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**SERVICE TO PEOPLE IN  
STREET SITUATIONS:  
BETWEEN TECHNIQUE  
AND AFFECTIVITY**

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**Abstract:** The paper analyzes the way in which the public policy developed by the Specialized Reference Center for the Homeless Population (Centro POP) is implemented in the municipalities of Juazeiro/BA, Natal/RN, Petrolina/PE and Salvador/BA. In the methodological path, the research adopted a qualitative approach, in two phases: bibliographic and field, the latter using the French Discourse Analysis technique for data processing. The results of the study point to elements that contribute in the sense of proposing adjustments regarding the forms of execution of the workshops, when taking into account the issues related to the management and direction of the relationships with the users.

**Keywords:** Homeless population; Public policy; POP Center; Social representations; Brazilian Northeast.

## INTRODUCTION

The homeless population in large numbers is a worldwide social phenomenon, whose origins date back to the genesis of the industrialization process, which considerably altered the modes of production and the relationship with the occupation of urban space (SILVA, 2006). Brazilian society also faces this problem, not through a process of industrialization, but from the abolition of slavery in 1888, and the consequent dismissal of blacks from the production system (COTRIM, 2017).

According to an estimate made by the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA), in September 2012 Brazil had a homeless population of 92,515. In March 2020, this number jumped to 221,869 individuals, which means a growth rate of 139% in the period, a phenomenon that was repeated in all regions and municipalities of all sizes, despite the existence of the National Policy for the Homeless Population – PNPR, established by

Presidential Decree nº 7.053/2009 (BRASIL, 2009).

A strong trend towards acceleration can be observed in the data between September 2019 and March 2020, when this rate was 6.8% increase (NATALINO, 2020). In this scenario, the Single Social Assistance System (SUAS) is the protagonist of the establishment of a national policy aimed at the care of people who are in social vulnerability, for which it has a social assistance network with 4,260 units that provide care to people on the streets.

Among these are the Specialized Reference Center for the Homeless Population - POP Center, with the tasks of welcoming, caring for and promoting actions for the social reintegration of users. In 2020, a total of 175 POP centers in Brazil were distributed in 154 municipalities, which represents 2.7% of the total, according to the reference booklet (BRASIL, 2011). This article aims to analyze welcoming practices carried out in the workshops that make up the operational strategies of the technical teams of POP Centers located in Juazeiro/BA, Natal/RN, Petrolina/PE and Salvador/BA.

## INSTITUTIONAL RECEPTION AND SOCIAL LINKS

It is understood that homeless people (BRASIL, 2009) are inserted in a social context, and this is structured by social institutions. However, it is a fact that the bonds of such people are weakened (ROSA, 2005), a factor that triggers the necessary discussion about the social production of indifference (HERZFELD, 2016), as well as the reach of social institutions and, also, that the way this part of society is embedded in the social structure.

Institutions appear as a pattern of control in which individual conduct is imposed by society. Discussing this theme, Peter L. Berger and Brigitte Berger (1977) analyze

the elements that characterize its existence, namely: exteriority, objectivity, coercivity, moral authority and historicity.

Exteriority is related to the fact that social institutions appear as something situated outside the individual; so that it is not possible to speak of control or elimination of it. Objectivity, on the other hand, is translated into the fact that social institutions become something objectively real, because everyone admits the fact that they exist. A characteristic related to coerciveness, since the coercive force exerted is supported by their objectivity, that is, individually, the objective existence of institutions will not be excluded, even if, sometimes, it is a non-materialized entity, such as the State.

In their maintenance, social institutions do not rely only on coercivity, they are also supported by moral authority, through the invocation of a right to legitimacy, so that they reserve the right to reprimand the individual who violates moral parameters.

It is essential to point out that the moral authority exercised will vary, being able to show itself in external or internal reprisals, and these are more related to the feeling of shame or guilt that falls on the 'offender'.

The historicity that covers such entities is related to their external character, as it is based on the logic that, in addition to being inserted in social contexts, it does so even before the individual is born. Furthermore, it persists after his death, even if with different characteristics, because recognizing the power of institutions does not mean that they do not undergo changes.

