enfermería. El recorrido metodológico involucró lectura analítica, identificación de conceptos clave, comparación dialéctica entre referenciales y construcción de una matriz de correlación teórica. Por tratarse de una investigación exclusivamente bibliográfica, no requirió la apreciación de un Comité de Ética. **Resultados:** Se evidenció que la perspectiva maffesoliana amplía la comprensión del cuidado al valorar lo cotidiano, la subjetividad y las relaciones afectivas, dialogando con modelos como adaptación, autocuidado, relaciones interpersonales y necesidades humanas básicas. **Consideraciones finales:** La integración de estos referenciales fortalece la dimensión humanística de la enfermería, favoreciendo prácticas más sensibles a la realidad vivida, superando abordajes estrictamente tecnicistas y valorando la potencia de lo cotidiano en la salud.

DESCRIPTORES: Sociología; Teorías de Enfermería; Humanización de la Atención.

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INTRODUCTION

The science of nursing has been established over the decades through the development of knowledge aimed at understanding the human being in their entirety. However, the practice of care is often confined to technical models that neglect the richness of human interactions and the complexity of everyday life. In this context, the Sociology of Everyday Life, proposed by Michel Maffesoli, emerges as a powerful framework for rethinking nursing practice, highlighting the value of the “here and now,” of emotions, and of the bonds that sustain collective existence. Maffesoli's comprehensive sociology, by moving away from grand narratives and focusing on micro-realities, offers a lens to unravel the complexities of care that manifest in daily interactions, rituals, and the symbolism that permeates the relationship between nurse and patient⁽¹⁾.

Michel Maffesoli⁽²⁾ argues that postmodernity is marked by a return to the sensible, where “sensible reason” comes to mediate social relations, overcoming the dominance of purely instrumental rationality. In nursing, care is, by its very nature, an everyday practice that occurs in the encounter between individuals, laden with symbolism, affect, and rituals that go beyond the mere execution of technical procedures. Understanding this everyday reality means immersing oneself in sociality—that is, in the way individuals come together and share their experiences within the healthcare setting. Everyday life is not

the trivial, but the site of “potency,” where the resistance and creativity of individuals manifest themselves in the face of institutional pressures⁽³⁾. This perspective invites nursing to recognize and value the innate capacity of individuals and groups to construct meanings and coping strategies within their own context of life and health.

Historically, various nursing theorists, in different historical contexts, have sought to systematize care from perspectives that, though diverse, converge with the thought of Michel Maffesoli. From Florence Nightingale's environmentalist approach⁽⁴⁾ to more contemporary formulations, such as Jean Watson's transpersonal care⁽⁵⁾ and Wanda de Aguiar Horta's theory of basic human needs⁽⁶⁾, a unifying axis can be identified that brings nursing theory closer to the sociology of everyday life.

The integration of these frameworks is essential for a practice that recognizes the patient not as a passive object of interventions, but as a unique individual, embedded in a specific social and cultural context, constituted by networks of affections, meanings, and affiliations^(7,8). In this vein, the present study aimed to reflect on the interface between Michel Maffesoli's theory of everyday life and nursing theories of care.

METHODS

This is a theoretical-reflective study with a qualitative approach, which aims to analyze the convergences between comprehensive sociol-

ogy and the conceptual frameworks of nursing. The theoretical-reflective study is defined as an intellectual construction grounded in concepts and constructs relevant to the application of theories in a specific field of knowledge, aiming to validate, expand, and reframe the understanding of a complex phenomenon⁽⁹⁾. This type of study allows the researcher to step back from immediate practice to reflect on the epistemological foundations that underpin it.

This reflection was primarily grounded in the seminal works of Maffesoli⁽¹⁰⁾, with particular emphasis on the notions of everyday life, sensible reason, sociality, the imaginary, and power. At the same time, we immersed ourselves in scholarly articles discussing the main theories of nursing, covering the historical, philosophical, and conceptual model phases. The methodological approach involved three stages: 1) An analytical and exhaustive reading of the selected texts to identify key concepts; 2) A reflective synthesis through a dialectical comparison between sociological assumptions and the propositions of nursing theories; 3) Construction of the theoretical framework materialized in a correlation table and critical discussion.

Regarding ethical aspects, since this is a theoretical study based exclusively on a literature review and analysis of works in the public domain and scientific publications, this study does not require review by a Research Ethics Committee. This approach is in accordance with the guidelines of Res-

olution No. 510/2016 and Resolution No. 466/2012 of the National Health Council (CNS), which establish that research utilizing only publicly available information and theoretical-bibliographic references does not require review by the CEP/CONEP system.

