

‘INVOLVED’: ADOLESCENTS’ NARRATIVES ABOUT THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH CRIMINAL FACTIONS IN FORTALEZA¹

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ABSTRACT. This paper aims to analyze narratives of adolescents deprived of their liberty by socio-educational measure about their involvement in criminal organizations linked to drug trafficking, popularly known as factions, in the context of Fortaleza-CE. This is a qualitative research in the light of the cartography method, operationalized from autobiographical narrative interviews with 10 adolescents who are accused of committing an infraction analogous to drug trafficking. To analyze the data, we used theoretical contributions from Social Psychology in its dialogues with interdisciplinary studies on violence, youth and their social markers. The results and discussion section traces the following lines of involvement of adolescents with drug factions, which stood out the most in their narratives: unequal precariousness of life as a political project of marginalization of peripheral adolescences; captures of modes of subjectivation associated with the imperative to ‘live intensely’; socio-spatial segregation and internalization of the stereotype of the ‘dangerous’; effects of institutionalization on (re)framing as ‘Involved’; objectification of women in the cisheteropatriarchal system; and intersection of gender, class, race, age, and place of living. From the analysis we conclude that gender is a fundamental category for understanding the psychosocial effects of violence on the life trajectories of adolescents deprived of their freedom, as well as a preponderant factor for their enrollment in the drug trade.

Keywords: Adolescent; urban violence; gender.

‘ENVOLVIDAS’: NARRATIVAS DE ADOLESCENTES SOBRE SUAS RELAÇÕES COM FACÇÕES CRIMINOSAS EM FORTALEZA

RESUMO. O objetivo deste artigo é analisar narrativas de adolescentes em cumprimento de medida socioeducativa de privação de liberdade sobre seus envolvimento em organizações criminosas ligadas ao tráfico de drogas, conhecidas popularmente como facções, no contexto de Fortaleza - CE. Trata-se de uma pesquisa qualitativa à luz do método da cartografia, operacionalizada a partir de entrevistas narrativas autobiográficas com 10 adolescentes a quem foi atribuído o cometimento de ato infracional análogo ao tráfico de drogas. Para análise dos dados, utilizamos aportes teóricos da Psicologia Social em seus diálogos com estudos interdisciplinares sobre violência, juventude e seus marcadores sociais. A seção de resultados e discussão traça as seguintes linhas de envolvimento das adolescentes com facções, as quais se sobressaíram nas narrativas:

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precarização desigual da vida como projeto político de marginalização das adolescências periféricas; capturas de modos de subjetivação associados ao imperativo de 'viver intensamente'; segregação socioespacial e internalização do estereótipo da 'perigosa'; efeitos da institucionalização no (re)enquadramento como 'envolvidas'; objetificação de mulheres no sistema cisheteropatriarcal; e intersecção entre gênero, classe, raça, idade e local de moradia junto ao recrudescimento de processos de subalternização a partir do envolvimento em facções. A partir das análises, concluímos que o gênero, em suas interseccionalidades, é uma importante chave de análise dos efeitos psicossociais da violência nas trajetórias de vida de adolescentes privadas de liberdade e nas hierarquias internas de grupos criminosos que disputam mercados ilegais e territórios urbanos.

Palavras-chave: Adolescente; violência; gênero.

