


## Staying on a street situation - A phenomenological look at the person-street relationship\*


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**Objective:** this research aimed at understanding the constructions that are established in the relationship of a person who lives in a street situation with this context and that exert impacts on the choice to remain in such situation.

**Methodology:** a qualitative and methodological procedure was adopted in the research. Open narrative interviews were used for data collection and the phenomenological research method was employed for the analysis articulated at three levels, namely: 1) Family relationships; 2) Welcoming; and 3) Living in the streets. **Results:** three men participated in the narrative interviews, with between 5 and 15 consecutive years living in the streets and own choice for such situation. Through the theoretical and methodological articulations, a dimension of what is built in the person-street experience was approached. The perspective found construction and potentiality, exceeding representations limited to lack or absence of life. People's choice and autonomy were considered, based on the meaning constructed by them. **Conclusion:** it is concluded that this relationship needs to be understood from the nonlinear interlocution of the clinic with the social body.

**Descriptors:** Street Population; Disorders Related to Substance Use; Gestalt Therapy; Qualitative Research.

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## A permanência em situação de rua - Um olhar fenomenológico para a relação pessoa-rua

**Objetivo:** a presente pesquisa objetivou compreender as construções que se estabelecem na relação da pessoa que vive em situação de rua com esse contexto e que impactam na escolha pela permanência em tal situação. **Metodologia:** na pesquisa foi adotado um procedimento metodológico qualitativo. Foi utilizada a entrevista narrativa aberta para coleta de dados e o método fenomenológico de investigação para a análise articulada em três níveis: 1) Relações Familiares, 2) Acolhimento e 3) Viver na rua. **Resultados:** participaram da entrevista narrativa três pessoas do sexo masculino que têm entre 5 a 15 anos consecutivos de permanência e escolha pela situação de rua. Por meio das articulações teóricas e metodológicas aproximou-se de uma dimensão do que é construído na vivência pessoa-rua. O olhar encontrou a construção e a potencialidade, ultrapassando as representações limitadas à falta ou à ausência de vida. Considerou-se a escolha e autonomia da pessoa, a partir do sentido construído pelas mesmas. **Conclusão:** conclui-se que tal relação necessita ser compreendida a partir da interlocução não linear da clínica com o corpo social.

**Descritores:** População em Situação de Rua; Transtornos Relacionados ao Uso de Substâncias; Terapia Gestalt; Pesquisa Qualitativa.

## Permanencia en situación de calle - Una mirada fenomenológica a la relación persona-calle

**Objetivo:** esta investigación tuvo como objetivo comprender las construcciones que se establecen en la relación de la persona que vive en situación de calle con este contexto y que impactan en la elección de permanecer en dicha situación. **Metodología:** en la investigación se adoptó un procedimiento metodológico cualitativo. Se utilizó la entrevista narrativa abierta para la recolección de datos y el método de investigación fenomenológico para el análisis articulado en tres niveles: 1) Relaciones familiares, 2) Recepción y 3) Vivir en la calle. **Resultados:** participaron de la entrevista narrativa tres personas del sexo masculino, que viven en situación de calle hace entre 5 y 15 años consecutivos y que eligieron dicha situación. Mediante articulaciones teóricas y metodológicas se logró aproximarse a una dimensión de lo que se construye en la experiencia persona-calle. La mirada encontró la construcción y la potencialidad, superando las representaciones que se limitan a la falta o ausencia de vida. Se consideró la elección y la autonomía de la persona, a partir del significado que los participantes construyeron. **Conclusión:** es necesario comprender esta relación a partir de la interlocución no lineal de la clínica con el cuerpo social.

**Descriptorios:** Población en Situación de Calle; Trastornos Relacionados con el Consumo de Sustancias; Terapia Gestalt; Investigación Cualitativa.

## Introduction

The presence of people who choose the streets as a survival space is a reality historically conceived in various parts of the world. In Brazil, this process was intensified with industrial development in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, where rural populations began to seek new forms of life in large metropolises. However, the most recent research studies on the theme indicate that most of the people living in a street context currently come from urban areas<sup>(1)</sup>.