RESULTS

An analysis of the theoretical frameworks revealed that Maffesoli’s thinking provides a solid foundation for understanding the various dimensions of care proposed by nursing theorists. It was possible to identify that concepts such as sociality and sensible reason permeate the interactions described in models of interpersonal relationships and transpersonal care,

while the notion of power and everyday life aligns perfectly with theories focused on the subject’s autonomy and adaptation.

A synthesis of these approaches, correlating concepts from the sociology of everyday life with the main nursing theories, their central characteristics, and year of publication, is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 – Interface between Maffesoli’s concepts and Nursing Theories. Maringá-PR, 2026.

Concept of Maffesoli	Theory / Theorist / Year	Characteristic of the Nursing Theory	Relationship with Maffesoli’s Concept
Everyday Life: Space-time of the “here and now” where life unfolds in its fullness and simplicity.	Environmental Theory / Florence Nightingale (1860)	Environmental Control / Hygiene (Environment)	The environment is the stage of everyday life; Nightingale focuses on controlling the surroundings to allow life to flow in the daily healing process.
Potency: Intrinsic vital energy of individuals and groups that enables resistance and creative action.	Theory of the 14 Needs / Virginia Henderson (1955)	Patient Independence	Potency is the vital force for action; Henderson aims at patient independence in everyday life so that they can regain their vital agency.
Sociality: A way of “being-together” based on affection, empathy, and community bonds.	Interpersonal Relations / Hildegard Peplau (1952)	Nurse–Client Interaction / Interpersonal Relationship	Sociality is the affective “being-together”; Peplau focuses on direct and mutual interaction as the core of care in the encounter between individuals.
Sensitive Reason: Knowledge that integrates rational logic with emotional, sensory, and intuitive dimensions.	Unitary Human Beings / Martha E. Rogers (1970)	Energy Field / Unitary Being	Sensitive reason integrates the whole (rational/sensitive); Rogers sees the human being as an integral and indivisible energy field.
Everyday Life / Adaptation: Daily living as a continuous process of adjustment to environmental stimuli.	Adaptation Theory / Sister Callista Roy (1970)	Adaptation Processes	Everyday life requires constant coping; Roy proposes that nursing helps the patient adapt to changes in the lived environment.
Potency / Agency: The capacity to act upon oneself and the world based on vital force.	Self-Care Theory / Dorothea Orem (1971)	Self-Care Agency	Maffesolian potency is the vital energy of action; Orem focuses on the individual’s ability to provide their own self-care in daily life.
Sociality / Transaction: The dialogical encounter that generates agreements and symbolic exchanges among individuals.	King’s Theory (Communication) / Imogene M. King (1971)	Three Interacting Systems (personal, interpersonal, and social)	Sociality involves negotiation in everyday living; King emphasizes interaction between nurse and patient to achieve common goals.
Ethics of Aesthetics: Sharing emotions and feelings that form the basis of unity among human beings.	Transpersonal Caring Theory / Jean Watson (1979)	Transpersonal Care / Love / Relationship between health, illness, and human behavior	The ethics of aesthetics involves sharing emotions; Watson proposes care based on sensitivity and soul-to-soul connection.
Imaginary / Everyday Life: Set of symbols and myths that give meaning to daily needs and experiences.	Basic Human Needs Theory / Wanda A. Horta (1979)	Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs	The imaginary shapes perceived needs; Horta sees care as assisting in balancing needs in everyday life.
Sociality / Tribe: Human groupings united by affinities, rituals, and shared cultural identities.	Transcultural Nursing Theory / Madeleine Leininger (1978)	Cultural Care / Emerging Nursing	Tribalism refers to groups with their own cultures; Leininger emphasizes respect for the rituals and values of the patient’s cultural “tribe”.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The results presented in Table 1 highlight the richness of the dialogue between Maffesoli’s comprehensive sociology and nursing theories. The identified correlations demonstrate that, despite different approaches and historical contexts, there is a funda-

mental convergence in the appreciation of the human being in their entirety, the care environment, and interpersonal relationships as central elements for the understanding and practice of nursing. This theoretical intersection not only validates the humanistic depth of nursing but also

offers new perspectives for analyzing care in its everyday and affective dimensions.

