

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The reception process of a socio-educational detention center for adolescents from the perspective of environmental psychology

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Abstract

Introduction: The reception process aims to provide technical, psychosocial and medical care during the arrival of the adolescent in a juvenile detention after sentencing. This service is guided by the National System of Socio-Educational Care and follow a policy integrated with joint actions of accountability, education, health and social assistance, in the context of human development of socio-educational measures.

Objective: To describe the environmental traces left by adolescents after have completed the reception process in Socio-Educational detention Centers in the State of Ceará.

Methods: This is a cross sectional study, with descriptive and qualitative approach. The research was held in the areas where previously the adolescents had completed the reception process. Data were collected by systematic observation using field diary reports and discussions guided by content analysis.

Results: The environmental traces were associated with the adolescents' previous and current experiences, through the appropriation practices of the spaces of the Socio-educational Center, configured as a place of permanence, movement or passage in constant articulation with social, cultural, economic, political, historical and psychological factors.

Conclusion: In the State of Ceara, the areas of Detention Centers reserved for socio-educational purposes as a long-term space for psychosocial and medical care, violates the basic rights of comprehensive care for adolescents. This reality points to the vulnerability of adolescents when exposed to unhealthy physical structures, and demonstrates the need for studies that deepen the discussions from the perspective of the person-environment inter-relationship.

Keywords: adolescents, socio-educational environment, environmental psychology, environmental traces, processing room, territoriality.

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Authors summary

Why was this study done?

It starts from the conception that records of human action can occur after the person-environment interrelationship. Thus, in this study, we sought to describe the environmental traces left by adolescents, during post-occupation in the reception room, of the Socioeducational Centers of hospitalization, in the State of Ceará, Brazil.

What did the researchers do and find?

A qualitative, observational and descriptive cross-sectional research was conducted using the field diary. We found that environmental traces are associated with the adolescents' previous and current experiences, through space appropriation practices, in the reception room of the Socioeducational Center, configured as a place of permanence, movement or passage, in constant articulation with social, cultural, economic, political, historical and psychological factors.

What do these findings mean?

The reception process of a socio-educational detention center for adolescents in the State of Ceará, Brazil, while a long-term space for psychosocial and medical care violates the basic rights of comprehensive care to adolescents. This reality points to an indication of adolescent vulnerability when exposed to unhealthy physical structures and intends to need studies that deepen discussions about territory from the perspective of the interrelationship person-environment deprivation of liberty.

INTRODUCTION

The period of adolescence, when confronted by the scarcity of goods and services, moral fragility and insecurity about the future, due to the lack of opportunities for those socioeconomically disadvantaged, allows crime to be a promising alternative for insertion into the social group to which they belong¹.

In Brazil, the adolescent who is involved in an offense is preserved by the Statute of the Child and Adolescent², socio-educational measures guided by systematized pedagogical programs, within the scope of school education, professionalization, sports, arts and health, aiming a healthy return to the socio-family environment.

Despite this, Estevam *et al.*³, when discussing these pedagogical programs, discovered practices conducive to social disintegration, instigating self-defense, which distanced the desired objective of re-socialization from the social-educational intervention, causing losses to adolescents in their fundamental rights.

The socio-educational practices in the confinement of the Juvenile Detention Center begin during the reception process which involves technical assistance during the adolescent's arrival. Upon arrival to the unit, the adolescent should have their documents checked and belongings stored in a reserved place, then will be referred for a shower, meal, technical assistance, medical examination and provided with accommodation⁴.

Considering that this process with technical assistance in a Socio-educational Center of a juvenile detention facility varies from two to five days, the aim of this study is to describe the environmental traces left by the adolescents during the post-occupation of the area used during their reception process at Socio-Educational Juvenile Detention Centers in the state of Ceará, Brazil.

METHODS

This qualitative, observational and descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted in three rooms, located in the Socio-educational Center 1 (CS1) and Socio-educational Center 2 (CS2), both for the detention of young offenders after sentencing in the state of Ceará. The observation was restricted to these two centers because they are the only ones that deal with the socio-educational measures in detention after sentencing,

This type of approach to the observation of variables in a physical space was performed by selecting a single moment, allowing direct observation of environmental traces as a phenomenon to be researched. Data collection was performed in a short time interval, without necessarily requiring further follow-up for adolescents who left their traces in the socio-educational environment. During the observation, it was not possible to delimit the periodicity of the markings, nor to certify that all were made by the adolescents. The cross-sectional research favored the discussions of a given phenomenon, being this the cause or consequence, or both, for the established sample. The convenience sample, by means of the few reference elements, limited the interpretation of the results for the generalization of its conclusions, but did not make the research impossible during data collection⁵.