Since 2004, after a history of initiatives limited to the Philanthropy areas, nationwide policies under the Social Assistance focus proposed by the Ministry of Social and Agrarian Development (*Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Agrário*, MDSA) have been promoted. It was sought to formulate a definition that could encompass the different dimensions and contexts of the street population, which came to be defined as follows: "A heterogeneous population group consisting of people who have in common the guarantee of survival through productive activities developed in the streets, interrupted or weakened family ties and non-reference of regular housing"<sup>(2)</sup>.

There is certain inconsistency in the proposal of classifications for this population group because it does not correspond to the multiple manifestations of subjective reality faced by people who remain in this context.

The first and still only decennial census published in 2009 identified nearly 31,922 people living in the streets in our country. A more recent estimate released in 2016 by the Applied Economic Research Institute (*Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada*, IPEA) points out that this collective group has tripled in seven years, totaling nearly 101,854 people in this condition.

It is important to point out the absence of official data on this population segment, a condition that can be partially explained by the operational complexity of a field survey with people without a fixed address<sup>(3)</sup>.

Even given the heterogeneity of this group, reinforced by the wording of the national policy, this population is treated with homogeneity. More than naturalization of the phenomenon, the absence of answers about the uniqueness of people living in the streets precludes understanding important stories for an approximation to this reality as an existence possibility. According to Mendonça<sup>(4)</sup>, it is not a question of denying social character, but it becomes necessary to see the subject immersed in this context, to understand the subjectivity of these individuals without depriving it of its totality. It is known that the street situation is a phenomenon that has historical, political and social facets that cross each other. It is necessary to consider and understand the senses that cross the experience of living in the streets from the diversity that surrounds

this way of life. The paths underwent until arriving at the street situation are characterized by successive experiences of losses and social disconnection. However, the dialectic inherent in the theme incubates us to reflect on a hypothesis: there are people who choose to remain there<sup>(5-6)</sup>.

As a science and profession, Psychology has built approximations to the social field that articulate praxis no longer restricted to an intrasubjective clinical conception, but that meets people in their contexts. This path is understood from the concept of Expanded Clinic<sup>(7)</sup> or Transclinical<sup>(8)</sup>, a health device that interfaces with the complexity of the psychosocial distress process, proposing care that encompasses the integrality and uniqueness of human experiences, including social determinants and not only individualizing psychopathological processes. Therefore, the clinic becomes an interventional resource, an encounter, a listening means, a politically engaged action.

In line with this conception, we have the contributions of the Gestalt Therapy, which, with the existential phenomenological perspective, reasserts the health and disease dialectic and considers singularity, autonomy and responsibility as elements that constitute the person-world relationship. This convergence enables the interface of this approach with care actions, with listening contributing important tools for understanding the dynamics of healthy and unhealthy functioning, seeking possibilities and re-establishing satisfactory contacts with people, understanding that each person has a particular way of being-in-the-world and consequently of suffering<sup>(9)</sup>. It is in this way that the Gestalt view seeks to go beyond the description of symptoms to understand the meaning of the disease process<sup>(10)</sup>.

Considering the complexity of the phenomenon, authors<sup>(11)</sup> draw the attention to the intra-, inter- and extra-subjective identity productions, capable of generating multiple meanings about oneself, the other and street life as a material and symbolic space. Nevertheless, research studies without prior knowledge of homeless people most of the time deal with the consequence as a cause with regard to the streets as housing for people<sup>(12)</sup>. This panorama not only affects the Brazilian context, but also several countries around the world that still do not have effective public policies to face this reality, either at the paradigmatic or pragmatic level<sup>(13)</sup>.

Thus, the paper aims at understanding the complexity of person-street relationships and how they impact the experiences of the people who choose to remain in this context, considering that the social reality and the clinical dimension are inextricably intertwined.

Based on the theme, it was sought to answer the following question: "How is the person-street experience constituted and which is the impact on choosing it as a life and permanence context?"

## Methodology

A qualitative and methodological procedure was adopted in the research, articulated as a case study, which is characterized by the subjective and contextualized view of the phenomenon under study. Open narrative interviews were applied for data collection and Giorgi's phenomenological research method<sup>(14)</sup> for the phenomenological analysis. For the author, the objective of this method is to access the intentionality of consciousness to reach the essence of a given phenomenon.

To perceive the world through the Phenomenology lens is to be concerned about the meaning of things themselves, that is, how they are meant by the experience of those who undergo them. It is considered that there is a descriptive movement carried out by consciousness that goes through social structuring until an intersubjective relationship is established with the phenomenon. Intentionality produces singular meanings to the lived<sup>(15)</sup>.

