

The role of the psychologist in the public policy of mental health as part of the process of subjectivation of adolescents: A foucauldian reading and historical-cultural psychology

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ABSTRACT

This production aims to promote reflections on Adolescent, Psychology, Public Policies and subjectivation processes. Based on the work developed in therapeutic workshops of a CAPS I, we intend to show the importance of deconstructing asylum thinking and the effectiveness that counter-hegemonic mental health care strategies can achieve. To bring to reflection the possibility of actions that do not universalize bodies and subjectivities through standardization.

Keywords: Subjectivation, CAPS, Therapeutic workshops, Adolescence.

INTRODUCTION

The reflections that we will develop arose from the experience in a Psychosocial Care Center of type I - CAPS I - in a municipality in the Center-South of the State of Rio de Janeiro whose population is from 2 to 18 years old, mostly low-income and in a situation of violence and social vulnerability. Our intention is to think about how the psychologist can work to produce subjectivities without disregarding the subject or about how not to fall into the traps of "knowledge-power" so present in the norms that regulate practices in many of the devices of public policies. Our guides will be the records of the Logbook* and the studies of Wagner Góis on Community Psychology, the Foucauldian concepts of subjects and processes of subjectivation, as well as the historical-cultural thought of Lev Vygotsky about the link between social relations and subjective constructions.

The therapeutic workshop we coordinated was a collective space in which the activities took place weekly, in different spaces, lasting 90 minutes. There was no fixed day, at the end of each workshop a survey was made to choose the best day for the next week and the participants signed an attendance list. The group had a maximum of 8 participants and had as its audience the adolescents aged 14 to 17 years attended at the service.

For Santos (2018), Logbook is spontaneous annotations based on everyday observations, detached from conceptual categories and any form of technicality or professionalism. It can be the mirror of the beginning researcher, providing reflection on what is observed and the work that is being developed

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The interventions took place in groups through therapeutic workshops with the use of art therapy resources supported by the work of Ciornai (2004), however, providing possibilities of expansion and/or adaptation with the adolescents. Our goal was to walk in opposition to those public policies and other actions of the State and society that do not give space for adolescents to seek, according to Góis (2003, p.24), "to weave their own life, as a loving, active and expressive person, present in daily life and being "inside and outside" the world".

THE PROCESSES OF SUBJECTIVATION FROM THE NOTION OF SUBJECT IN MICHEL FOUCAULT AND HISTORICAL-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

When thinking about the form of construction of modern thought, it is necessary to highlight how science is based on a rationality inherited from positivist thought, in which there is a dichotomy between subject and object, with the object being passive and the subject as the holder of knowledge about such object (GALEANO et al, 2020). Foucault (2002) analyzes how knowledge is produced and created by human beings. It denaturalizes knowledge and shows that it is not an a priori given, but rather an invention that is related to power.

In his studies on sexuality, Foucault (2007) discusses the constitution of the subject through discourses. It breaks the dichotomous logic of understanding power by showing that it branches out in society, crossing all forms of social relations. It shows how the subject is constituted in this web where the game of forces between "knowledge-power" given by the discourses are modes of subjectivation and subjectivity would be the product of this relationship of forces that institute knowledge.

It highlights "biopower" as a technique of disciplinary power that seeks to create a state of life in a given population to produce active and docile bodies. It is a power used to sustain life through State policies, such as public health policies, which can function as an instrument of standardization.

However, even if the subject suffers the effect of a process of subjection, it does not mean that he does not have a field of possibility. Because each one of us always occupies a position in a discursive network in which the subject, even when subjected, is not placed as passive in Michel Foucault's perspective, since "in this process we, as subjects, have the possibility of believing or not, giving in or not, agreeing or not (GALEANO et al, 2020, p. 95)".