In addition to the analysis of social institutions and their representations, the proposed discussion is related to the gift theory. The gift theory, developed by Mauss (2003), refers to the analysis of the social pact and which elements make it consistent, revealing itself as a rule that emerges from the social

bosom. As a way of creating the social pact, he recalls the importance of reciprocity actions, which mark the emergence and maintenance of a mandatory contract of social relations. Of an apparently free nature, it makes the parties involved in an atmosphere of freedom and gratuitousness for the formation of bonds of belonging.

In addition to explaining the formation of legitimacy of the social pact, the gift theory relates to the coercive force and moral authority that is exercised by social institutions. This is because adherence to the social pact ends up creating, on the one hand, behaviors and socially accepted methods and, on the other hand, repulsion or distancing those who do not conform to the socially imposed rules.

In this context, in which interpersonal relationships gain prominence, living in society forces everyone to build relationships to survive, a situation that creates inevitable risks, since the principle of life implies getting out of oneself, which presupposes the existence of a relationship of giving and receive (MARTINS, 2016).

Social experience, from this perspective, implies the dedication of society to act collectively, which leads to the generation of feelings of belonging, recognition and inclusion in the sharing of urban space, that is, in the right to life in the city (LEFEBVRE, 1991; MENDES, 2007) fully.

This way, analyzing social institutions about the service signals the need to evaluate public policies (TINOCO, 2010) that effect the insertion of these people in the social structure, which presupposes an integrated work within the service network that enables qualification, treatment, care psychological and assistance.

### **RESEARCH WITH THE USE OF SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS**

The identification of social representations

that guide the programs implemented to assist homeless people was carried out with the help of research instruments that favored content analysis. It is a set of methodological tools that apply to extremely diversified “discourses”. Furthermore, it is a controlled hermeneutic, based on deduction: inference. As an effort of interpretation, content analysis oscillates between the rigor of objectivity and the fecundity of subjectivity.

Among the paradigms formulated in the social sciences, social representations emerge as a satisfactory way to apprehend the behavior of individuals and social groups (SPINK, 2013). Moscovici (2011) states that they are formed by reciprocal influences and by implicit negotiations in the course of actions of social agents, they are mechanisms by which people are oriented towards symbolic models, images and values.

In this process, individuals acquire a common repertoire of interpretations and explanations, rules and procedures that can be applied to everyday life. Speaking, feeling and perceiving are the processes that form social representations, as Moscovici (1978) says.

The methodological procedures used were those of the French Discourse Analysis, to survey the mechanisms of speech functioning, which rest on the imaginary formations of the subject (ORLANDI, 2001; AMOSSY, 2007).

The focus for discursivization is the central aspect of the research, considering the conditions of production of discourses and their constitution processes, taking into account the contributions of Foucault (2008), Pêcheux (1997) and Orlandi (2001, 2006) between others of equal importance. Therefore, we pay attention to the social place from which the subjects involved speak, the institutions they represent, and the power relations that guide this process.

The premise is that the subject enunciates from a Discursive Formation (DF) which, in

the conception of Pêcheux (2014 [1975]) allows discursive processes to produce the effects of meaning. This way, language constitutes the material place where intersubjective exchanges take place, through which motivations for social relations are made known.

## **DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING**

The locus of the research was the POP Centers units of the following cities: Juazeiro/BA, Natal/RN, Petrolina/PE and Salvador/BA, Djalma Dutra unit, having been interviewed the technical teams that compose them.

To collect data from the survey, carried out between August and October 2020, analysis of reports referring to implemented programs was used, with emphasis on socio-educational workshops. In a complementary way, interviews were carried out with a previously agreed script for the institutional representatives, in order to consolidate depersonalized databases, in which the information was aggregated, without the possibility of individual identification.

The documents obtained were treated according to principles and procedures recommended by the French Discourse Analysis theory (ORLANDI, 2001), whose systematization in stages allows the discursive analysis to verify how the symbolic object (the text) produces meaning effects.