The research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Pontifical Catholic University of Goiás (*Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Goiás, PUC/Goiás*), adapting it to the requirements set forth CNS Resolutions 466/2012, 510/2016 and complementary with opinion number 3,182,691 and CAEE: 04851318.9.0000.0037. The researchers identified the benefit (direct or indirect) of participation as a possibility to reflect on the uniqueness of people living on the streets, representing important experiences to break with stigmas and devise integrated care that respects the autonomy and human rights of this population. The risk measured was the embarrassment or discomfort of some participants during the interview, which did not happen because it was minimized with the individual character of the meeting and confidentiality of all the information, as well as from the search for an interrelational and dialectical space during the collection moment, providing the legitimate expression of the subject's perceptions in a judgment-free contact. The subjects could give up their participation at any time during the interview. The interviewer, in fact, was available to offer support to the participants who felt mobilized with the contents addressed during the interview, providing their contact in the free and informed consent form.

## Participants

Three male participants took part in the study, who were identified with fictitious names chosen by themselves: Cristófer, 31 years old, Complete High School and ten years in a street situation; Carlos, 30 years old, Complete Elementary School and five years living in the streets; and Matias, 46 years old, Incomplete

Elementary School and fifteen years in a street situation. The number of participants is justified by the study time limitation, as the method is based on a detailed analysis of the narrative interviews; the specificity of the participating population is also considered, such as high turnover and difficulty in adherence and bonding, as well as it meets the objective proposed of understanding subjective realities. The relationship with health services and community leaders close to the territory were facilitators. The participants were selected for convenience, after being approached by the interviewer who explained about the research, all were volunteers in the data collection procedure and signed the free and informed consent form.

## Instruments

In line with the approach underlying this phenomenological study, a sample based on a case study was chosen, involving three subjects, all with life paths and permanence in the streets, considered a meeting and participation place. Narrative interviews, conducted directly in the experience *loci* of the research protagonists, can be considered a participant observation technique<sup>(16)</sup>. Such method, which emerges from an ethnographic approach, in fact turned out to be the most compatible with a phenomenological type of knowledge matrix, which considers subjective experiences (*Erlebnisse*) as "those human dispositions that lead a person to undergo phenomena as something experienced from the core of themselves (...) and bearer of meaning and value evident in themselves for the subject who thus experiences it" (p. 96)<sup>(17)</sup>.

In line with the phenomenological approach, the justification and the objectives of the current study, the guiding question was as follows: "What do you find in the streets that makes you stay there?", enabling the open narrative interview, which provides for the researcher's approximation to the senses produced by the participant<sup>(16)</sup>. A sociodemographic questionnaire applied after the interview helped understand some characteristics of the sample that enabled the analysis of the interlocutors' profiles.

## Data collection procedures

The researcher made the contact and met with the participants in their own life context: the streets. It is important to note that the moment experienced during the approach was considered, as well as an initial conversation with the participants who met the inclusion and exclusion criteria, who were invited to participate in the research and received detailed explanations about the study objectives and procedures. The people who agreed to participate and signed the informed consent form were subjected to an individual interview with the researcher

that took place between March and May 2019. The interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 1 hour. They were recorded to ensure reliability of the content reported; the participants' identity was preserved using fictitious names, indicated by the involved subjects themselves.

Authors<sup>(18)</sup> evidenced that the potential of analyzing individual narratives was indispensable to be able to access the relational complexity between the subjects' practices and the reflexivity. Addressing singularities allows apprehending subjectivity as that which escapes the social fields, "which cannot be fixed by a norm or in a form" (p. 31).

### Data analysis

The phenomenological research method was used, which corresponds to a method suitable for Scientific Psychology. The objective of this method is the intentionality of consciousness, seeking to achieve the essence of a given phenomenon by describing it thoroughly until obtaining reliable knowledge<sup>(14)</sup>.

Data analysis was carried out from the verbatim transcription of the interviews that described the participants' experiences (general sense); subsequently, determination of the parts, with a division of the units of meanings (phenomenological-psychological reduction), as well as transformation of the units of meaning into expressions of psychological character (synthesis of meaning); and, finally, determination of the general structure of psychological meanings (essence of the phenomenon)<sup>(14)</sup>, which resulted in three levels: 1) Family relationships; 2) Welcoming; and 3) Living in the streets, described in the Results session.