The processes of subjectivation discussed so far can therefore be seen as a weaving composed of innumerable actions by which the subject is constituted not only as an effect of external processes, but also from the relationship he makes with himself and with others. In this way, the possibility of dialoguing with Vygotsky's Historical-Cultural Psychology and his perspective as a human being, the only animal constituted socio-culturally and historically, is opened. Subjectivity is understood by him as the entire



psychic construction of the subject in its interrelation with the world in which it is inserted (VIGOTSKI, 1991).

Vygotsky's (1991) conception of man is as a historical-cultural being, arising from the presuppositions of dialectical historical materialism. According to him, in order for us to understand who we are, we must take into account not only the biological factors characteristic of our species, but also the historical-cultural context in which we live is decisive for their development. We are beings that are formed from the interpretations of reality that we construct involved in the sociocultural knowledge of a certain period of human history. A historical being, whose development is a result of the exchanges between him and reality, mediated by social relations and the culture present in them, which develops biologically and psychologically.

For him, the interaction with reality does not occur directly in its entirety. His studies allowed him to affirm that the more we develop (as a species or as people) the more there are elements, material or symbolic (culture) that serve as mediators of this interaction. Among these mediators, Vygotsky (2007) highlighted the importance of language, more strictly of languages and their words, in human thought. Its role as a builder of consciousness, based on imbrication with thought. According to Rey (2013), the Soviet psychologist breaks with linear reasoning about the psyche by including qualitative aspects to the human development process.

When focusing on the study of Higher Psychological Functions (SPF) – consciously controlled actions, voluntary attention, active memorization, abstract thinking, intentional behavior – thinking and language are highlighted as the main mediators of its development. According to Rey (2013), these are constructions carried out throughout the subject's life through internalization, that is, synthesis based on the dialectic between inter and intrapsychological functioning, in which the other is the one who provides the meanings during the interaction. This functioning of the subject from the interaction with the environment is only possible due to the mediating elements that operate as a link between the subject and the external environment: signs and instruments (VIGOTSKI, 2007).

Signs are the mental representations capable of replacing the absent object, a generalizing function of thought. These are the basis for the construction of concepts, key to learning through exchange with others. Through the appropriation of signs, human beings are able to vary their way of thinking, being able to modify their action and language, for example. Another mediator is the instruments by which man transforms and is transformed by nature through interaction with the environment in an intentional and planned way (REY, 2013).

In view of the above and according to Rey (2013), it is understood that materiality is not the main component of mediation, but rather the semiotics of mediation instruments united to the elaboration of the subject, which is individual. Language, as a mediating element of subjectivity, is present in the historical



and cultural context, promoting a game of forces that constitutes the subject and will participate directly in the individual's learning. Vygotsky (1991/2007) considers language as a human production and, therefore, constitutes itself as a social practice. Foucault (2002), when talking about the micro-branched "knowledge-power" in the social body that produces knowledge, refers to how language is part of the games of forces that form truths and produce subjectivities.

Such theoretical productions lead us to discuss how much and how the tensions between Brazilian historical, social and economic conditions can produce demands on the psychology professional within public policies. Reflect on how they are implicated in the processes of subjectivation produced by the relationship we establish with the various political, economic, social and cultural fields. For the subject we understand here is the one permeated by the "knowledge-power" that is produced by the relations established during the life of the same with the other subjects, the institutions and the entire social body.

THE ADOLESCENT AS A SOCIO-HISTORICAL SUBJECT AND THE PROCESSES OF SUBJECTIVATION

Adolescence is a complex moment of transition between childhood and adulthood of human development in which psychic transformations occur, in addition to biological changes. However, when thinking about adolescence, it is essential to consider the process of subjectivation within a socio-historical context and considering temporality. As described by Coutinho (2009): "The word "adolescence" comes from the Latin *adulescens* or *adolescens*, past participle of the verb *adolescere*, which means to grow (pg., 17)". The author postulates in her work that adolescence is not a natural process, separate from the context, and it is necessary to analyze how singularity is crossed by social values by which subjectivation becomes even more complex.