Data were collected through a field diary with systematic observation, without a rigid time frame, during two days, in morning shifts, in the respective Centers intended for the male public. The observation for a space in CS1 was in September 2018 and the 2 spaces of CS1 were observed during November 2018.

The field diary was used as an instrument in the post-occupation of the reception rooms. It did not establish rigid times for observing the environmental traces left by the adolescents during their stay. The reference elements of the observation were the environmental conditions and the marks left on the walls.

The practice of fixedly looking at the behavioral residues present in the environment was used, seeking to explain facts of the interrelation between person-environment⁶. The observation totaled eight hours, during five days of institutional visits, in each socio-educational center.

The observation over the behavioral residues in Environmental Psychology is directed, according to Günther *et al.*⁷, to the "effects of environmental conditions on individual behaviors in that how the individual perceives and acts in their surroundings". Each individual inhabits and lives in a place where they produce their own identifications, way of being and acting, being affectively linked positively or negatively with the place.

The content analysis, in regard to Bardin⁸, led the discussions according to the analytical category: the space of the holding room: the embodiment of the environment by the appropriation of space.

■ RESULTS

The space of the initial reception room at CS1 is characterized by an entrance consisting of a door with iron bars, located in front of a dimly lit corridor. This space has an internal area with two wooden beds without mattresses, a bathroom, where the flushing is done by the social educator who also gives consent to go to the bathroom.

There is a barred window two meters from the floor to let ventilation and lighting enter to, allowing visibility to the gardens located in the center of a round area. Through this window it can be observed the dynamics of other adolescents accompanied by social educators during their routine activities while transitioning to classrooms, as well as being able to talk with others adolescents who attend the cooking course, located in the next room.

The spaces reserved for initial process in CS2 are located next to each other. The entrance consists of a door with iron bars, located in front of the corridor with good natural light. Inside, there is no wooden bed with mattress and no bathroom. Along this corridor there is the movement of adolescents, cleaning workers, social educators, and health and social professionals.

The CS2 also has the same design of barred windows of CS1; one of the windows is between the two spaces and the other allows the viewer to see a small dusting area without roof, followed by a white wall of about four meters long, which allows natural lighting and ventilation. Thus, one room has lighting and ventilation, while the other does not. A lot of mosquitos remain in these rooms mainly during the day causing discomfort when get in contact with the skin, and spread diseases through their bites. The absence of a bathroom for basic needs and body hygiene was observed. The floor is used for resting and to sit on while eating.

These spaces have marks on the walls left by adolescents who use sharp materials such as remnants of cement plaster, stones and fingernails. In addition to these common materials, in CS1, the use of toothpaste and a disposable razor blade were observed. In CS2, it seems to be that adolescents use the walls to rest their feet because there are some marks of dirty feet on the walls near the window bars.

Toothpaste and disposable razor blades that allowed for deeper marks on the walls were present only in CS1 because the adolescents, upon arrival at the institution, receive a hygiene kit (soap, disposable razor, shampoo, conditioner, brush, toothpaste, towel, shorts, underwear, shirt and slippers) while awaiting referral to their respective dormitories and construction of their Individual Care Plan (ICP). The ICP is a pedagogical instrument that aims to establish equity among adolescents for socio-educational measures in school activities and health care assistance.

The spaces described above characterized by

their strong smell and confining appearance in relation to the integral protection care of adolescents following sentencing after an offense.

However, even facing occupational restrictions offered by the space, due to the absence of adequate furniture, ventilation and lighting, it was possible to investigate behavioral traces of the post-occupation person-environment interaction, within the scope of Environmental Psychology, in the context of socio-educational practices for adolescents in conflict with the law during their reception process into the Socio-Educational Center.

■ DISCUSSION

The location of reception process: the personification of the environment by the appropriation of space

Space in Environmental Psychology exists beyond its physical structure because as an environment it is configured within the social, cultural and historical sphere. In this area of knowledge, we conceive the physical structure as not just reduced to itself, but connected to human behavior with current experiences and past sensations^{7,9,10}.

In this way, the environment is the visible and real social context that exists as it is manifested. It is the concrete and projected experience of the developing person who appropriates space by leaving her/his marks. Studies of the socio-educational environment, from the perspective of Environmental Psychology, can contribute to the observation of behavior in the built or natural environment, whether in collective or individual spaces.

In this way, the rooms used during the reception process at juvenile Socio-Educational Centers exist as a dynamic environment which during the appropriation of space demands a constant reworking, characterizing its own movement and temporality.