The discursive data, on which the methodological procedure of the current study is based, cannot be considered empirical references of objective and objectifying realism, but of a discursive (co)production between the observer and the observed subject. The narratives, around which this phenomenological analysis is articulated, present themselves as meta-artifacts, that is, "socially-constructed and culturally-crystallized mediation devices, through which the actors interact with the world and act in it" (p. 73)<sup>(19)</sup>.

Therefore, more than the explicit content, object of the lexicographic methodologies of a socio-cognitive nature, in the current study attention was paid to the rhetorical matrices, which implicitly permeate the narrative productions of the interviewed subjects, in order to access the intra-, inter- and extra-subjective representations, underlying a phenomenological view of the reality experienced by the research participants<sup>(20)</sup>. The sense and meaning attributed to the street reality and phenomenon was in fact particularized, as a daily interaction context, in relation to the historical, symbolic and normative coordinates that circumscribe the *Dasein*

of the subjects interviewed; in this sense, meaning is not in the words (explicit content), but what is expressed between the words (implicit content).

### Results and discussion

The narratives analyzed carry with them experiences that approximate the relationship that these people establish with the streets, with themselves and with the social field. These experiences are found from an approximate clipping with the dimension of living in the streets as a subjective possibility, without losing sight of issues circumscribed to the constitution of subjects also contextualized and inscribed in a population group. To this end, a brief contextualization that marks the uniqueness of each story before interrelating them is highlighted below.

There are three participants, who were assigned fictitious names, identified in this study as follows: Cristofer, Carlos and Matias.

Cristofer says that his path to the streets was due to an imposition of his father, communicated by his mother after recurrent relational conflicts. He states that such situations impacted his psychological well-being, asserting that it is difficult to organize from interrupted family ties. He reports that the experience in the streets happens through coexistence, respect and belonging strategies. As subsistence is the simplest stage to ensure, which asserts that it does not happen with one's rights and well-being, indispensable factors in a person's perspective. Cristofer had not used drugs until the time of the interview, three years ago. He lived most of his period in the streets in the region known as *Cracolândia* in the city of São Paulo, being linked, at the time, to drug trafficking and the First Command of the Capital (*Primeiro Comando da Capital*, PCC) faction. He asserts that the support of specialized services was an important resource for building a life project and psychosocial support. He participated in programs that promoted citizenship and social participation. Currently, he lives in the streets in Brasília by self-declared choice and has links that seek to overcome the vulnerability barriers.

Carlos asserted that he decided to leave his home after a course of conflicts with his mother and wife, given their relationship with substance use and activities related to trafficking. He felt controlled by his family and was threatened by friends who accused him of treason. Carlos pointed to the streets as a place where he finds people who live similar situations and where there are no demands. He indicated State violence as striking and asserts that such process is intensified by depersonification of the people living in a street situation. Carlos made a comparison between the streets and the prison system, asserting that they differ because the former consolidates respect as a relational form.

In his testimony, Matias mentions the death of his parental figures, his father during his early childhood and his mother in early adolescence; such events imposed significant interruptions on him, making it impossible to conceive family and living in a house after such episodes. He left his house without communicating the decision to his wife and children, losing any contact thereafter. Other striking aspects are the centrality of work in his life, exercised regularly as the element that he attributes to his appreciation. He also makes regular use of crack (after his working hours), which does not impose direct harms to his life according to him, contrary to the common sense notes directed to this theme. Matias works informally as a painter and master builder and is currently the spokesperson for a social income-generating project.

The following are the general structures of meaning, presented in terms of categories. They correspond to the phenomenological reduction of the common units, as detailed in the method of analysis of the interviews; it is the approximation of the meaning of the psychological dimensions expressed by the research participants when describing their experiences with the phenomenon under study.

A narrative pattern can be observed during the analysis of the interviews: both start from the report of the reason why they came to the condition of living in the streets, and go through the current relationship with this motivation, articulated to what they find on the street and, finally, describe the ways of life in this context.

The phenomenological analysis will be described based on three categories: 1- Family relationships; 2- Staying in the streets; and 3- Ways of life in the streets.