This path comprises the establishment of the corpus and the question that organizes it until the reach of the discursive processes, responsible for the way the text means. The next step is de-superficialization, which consists of transforming the linguistic surface (the corpus, the raw material, the text) into a discursive object, collected in the first stage. So the object of analysis becomes the discourse; the text is then considered “an example of discourse” (ORLANDI, 2001, p.65).

For the construction of meanings, it is



Figure 1 - Panel in: Centro POP Djalma Dutra - Salvador/BA

Source: Collection: Centro POP Djalma Dutra, 2020.



Figure 2 – Users' Workshop of "Centro POP Petrolina/PE"

Source: Collection: Centro POP Petrolina/PE, 2019.

necessary to refer this text to exteriority, to discursivity, to report it to discursive knowledge, to what has already been said independently, considering that every text inscribed in memory and history maintains a permanent dialogue with other texts.

In the second stage of data processing, the discourse is referred to a Discursive Formation - DF from which its meanings derive and the different Discursive Formations - DFs are related to the ideological formation that challenges these relationships. This is how the cut was made.

## RESULTS

For AD there is no subject without ideology. Ideology and the unconscious are materially linked by language. In this sense, the AD subject is not free to say what he wants to say, but occupies a social place from which he enunciates what is possible for him, from a certain Discursive Formation.

From this perspective, the objective is to verify how the subjects of this study are constituted in relation to the application of socio-educational workshops for users of the POP Center in Juazeiro/BA, Natal/RN, Petrolina/PE and Salvador/BA, which discourses the cross.

We are interested in the representations they construct about public policy and the FDs from which they enunciate. Such representations are named imaginary formations or images by AD. Once the categories chosen for analysis have been addressed, we will now deal with the methodological path taken in the search for the production of meanings.

A. The reception supported by the technique

Report 1 Hosting is necessary, but we had to direct users to get a better result. The time dedicated to each activity needs constant control by the team.
Report 2 From the methodology point of view, adjustments were necessary, especially regarding time management, as some of them require a lot of attention and this, to a certain extent, hinders the flow of planned activities.
Report 3 The first step is to organize the reception, and then distribute the tasks for the technical team. However, user demands are varied, which needs to be managed.
Report 4 Regarding the reception, it was necessary to keep a lot of attention, because it is at this moment that we have a notion of what the day will be like depending on the variety of possibilities of situations. It is at this moment that the user approaches with great interest and it is necessary to include the demands in the organization of activities.

The discursive subjects of the Reports above place themselves as part of the state technocracy, which denotes the need to affirm the work through a technical bias. Thus, it is possible to perceive that the performance of the care team for the reception needs rationality, planning and resource management capacity, as we can observe in the use of the expressions “direct users to obtain a better result”, “constant control” in the Report 1, “organizing the service” in Report 2 and “organizing activities in Report 4.

This way, a place of knowledge-power is established that is inscribed in the institutional dynamics as an episteme (FOUCAULT, 2008) for the rationalization of the work process, as demonstrated in the statements “what needs to be managed” in Report 3 and “it was need to keep close attention” in Report 4.

Another point that is evident is that the form of reception is directly related to time. This aspect is quite relevant for the performance of activities, becoming a point of tension, as can be seen in Report 2 when it states that “adjustments were necessary, especially regarding time management” and later “it interferes with the flow of planned activities”,

which reveals a tension in the management of the institutional routine. The effect of meaning produced is that of the appropriation of care processes, which constitute an asset of value in the social relationship.

### B. Valuing speech through listening

Report 1 Among the activities is listening, carried out by all the professionals involved.
Report 2 Many users require a great deal of attention, some go to the service daily just to report their experiences...
Report 3 During the execution of the activities, it becomes necessary to use creativity so that everyone participates, because in general the time for all users to express themselves is scarce.
Report 4 There is a need for speech on the part of users... Which brings the need to value their views that need to be included... Conversation circles are practically daily.

The reference in the statements above about the primacy of speech repeatedly present in Reports 2 “they go to the service daily just to report” and 4 “There is a need for speech on the part of users”, “The conversation circles are practically daily”, denote that listening is a crucial part of the practice of the technical team.