Coutinho (2009) makes a historical analysis of paramount importance, showing how the concept of adolescence is heir to a Eurocentric Western monoculture that was consolidated in Europe in the mid-twentieth century. Based on the author's studies, it is possible to perceive how the concept of adolescence is belatedly created in modernity and incorporates discourses within society. It outlines what an adolescent would be and creates ways of controlling these bodies through a "knowledge-power" of historical, political, social and economic elements and discourses.

These statements already established in the social body will also be part of the process of subjectivation of the adolescent within the public policy. Another point to think about adolescence, according to Kuhn and Mello (2020), is the late inclusion within the mental health political agenda, taking time to affirm both the child and the adolescent as subjects and citizens with full rights. In addition, Kuhn and Mello (2020) will show how the colonialist logic permeates adolescence inside and outside public policies, reinforcing care practices and postures that consider the adolescent subject from a Eurocentric



perspective. This logic annuls what belongs to the countries marginalized by the peoples of the West, criminalizing their ways of existing and universalizing cultural differences. Another highlight given by the authors was about the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA), an important achievement for childhood and adolescence, but which:

“[...] it did not give space to "other" subjects, that is, children and adolescents who do not fit into the pattern that was established throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe and brought to Latin America through coloniality (KUHN & MELLO, 2020, p. 305)".

As a result, the processes of subjectivation are immersed in the power play of the "knowledge-power" relations. For example, when we comply with social requirements within public mental health policies, such as what it would be like to be an adolescent and how they should behave from Eurocentric, individualizing and psychopathologizing perspectives, a truth is constituted linking the individual to his or her diagnosis. If we unite the training of the Psychologist, which is still Eurocentric, we see a "biopower" permeated by a hegemonic truth in which knowledge is produced through the manifest discourse of professionals, especially for those adolescents who are framed by a eugenicist model.

Foucault (2007) will say that the maintenance of discourse depends on the use that is made of it, and that power can then be instrumentalized. Therefore, it is essential to think about the tensions between Brazilian historical, social, and economic conditions in order to reflect adolescence and not fit it into the pattern that was established in Europe and brought to Latin American countries (KUHN & MELLO, 2020). Only in this way is it possible to reduce the effects of the discourse linked to the deterministic and Eurocentric truth of the adolescent, allowing them an opening of possibilities for becoming.

Thus, the possibility arises of thinking about adolescence from a territoriality and even constructing a knowledge based on the classical theories of psychology, reflecting materiality beyond modern Eurocentric science.

COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY FROM WAGNER GÓIS

Wagner Góis, professor and researcher at the Federal University of Ceará (UFC) talks about a Community Psychology arising from the Social Psychology of Liberation that has its origins in social movements, especially those of mental health, in countries in Europe and Latin America. It is influenced by Critical Social Psychology, Historical-Cultural Psychology, Liberation Theology, Popular Education and the experiences lived in Brazilian territory. In general, Community Psychology for the author is focused on the understanding of social activity and the objective and subjective dimensions as a product of the community way of life in a dynamic relationship between organism and its environments:



"Community Psychology studies the meanings and senses, as well as the personal and collective feelings about the life of the community [...] it must be concerned with the psychosocial conditions of community life (internal and external) that prevent residents from constructing themselves as subjects of their community and the conditions that make them subjects of it... (GÓIS, 2003, p. 20)".

For Góis (2003/2005), the construction of the individual is based on the notion of a historical and community subject, and Community Psychology is understood through interdisciplinarity. It focuses on the construction of a critical consciousness and on the ability to fight communally for a new concrete reality and not the social adjustment of the subjects and the community reality, thinking about the individual-community-municipality. When talking about municipality, it affirms how the inter-community dynamics generate social and individual identity, with the municipality being a living, dynamic and concrete place of social, affective and effective participation.

In view of this, the author uses two concepts, intervening-researching and researching-intervening to discuss the importance of social participation in the intervention/investigation process. And so to seek a study that values the inter-subjective relations between subject-community-municipality-researcher. Góis (2005) points out that the community would be, then, a social and psychological construction that emerges over time through the psychosocial relations of the residents of a given place.