The first category, "Family relationships", brings together the approximate dimension with the elements involved in heading to the street situation. The common unit that corresponds to the description of all participants is the experience of conceiving the streets as a possibility from the interruption of family ties. Cristofer's narrative refers to the action of leaving his home due to family conflicts; in this case, such exit is not a choice, but is constituted after a determination of his parents. Carlos decides to leave his home after conflicts with his mother. Matias chooses to leave the house after the loss of his parental figures, initially his father and then his mother. In all three reports, there was interruption of the ties, either by imposition, choice or fatality. It is noted that the relationship with this phenomenon is an unhealthy condition for the participants; it is understood that being in the streets is also a way to continue living such interruptions.

Heidegger<sup>(21)</sup> asserts that human beings are signified by their condition of being free. Man is the result of his freedom because he chooses the actions he

will perform every day. Thus, freedom is not a human achievement, it is a condition of human existence, as shown in the following excerpts from the interviews carried out:

Excerpt 1: *The break of family ties I believe that's the problem, I didn't get along very well especially with my father. And this disagreement made my father ask my mother to choose between me and him. She asked me to leave the house and go on with my life.* (Cristofer)

Excerpt 2: *My mother who gave me so much advice and I didn't listen, she said she didn't want to hear from me anymore. The only option was to go live in the streets.* (Carlos)

Excerpt 3: *I don't feel good anymore, I enter a house, I remember my mother, you know, she talking to me. I get lost, always, it's something that no human being can remove from my mind.* (Matias)

Zinker<sup>(22)</sup> asserts that the family is a totality where the parts affect each other in the search for self-regulation as a contextualized cohesion unit. The ability to develop a perception of oneself and certain differentiation from others is attributed to this system. Thus, the speeches show the concept of house fixed to the idea of family, which brings about a reflection on the link between these elements. The house is represented in the narratives as the place where family life is consolidated; therefore, when such ties are questioned, the connection with this space is revised to some extent as a form of creative adjustment. Cardella<sup>(23)</sup> points to creative adjustment as the ability to incorporate the new to what is old to recreate the format: relational reality as something flexible that can be transformed.

The disconnection in the socio-family axis is a weakening process that can become isolation and social emptiness, the streets are a way of feeling it. Contact arises as an opportunity to affect and be affected in the constructive and/or destructive relationships<sup>(12)</sup>.

The second category, "Welcoming", consists of the elements that make it possible to approach what is found in the street experience and is associated with the choice to remain in such situation. The common unit that best approximates the narratives of all three participants in this context is the streets as a place where help is found, as well as absence of social demands, tranquility and freedom, elements pointed out as important for structuring, building goals and psychological well-being. It is perceived that the non-place that emerges from the interruption of family ties is resized in this new psychologically-conceivable form of life. An encounter with others living similar situations takes place, but is also referred to as a contact with oneself, both through welcoming. Permanence is a response to this finding, as it is an alternative that gives answers and makes sense. Another two elements align continuity in the street context: discrimination and loss of the social path, both

of them dimension that even if a person does not choose to remain in the streets, leaving is a complex process, as it is difficult to cross walls that annihilate possibilities and that take the person away from the social path (sic) – the latter is used in the narrative and is associated with the set of rules and socialization contracts, gained by our arrangements with the social life dynamics and permanence in the street space.

Both for Existentialism and for the Gestalt Therapy, only human beings can understand themselves, through a direct experience of their being-in-the-world. Even when they momentarily lose this ability, they remain the most faithful interpreters of themselves<sup>(9)</sup>. In the following excerpts, the discursive constructions through which the people interviewed attribute a meaning to themselves and to the context (whether social or physical) of living in the streets will be highlighted:

Excerpt 4: *I stay in the streets because it's very good to me and I like it, there are no rules from either mother or wife. If I'd known that, I would've come here before.* (Cristofer)

Excerpt 5: *I found myself in the streets, I prefer to be here. The streets are welcoming, they take the weight off, calm you down, give you freedom to come and go, rethink my life and start all over again.* (Carlos)

Excerpt 6: *I feel lost in a house after my parents' death.* (Matias)

Cristofer, Carlos and Matias describe the streets as a logic constituted and organized by tacit operation and coexistence contracts. There are time and space specificities that govern sociability in this context. This is pointed out as a physical and also symbolic place, as it is inscribed in the identity of these people. According to the participants, the streets have their own rules, which include respect, loyalty and diverse relationships with hygiene, body, money, dimension of the public and private, individual and collective and interpersonal relationships, among others.