DISCUSSION

The depth of Michel Maffesoli’s theory transcends the years and

adapts with remarkable flexibility to different themes in nursing and health care over the decades. Maffesolian thought invites the nurse to abandon purely bureaucratic “development” to engage in affective care—that which touches and, therefore, becomes effective⁽⁸⁾. This connection with nursing themes is vital, as care does not occur in a vacuum but rather within the pulsating social fabric of daily life. Maffesoli’s work⁽¹¹⁾ allows for a reinterpretation of classical theories, revealing that nursing, from its very inception, already carried the seeds of comprehensive sociology in dealing with the “here and now” of suffering and healing⁽¹⁰⁾.

Maffesoli’s “sensitive reason” offers fundamental epistemological support for nursing to overcome the entrenched dualism between science and art, integrating technical rationality with the sensitivity of care. When analyzing Martha Rogers’s science of the unitary human being⁽¹²⁾, one perceives a direct resonance with Maffesoli’s proposal to integrate the rational with the energetic and sensitive. Rogers proposes a field of energy that cannot be fragmented, which resonates deeply with Maffesoli’s critique of reductionist modern science^(2,12). This holistic perspective is fundamental to understanding care in its entirety, allowing us to view the patient not as a set of symptoms, but as a vibrant being integrated into their environment.

Similarly, the application of Jean Watson’s theory of transpersonal care⁽¹³⁾ elevates care to the level of the “ethics of aesthetics,” where the sharing of deep emotions and transpersonal love become the foundation of the bond between caregiver and care recipient, transcending mere cold and instrumental technique. As Maffesoli⁽¹⁾ emphasizes, the rhythm of life is intrinsically marked by this constant alternation between the material and

the imaginary, which translates into the dynamic balance of basic human needs—a central concept in Wanda Horta’s theory⁽⁶⁾—highlighting the complexity and richness of the caregiving process in everyday practice.

Sociality, as an essential form of “being-together,” finds significant resonance in Hildegard Peplau’s analyses of interpersonal relationships⁽¹⁴⁾ and in Imogene King’s contributions on goal attainment⁽¹⁵⁾. Nursing is understood as a fundamentally interpersonal process, where genuine interaction is the primary driver of health and the construction of professional identity⁽¹⁶⁾; this interaction culminates in the transaction and the achievement of shared goals, according to King’s perspective⁽¹⁷⁾. Such theoretical perspectives reinforce Maffesoli’s idea that social and clinical life is constructed through encounter, continuous negotiation, and the shared experience of daily life⁽¹⁰⁾. Daily family and clinical life reveals the undeniable strength of tribal bonds and organic solidarity that sustain individuals in distress⁽¹⁸⁾, highlighting the importance of support networks and community in the process of healing and well-being, especially in contexts of vulnerability and crisis.

The enduring relevance of Maffesoli’s theory stems from the undeniable fact that everyday life remains the primary setting where life unfolds in all its fullness and complexity. The concept of “potential” is essential for understanding discussions regarding the applicability of Dorothea Orem’s theory of self-care deficit⁽¹⁹⁾ and Virginia Henderson’s theory of fundamental human needs⁽²⁰⁾. From a Maffesolian perspective, the nurse does not passively “give” health to the patient, but acts as an active catalyst for the vital potency that the individual already possesses in their daily life⁽³⁾, helping them adapt and find their own resources, as demonstrated by the ap-

plication of Callista Roy’s adaptation model in practice⁽²¹⁾. These necessary and enriching dialogues between sociology and health enable a more humanized and holistic nursing practice, valuing the imaginary and the sensitive in the context of postmodernity⁽²²⁾, while respecting cultural care and the diversity of knowledge proposed by Madeleine Leininger⁽²³⁾.

Among the limitations of this study is its strictly theoretical nature, which does not aim for immediate empirical validation in specific clinical settings. Furthermore, the vast scope of Maffesoli’s work and the multiplicity of nursing theories preclude an exhaustive analysis of all possible connections in a single article, suggesting the need for future studies focused on specific interfaces, such as mental health care or the management of daily hospital life, to deepen the discussions and explore new perspectives on the integration of comprehensive sociology and contemporary clinical practice.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Reflection on the interface between Michel Maffesoli’s Sociology of Everyday Life and Nursing Theories reveals a synergy that is fundamental to the evolution of contemporary care. It is concluded that Maffesoli’s framework offers the conceptual tools necessary for nursing to reclaim the importance of the sensible, of affect, and of group experience in its practices, without sacrificing technical competence.

Nursing theories, when viewed through the lens of comprehensive sociology, gain new vitality, allowing nurses to understand the patient as

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