When Pol¹¹ discussed the concept of space appropriation, stated that in its constitution there are two circular processes: one of action-transformation and the other of symbolic identification. These two processes may not occur together. The action-transformation, derived from behavioral activity, modifies the space and promotes a meaning for the subject, shared or not by the community. In symbolic identification there is the construction of meanings that causes the formation of urban social identity and place, where the appropriated space favors the maintenance of the referential, spatial and symbolic.

For Bomfim^{9,10}, to take ownership is “to identify and transform oneself, the community and the surroundings. This means that each of us is included, in a decisive way, in the places we have been and the places we are”.

In regard to these places where we were and are, we understand the appropriation of space from a socio-historical perspective. The neighborhood where we live or the group we belong to represent us, being symbolic and meaningful triggers for our existence, as we recognize ourselves in the different spaces we occupy.

In the case of the reception room, during the post-occupation period, the walls showed as representative

demarcations of territory: the Dias Macêdo, Parque Dois Irmãos and Bela Vista neighborhoods, located in Fortaleza, as well as other municipalities of the State of Ceará, such as Croatá, Pajuçara, Sobral, Riacho; and groups belonging to or affiliated with the Red Command (CV), Guardians of the State (GDE), First Command of the Capital (PCC), and Northern Family (NDF) gangs.

These markings give evidence of where they come from and the groups which they support to each other in the search for processes of representative identification of power and resistance during adaptation to a new conjecture of institutional interaction. The identification marked by previous experiences, accompanies the adolescent in their process of entering the institution through different interpretations, and during their stay in the socio-educational detention environment after sentencing.

Pol¹¹ states that the subject leaves his/her marks personifying their environment by establishing activities of interaction with the space, transforming it according to their personal needs. Hence these spaces are full of significances and meanings, symbolizing subjective aspects of life from the way objects are arranged.

The personification of the spaces in these socio-educational detention centers is an attempt to decorate the institutional areas from the objects loaded with symbolism and meaning, between the present environment and those left behind.

Words written on the wall, such as satan, crime, coming, going, and codes, in large drawn letters, announce experiences that have marked the adolescent and are still present, combined with the symbolism of the clown and images of weapons; in addition to their own names, nicknames, neighborhoods and gangs.

The image of the clown observed in CS1 exists as a metaphorical marking made with toothpaste, which assumes a functional representation of the action-transformation as interaction between a specific audience, and when used, is appreciated or recreated only by those who know its meaning. This image is representative of the fact that there has been someone in the juvenile detention center that probably killed a police officer.

The code that represents to be part of the Red Command gang is 321, Guardians of the State is 75, First Command of the Capital is 1533, Northern Family is 6413, *i.e.*, a correlation is made between the alphabet and numbers in ascending order, as follows A = 1, b = 2, c = 3, d = 4, e = 5, f = 6, g = 7, h = 8, i = 9, j = 10, l = 11, m = 12, n = 13, o = 14, p = 15, q = 16, r = 17, s = 18, t = 19, u = 20, v = 21, x = 22, z = 23.

These codes represent that when someone is stepping for first time into a space, physical (bodily), metaphysical (transcendent) and metaphorical (symbolic), conscious or unconscious manifestations occur. Therefore, there is a mutual influence between environment and human behavior over time lived and perceived within a dynamic and transformative perspective, generating psycho-socio-environmental results¹².

In the other two spaces in CS2, hand and foot marks are present in an attempt to see what exists beyond the bars. When adolescents arrive, this is an unknown space,

surrounded by uncertainties where they don't know how much time will stay there; who they will find; the routines that should be taken on. In these spaces were identified markings done with something sharp or a solid white substance characteristic of construction residue.

There are a lot of mosquitos on the walls and ceiling during the day, poor ventilation and lighting, with a dirty floor, demonstrating carelessness about on-site cleaning. It is a place that does not meet the basic needs of comfort, and engraved on the walls are names of neighborhoods, municipalities and groups of representative gangs, linked to places where the adolescents had been before and probably were significant for them

In Environmental Psychology a significant place denotes a location where people "stop", resulting from the processes of action-transformation, perceptions and functionality through the physical aspects of space that carry a meaning and emotional value, synthesizing both public and intimate experiences.

This means, for example, that a room in the processing area is not limited to a space to receive health care or assistance and subsequent referral to the appropriate dormitory. This space may take on the role of a place of meaningful and interactional experiential exchange by the markings left, or the apathy that unsettles the quest for freedom.

The space used during the reception process is an area where the adolescents with their experience and sensations can identify themselves or not with some of the marks left on the walls, as well as create their own impressions. Thus, the appropriated space is created or recreated, concrete and symbolic space where the "individual brand" is imprinted, and that can be modified at any moment, that is, the phenomenon of appropriation is a bi-directional and dynamic process of action-transformation between territory and subject.