It is noted that, understood from these representations, the streets are not only a place but an element endowed with meanings constituted from the relationships that occur with it, the interaction with the streets consolidates particular modes of existence.

The Gestalt Therapy is based on a specific view of existence. It brings human freedom, individuality and the personal responsibility to become more and more aware of oneself, from the experience underwent in the present and the holistic view of man as a being-in-the-world<sup>(10)</sup>.

The streets, segment of this population, are a space of experiences, work and housing, continuously living in these dimensions is marked by resignifications and new paths. It has different forms and meanings. Therefore, it is not only restricted to the living in the streets but to street situations<sup>(24)</sup>. A French-Argentine anthropologist<sup>(17)</sup> asserts that it is necessary to stop considering the street population as a kind of negative portrait of humanity,

analyzed as a single undifferentiated set and always based on its losses. For the author, when listening to and analyzing these lives it should be tried to overcome this sense of losses first from a more sensitive attention, not to stop listening to them but to come into contact with other words and, therefore, with other constructions of losses and gains that form a condition of social and psychological reality permeated by failures, but that does not cease to be human.

It is known that dialog and understanding the theoretical and philosophical grounds of the Gestalt Therapy presupposes an attempt to put an end to the dichotomy between the psychological and the social, breaking with simplistic causal models. Thus, it provides us with elements capable of going beyond individualized descriptions, but which seek to represent a subjective reality in the form of a contextualized totality: person-world<sup>(9)</sup>. The narratives of all three subjects involved in the research egregiously show how living in the streets represents an existential choice connoted by agency:

Excerpt 7: *I found myself in the streets. There are people with similar situations there, we welcome each other. I couldn't deal with indifference in my mother's house.* (Cristofer)

Excerpt 8: *The streets are a good challenge, because I didn't know so many things before I came to the streets, now I know.* (Carlos)

Excerpt 9: *The streets are a possible way of life.* (Matias)

The definition of the phenomenon of living in the streets goes through the collective aspects and meets the multiplicity of personal conditions, as well as the diversity of solutions given existence in this context. The streets are means for survival and construction of an identity, where stories based on relationships, work, leisure and housing are realized. That is, the streets are a space where lives are also built<sup>(25)</sup>.

These projects and choices are linked to the notions of freedom and agency. It is by being free that a person chooses what he wants to be. It is the fact that a person can make choices that constitutes his essence and allows him to create their own values. Man is a being in the face of choice. There is no way not to choose. If he is totally free to choose, he is also responsible for everything he does<sup>(23)</sup>.

The third category, "Living in the streets", refers to the ways of relating to and on the street. The common identified units are as follows: Drugs, State Violence and Social Relationships.

The relationship with drugs emerges as a form of survival, but not as an essential resource, as the possibility of being in the streets without using substances is pointed out, a situation currently experienced by the first participant. However, there is certain differentiation in the ways of living when using and not using drugs. Use is associated with respect by other people in a similar situation, whereas non-use is pointed out to a higher level of operational organization.

State Violence is illustrated by the intervention of Police officers, by the hygienist actions of merchants, and by the delegitimization of the rights of this population.

The Social Relationships are the interactions between people and access to social devices, such as a Psychosocial Care Center (*Centro de Atenção Psicossocial*, CAPS) or the Specialized Reference Center for the Street Population (POP Center). It is understood that the former is associated with necessary interactions and that the latter are relationships of trust. Work emerges as a constituent element of dignity and with an occupational function:

Excerpt 10: *The relationship with social devices, monitoring is important not only in terms of infrastructure, but psychological support when you lose your way.* (Cristofer)

Excerpt 11: *I know a lot of people who live in the streets and don't do drugs.* (Carlos)

Excerpt 12: *Every day they (the Police) come wanting to hit us. I can protect myself from this violence because I know the law.* (Matias)

The streets bring up the issue of survival and subsistence, two dimensions that go through the self-support and heterosupport relationships, internal and external elements that assist in the development of the individuals in their self-regulation process<sup>(26)</sup>. It is necessary to relate, such proposals are linked to the affiliation process. There is also dialogue about the difference of living in the streets at different locations, asking for food, money and informal work as forms of guarantees.