From there, it uses the concepts of activity¹ and consciousness² and establishes an indissoluble link between material and subjective changes. The community is a place of recognition and confirmation of identity, and also of individual and collective singularization with its own ways of existing. Thus, the formation of the psychic structure depends on both external and internal forces. By this, he thinks of consciousness - in which it is of an active and social character - as "a kind of property of the mind which gives meaning both to psychic life and to the external activity of individuals themselves. This activity, in turn, guides and gives the substance of one's own consciousness (GÓIS, 2005, p. 154)".

Activity, according to Santos and Santade (2012), would be a mediating element for the constitution of consciousness that develops in individual and collective activity. Therefore, activity and consciousness are thought of together and Góis uses them to analyze community habits and the participation he has in the development of the individual. According to Góis (2003/2005), the greater and more active the individual's participation in the collective and in the individual sphere, the greater the subject's critical and inquiring consciousness.

EXPERIENCE IN THERAPEUTIC WORKSHOPS WITH ADOLESCENTS IN A PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE CENTER (CAPS)

Therapeutic workshops are transdisciplinary spaces within a CAPS that users work in different ways, one of which is plastic expression. Such as painting, music, body language and other things. The



workshops were held with adolescents using art therapy resources in a CAPS I in conjunction with the multidisciplinary team. With the objective of going beyond the promotion of autonomy and social reintegration of the subject, but to promote reflections on adolescents and their processes of subjectivation.

The group of adolescents was open, and the number of members varied each day, which required a brief initial contextualization at each meeting. In a Logbook, notes were made about the sensations and anguish that arose during the course of the research. The absence of a creative space in which to allow an intuitive connection beyond rationality and/or direction based on users' diagnoses motivated this work. And the protagonism of the service users in the construction and conduction of the workshop are the basic vectors of the work.

The adolescents who participated in the group were referred according to the Singular Therapeutic Project (PTS), which was not set up with them. The materials used were the most diverse and their choice depended on the proposal of the activity and the individual will, as far as possible, such as: colored pencils, felt-tip pens, papers of different types and sizes, clay, gouache paints, brushes, sponges, music, strings, glue, glitter, dry leaves, seeds, among other available materials.

The construction of the activities was distributed in stages and their conduction was supported by the work of Ciornai (2004). The workshops were weekly and for each meeting there were activities that alternated in conversation circles, body movements and dynamics clarified below. During the 10-month period that the workshops took place, narratives were observed pointed out to the subjects who did not conform to the institutional norms. These were the adolescents directed to the workshops by the technical team.

Subsequently, the workshops with the adolescents begin through a conversation circle to explain to those present the reasons for being there and invite them to use discourse and language to relate and to stay, if they wished.

The second stage of these meetings was the establishment of a bond because it was one of the primary factors for the continuity of the proposed workshop with the resources of art therapy, as pointed out by Ciornai (2004). This step occurred as many times as necessary since, in the beginning, the turnover of the adolescents was significant and after a few meetings, the exchange of experiences and experiences allowed the participants to feel welcomed and understood, strengthening the bond between them and contributing to the process.

In most of the meetings, there were guided tasks of body expression to warm up in order to provide a corporeality. Followed by a moment to talk about the experience in order to start an opening to new experiments, relaxations and interactions. Playful activities, as Ciornai (2004) points out: "help people to mobilize energy and relax (p. 99)".



The next stage of this process was to begin expressive activities. The adolescents were: encouraged to explore different forms of expression during the creation stage using art as a form of communication and social ties; invited to share their creations and ideas with the group, promoting the exchange of experiences and mutual support; encouraged to appreciate their own productions and to make adjustments or improvements, if necessary, with the help of the other participants. At the end of the workshops, a joint evaluation was carried out with the adolescents, so that they could express their opinions and suggestions about the work carried out.