According to Gonçalves¹², this appropriation has a two-way dynamic: one guided to the conquest of space and another to oneself. This allows the subject to adapt the space to their own needs. Each individual appropriates the place in a different way, depending on the cultural, social and lifestyle models already experienced.

The marks identified in the field diary records from the observed environmental traces in the holding room area are linked to a personal or functional meaning with the place. In this way, each adolescent occupied their space, according to their affective bonds left behind, giving them meanings based on the memories still vivid in their minds, so as not to forget what they had once lived and who they once were.

Thus, space is the visible and real social environment that exists as it is manifested; and the socio-educational environment is the concrete and projected experience of the developing person during their institutional stay.

The adolescents build and resignify their spaces, being able to open themselves to a relationship with others or close themselves in a world that is their own. This resignified space is thus no longer vague and abandoned, and now has meaning and value, that is, the space acquires the status of a place, in which the subject projects his personal characteristics, as permanence occurs.

Appropriated spaces tell a particular story as often as necessary, even though it may have been experienced as a social environment without deprivation of liberty. The subject projects him/herself onto the appropriated space recreating an identification with the environment in order to reveal him/herself based on a reciprocal interaction between subject and socio-physical environment.

CONCLUSION

This socio-environmental investigation, is a great challenge, where the conservative discourse of behavior standardization is aimed at maintaining order, safety and guaranteeing the basic rights protected under the guidance of institutional agents, representatives of the state in the territory of Ceará, Brazil.

In the socio-educational institutional spaces of this research, adolescents as social and cultural subjects engrave their marks, develop and reconstruct stories in an active process, characteristic of the appropriation of space. Hence, they do not simply adapt or project themselves into the environment, but it becomes appropriated (or not), according to their individuality and what is offered or given as a possibility of resocialization and / or resignification of the social, cultural, historical and affective context, learned in the dynamic process of being, feeling and acting from the relationship with the environment.

Therefore, the socio-educational institution can be

conceived from its social, cultural, concrete and symbolic dimensions, as well as being an empty space of meanings, distant to the real needs of the subjects. In other words, the socio-educational environment can be a space that contains a floor, walls, ceiling and bars, but it can also be an environment in which the way of being, feeling and acting towards a resocialization process is projected and reinvented, and which must consider the real needs of adolescents in compliance with judicial measures, while staying in prison after been sentenced. The resocializing nature of the institution is questionable, due to the occupational restrictions and poor hygiene observed during the research.

Thus, the understanding of environmental traces in the process of appropriation of space is connected to the production of the senses, in which each singular demarcation can connect to collective meanings. The sense of belonging to a gang or territorial delimitation, demarcated by environmental traces on the walls, can take on different meanings depending on which context the adolescent is inserted.

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Resumo

Introdução: A sala de recepção visa atendimento técnico, psicossocial e médico, durante a chegada do adolescente no ambiente Socioeducativo de regime fechado, após sentença. Esse ambiente, guiado pelo Sistema Nacional de Atendimento Socioeducativo, deve assumir uma política integrada com ações conjuntas de responsabilização, educação, saúde e assistência social, no contexto do desenvolvimento humano das medidas socioeducativas.

Objetivo: Descrever os vestígios ambientais deixados pelos adolescentes, durante pós-ocupação na sala de recepção, dos Centros Socioeducacionais de internação, no Estado do Ceará.

Método: A investigação deteve-se à sala de recepção durante pós-ocupação, através da abordagem descritivo-qualitativa, com corte transversal. Os dados foram coletados pela observação sistemática com utilização do diário de campo e discussão direcionada pela análise de conteúdo.

Resultados: Os vestígios ambientais se associaram às experiências anteriores e atuais dos adolescentes, através das práticas de apropriação do espaço, na sala de recepção do Centro Socioeducacional, configurada enquanto um lugar de permanência, movimento ou passagem em constante articulação com os fatores sociais, culturais, econômicos, políticos, históricos e psicológicos.

Conclusão: A sala de recepção das medidas socioeducativas, no Estado do Ceará, enquanto um espaço de longa permanência para o atendimento psicossocial e médico, viola os direitos básicos da atenção integral aos adolescentes. Essa realidade, aponta indicativo de vulnerabilidade dos adolescentes ao serem expostos às estruturas físicas insalubres, e tenciona para a necessidade de estudos que aprofundem as discussões na perspectiva da inter-relação pessoa-ambiente.

Palavras-chave: adolescente, ambiente socioeducacional, psicologia ambiental, vestígios-ambientais, sala de recepção, territorialidade.

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