The use of psychoactive substances is transversal to the speeches, pointed out as a striking point, but not inherent to this condition as attributed in the social imaginary. It is important to highlight that the support field for this research is a Psychosocial Care Center for Alcohol and other Drugs (CAPS-AD III) – a health service that serves people with problematic use of alcohol and other drugs – which makes this topic present in some way in all reports.

State and relational violence are associated in the speeches, the difficulty mentioned in establishing bonds of trust, and reveal themselves as one of the resources used in conflict resolution in this context<sup>(27)</sup>.

The streets are finally associated with freedom, free choice and absence of behavior regulators, as socially experienced, such as: non-obligation to have a bath, wash clothes, meet schedules and pay bills. The speeches indicate that the streets have maintenance mechanisms in the context itself, from the stigmas and social marks and also from the adaptation to the different daily patterns, which according to them impact on continuity in this context.

Merleau-Ponty<sup>(15)</sup> asserts that the body is existence itself, being the significance place of the self

and the world. The individual exists from their bodily communication. The body is a source of meaning, not merely a physical apparatus, but has a symbolic existence that expresses itself and communicates with the world, based on our way of being and existing. The relationships are mediated by a social body; thus, subjectivity is understood beyond a construction of interiority, but in corporeality.

Yontef<sup>(15)</sup> also points out that the Gestalt Therapy allows an opening to understand the totality as the result of the interaction between two or more interconnected and transforming factors. Phenomena are understood from a context consisting in a web of interrelated forces.

Performance in the Gestalt Therapy must start from the notion that individuals have no significance being separated from their environment and that such an environment must be considered, taking into account that the field always consists of multiple factors and complex and differentiated interrelationships, from their relationship with the world<sup>(10)</sup>.

Human beings tend to self-regulate to be better adapted to the relationships with their environment. Thus, the Gestalt Therapy must be attentive to the parts of the individual and to the whole as constituent factors of a unit that complement each other<sup>(9)</sup>.

It is known that the Gestalt Therapy proposes an integral view of the subject; therefore, it aims at non-dichotomy between body and mind. Understanding subjects as beings, whose unique experiences are constructed and reconstructed from the relationships they establish with the field, in an uninterrupted process of seeking self-regulation and growth, allows for a broader view of the existence possibilities of this population group.

In this sense, the life stories of those who live in the streets do not simply constitute objective descriptions of life events. They are accounts endowed with a particular affectivity, precisely because it is from them that individuals count and reassert themselves as subjects, within their context<sup>(28)</sup>.

The distrust tone, the emotional pauses, the possibility of transposing the introjected discourse of self-reference, and often of intersection with the stigmatizing representations attributed to these people, share place with dialogical listening and interest in the meanings that these subjects attribute to their lives. In addition to the theoretical constructions, there is the dimensioned history that only those who have experienced this condition bodily, socially and psychically can report<sup>(29)</sup>.

## Conclusion

Through the theoretical and methodological articulations, the dimension of what is built (what is found in the streets and not only what is lost) was accessed as



a social possibility and subjective experience, breaking with the restricted conception of reducing experiences to representations of lack or absence of life. The look was directed to the construction and potentiality from the sense constructed by the subjects themselves. Such proposal considers the subjects' choice and autonomy; it does not remove from them the ability to affect and be affected. It is not a question of denying aspects related to vulnerability, as they are circumscribed in the narratives and compose the stories; the proposal is to overcome uni-causality.

With regard to its objectives of understanding and identifying aspects related to the choice of staying on the street, this research fulfilled the purposes, aware that reflection is not exhausted here, but that the neglected perspective is outlined in the social imaginary and in most of the studies involving this topic: not everyone who lives in the streets has the intention of leaving them. This proposal demarcates the difference between assistance-related practices and assistantship, common in this scenario. The first permeates the production of life projects, whereas the second is based on moral and simplistic conceptions that exert impacts on the formulation of public policies for these people.

The background dimension of this study is the concept of expanded clinic, or psychosocial approach, which emerges from the need to think about a practice capable of accessing demands that do not reach the conventional therapeutic setting, but that need to be understood from the interlocution of the clinic with the social body in the professional practice.

Within the nexus with its methodological objectives, this study has as limitations the sample size and the fact that is only comprised by male individuals, failing to consider important aspects of female existence in these contexts. For further studies, the possibility of expanding and diversifying the sample is suggested, seeking the interrelationships of understanding the multidetermined and complex experience of living and/or remaining in the streets in Brazil.

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