The emitted word is a gift that needs the reciprocity of listening (MAUSS, 2003; MARTINS, 2001), which is received as social consideration, as can be seen in Report 1 “Among the activities is listening” and in Report 2 “ Many users require a great degree of attention”.

Speech thus constitutes a means of exchange, in which giving and receiving complement each other, constituting part of an economy of linguistic exchanges (BOURDIEU, 1983). From this perspective, a point to be considered is that social representations occur in a tangible way through the incorporation of speech acts, in which the self-image of users is expressed through their protagonism in social

relationships, as seen in Report 4 “ Which brings the need to value their visions, which need to be included”.

### C. Art as a factor of engagement

Report 1 In the handicraft workshops we had few adhesions, most prefer to use the time for some economic activity. What impacted the most was the cinema, watching movies at the unit. Especially the action ones, like the X-Men.
Report 2 In the routine of activities, movies two to three times a week, with great acceptance by users
Report 3 As for movies, we always try to hear what they prefer, however there needs to be a direction to avoid stress and disputes that can affect the operation of the service.
Report 4 What has shown a lot of results are the films, there is a great interest in varied films. But this always needs to be negotiated with users, so that not only those in the commercial circuit are included, but also educational ones, who add more to the team's work.

The valuations attributed to the use of cinema as a work strategy are quite significant. Regarding its use in the workshops, it is a usual way of capturing the attention of the Pop Center users, being mentioned repeatedly, as follows: “What had the most impact was the cinema” (report 1); “The routine of activities includes movies two to three times a week” (report 2); “there is a great interest in varied films (report 4)”.

The use of the verb ‘impact’ and the expression ‘great interest’ point to a relationship in which the discursive subject recognizes the appropriation of the seventh art as an enabling device for the work. Such a mechanism has its recognized function, by allowing access to the formation of subjectivities aimed at enabling social insertion actions, as according to report 4 they ‘add more to the team’s work’.

There is, therefore, in this statement a positive perception of adherence to cinema as an integrative and educational practice, with favorable consequences for institutional

work. The effect of meaning produced is, therefore, the appropriation of technical knowledge in the organization as part of its habitus (BOURDIEU, 2004), fundamental for the development of workshops as part of the technical-organizational culture.

On the other hand, there is the insertion of elements of tension with the users, as stated in report 3, when stating that, “however, there needs to be a direction to avoid stress and disputes that can affect the functioning of the service”. This valuation, by introducing an adversative conjunction, reveals the existence of constraints in the conduct of the workshops, since it ‘always needs to be negotiated’.

This way, it enunciates a place of construction of reciprocity (MARTINS, 2016), so that the social relationship is satisfied for the objectives of public policy. In this aspect, it appears that there is an indication that there is no exclusivity in the prevalence of the will of the technical team, but the need for expertise that is manifested in the ability to negotiate with service users.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The research work carried out aimed to analyze the way in which institutional care for homeless people occurs. Of a sociological nature, its scope was the experiences of the Centro Pop’s technical teams in serving the service users. In particular, on the way of conducting the practices carried out in the socio-educational workshops.

Several intervening factors in social relations were identified, with an impact on the execution of public policy. Among which, in a very expressive way, it became evident that the existence of physical equipment and the provision of services of a bureaucratic nature, added to the promotion of workshops according to government priorities, are not enough.

In order to be successful, the data point to

the need to establish a relationship of trust, not only with the institutions, but also especially obtained through proximity to professionals in the field. The individuals served, despite all the miserable condition to which they are subjected, still place themselves in a way of reserving for themselves a space of autonomy in the face of the power of the State.

A better use of its performance can be obtained with appropriate approaches through the use of artistic languages, which take into account the need for an institutional action that goes beyond the mere application of bureaucratic procedures.

The adequate management of actions aimed at homeless people, in order to adequately preserve the protection of their social rights, involves investment in structural improvements in the physical equipment available and in training for the teams. This way, Brazilian society will be able to approach the constitutional precept of integral social protection.



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