In order that, through the *activity, a critical and inquiring* consciousness *would be worked* on, reflecting on themselves as active subjects and on the collective. They were also encouraged to analyze their own experiences and to question the structures and norms that surrounded them, such as the PTS and the spaces instituted and offered by CAPS I. They perceived the lack of participation in decisions about their treatments.

Such discussions and reflections were taken to the reference technicians, opening the possibility of dialogue between the adolescents and the professionals responsible for their care. This allowed the adolescents to feel heard and valued, contributing to the construction of an environment with collective participation.

In addition to the workshops within the physical space of CAPS I, actions were promoted in the territory for the construction of a municipality with the purpose of working on the adolescents' sense of belonging to the community. With the aim of providing participants with the opportunity to get to know the culture, history, sights of the municipality and a new and meaningful experience. Because many had the feeling of "*loneliness*" and never visited the places of cultural relevance.

In view of this, when we think that learning is mediated and happens through the relationship between the individual and the environment, according to Vigotski (2007). We can affirm that the workshops, when working with thought and language, functioned as mediating elements by creating multiple possibilities for the subject to perceive and elaborate the events in order to overcome the initial state in which he was. Providing the development of new meanings for their experiences.

Based on the above, it is observed how the psychologist's work in mental health can maintain power relations and subjection by disregarding the adolescent in their health process and making their way of existing in the world invisible through normalization. Thinking about the processes of subjectivation put on the agenda the "biopower" present in policies as a technique for the production of truths through "knowledge-power", aiming at the adequacy of users to the established norms. As well as the forms of health promotion that regulate their lives, giving few possibilities of appropriation of the subjective process itself.



Finally, Coutinho (2009) will say that adolescence would be a phenomenon constituted by both the social and the psychic, marking the singular, heterogeneous universe with demands specific to this period of development. Thus, when thinking about Public Mental Health Policies for this population, it is necessary to discuss programs that meet the specificities of this group with care so that the various institutional mechanisms and structures of knowledge that enhance "biopower" within the social body are not reproduced, including those promoted by the State itself through institutions.

FINAL THOUGHTS

From the work carried out with adolescents in a CAPS I, it was observed that even in the face of all the realities that constitute individuals, therapeutic workshops with art therapy resources can mediate the process of resignification of experiences and construction of new skills. The processes of subjectivation are always present in socio-historical-cultural relations, but even so, in the encounter between Adolescence and Public Policy on Mental Health, it is possible to estrange to the *status quo* and question normative social demands, stimulating the participation of adolescents in their process and opening space for a psychological and social construction.

That said, what is verified is the search to maintain the institution with its way of functioning, which aims to maintain relationships between people through the centrality of the disciplinary discourse, leaving aside the subject and the achievement of singular and collective objectives in health care.

As stated by Galeano et al (2020), to discuss the process of subjectivation is also to include the neoliberal components that cross the present and the fragilities of public policies, it is to think about the struggles that, as psychology professionals, we propose to wage. The elements transversal to subjectivity branch out and run through the social environment. In addition, the training of psychologists in Brazil is still predominantly Eurocentric, which makes it difficult to perceive the traps of "knowledge-power" that regulate professional practice both inside and outside public policies.

With the results obtained, we can affirm how much the therapeutic workshops functioned as an instrument of modification of the collective space, allowing the mediation of learning, as well as of discourses, through language as a mediating element of the processes of subjectivation. We then observed that the learning process is constituted in a heterogeneous, collective and singular way, in which there is no primacy of actors present in the group.

Therefore, it was perceived that therapeutic workshops can be not only a therapeutic method, but also a tool of subjectivation used by the psychology professional. And in the context of this work, it contributed to the process of reframing experiences and building new social skills on the part of adolescents. Thus, it can be an instrument that modifies not only the subject, but also the external environment in which he is inserted, based on the psychic construction of the adolescent and his



relationship with the world, by betting on the construction of a critical consciousness and not a social adjustment.



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