'INVOLUCRADAS': NARRATIVAS DE ADOLESCENTES SOBRE SUS RELACIONES CON FACCIÓNES CRIMINALES EN FORTALEZA

RESUMEN. El objetivo de este artículo es analizar las narrativas de adolescentes en cumplimiento de medidas socioeducativas privativas de libertad sobre su participación en organizaciones criminales vinculadas al tráfico de drogas, conocidas popularmente como facciones, en el contexto de Fortaleza- CE. Se trata de una investigación cualitativa a la luz del método cartográfico, operacionalizada a partir de entrevistas narrativas autobiográficas a 10 adolescentes acusadas de cometer una infracción análoga al tráfico de drogas. Para el análisis de los datos, se utilizaron aportes teóricos de la Psicología Social en sus diálogos con estudios interdisciplinarios sobre la violencia, la juventud y sus marcadores sociales. En el apartado de resultados y discusión se exponen las siguientes líneas de implicación de las adolescentes con las facciones, que más se destacan en sus relatos: la precariedad desigual de la vida como proyecto político de marginación de las adolescencias periféricas; las capturas de los modos de subjetivación asociados al imperativo de 'vivir intensamente'; la segregación socio-espacial y la interiorización del estereótipo da 'peligrosa'; los efectos de la institucionalización en el (re)encuadramiento como 'involucrada'; la objetivación de las mujeres en el sistema cisheteropatriarcal; y la intersección de género, clase, raza, edad y lugar de residencia. Del análisis se concluye que el género es una categoría fundamental para entender los efectos psicossociales de la violencia en las trayectorias de vida de las adolescentes privadas de libertad, así como es un factor preponderante para su inscripción en el tráfico de drogas.

Palabras clave: Adolescente; violencia urbana; género.

Introdução

The objective of this article is to analyze narratives from adolescents serving socio-educational measures regarding their involvement in criminal organizations linked to drug trafficking, popularly known as factions, in the context of the peripheries of Fortaleza, state of Ceará, Brazil. This study is based on a master's thesis that examined the intersection of violence in urban areas and the life trajectories of adolescents deprived of their liberty. This research was part of the umbrella research project *Youth and urban violence: cartography of subjectivation processes in the city of Fortaleza-CE* of VIESES: The Research and Intervention Group on Violence, Social Exclusion, and Subjectivation, linked to the Department of Psychology and the Graduate Program in Psychology at the Federal University of Ceará

(UFC). Theoretically, we draw on social psychology references in dialogue with interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary studies on violence, youth, and their social markers. We employ cartography as the ethos of our research-inter(in)vention, through narrative life history interviews.

One of the psychosocial aspects that has attracted the most attention in social psychology studies of violence dynamics in Ceará is the attempt to naturalize the deaths of Black and impoverished adolescents and young people through their criminalization, framing these individuals as suspects a priori, supposedly because they are involved in the retail sale of illicit drugs. Studies by Benício et al. (2018) and Cavalcante et al. (2022) reveal some effects of these psychosocial transformations of crime in the peripheral territories of the city, demonstrating how they contribute to the fictional production of enmity between factions and between these factions and the police. In the face of this reality, the studies highlight the coping and resistance strategies employed by young people.

In this context, the worsening problem of deaths among adolescent and young women, mostly poor and Black, stands out. Since 2015, cases of torture and femicide within the context of violence in urban peripheries have increased, as has the sensationalization of these violent practices on social media (Sousa et al., 2020). These events have occurred amid social transformations in crime in Ceará and the reproduction of structural racism and cisheteropatriarchy.

One notable aspect of these transformations is the activity of criminal organizations popularly known as factions that operate in peripheral territories and significantly impact the management and instrumentalization of life and death conditions. In Ceará, for example, the Comando Vermelho (CV), Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC), and the Ceará-based Guardiões do Estado (GDE) factions are present. Some reports indicate that the Família do Norte (FDN) no longer operates in the Ceará capital, while other smaller factions operate in partnership with those mentioned. Studies by Sousa (2019) and Paiva (2019), among others, report on the process of change and strengthening of these factions.

It is worth pointing out that the dynamics of criminal violence in urban peripheries permeate the lives of adolescent and young women, intersecting through overlapping social markers unique to each life trajectory. These markers contribute to their involvement in drug trafficking and, consequently, in criminal factions. The research by Nunes and Barros (2022) indicates that social psychology should appropriate gender as an important intersectional category of analysis, alongside race, class, territory, and generation. This contributes to the production of subjectivities that evoke more cautious ways of relating: avoiding certain locations, paying attention to whom one interacts with, living with uncertainty and discouragement about the future, and coping with the fear of death, torture, or sexual violence.

Given the above, in order to analyze the *involvement* of girls in criminal factions operating in Ceará, the following sections sought to trace, through narratives of life trajectories, the lines of force that involve girls in the dynamics of these groups. These lines of force contribute to the management of the lives and deaths of adolescent and young women living in territories dominated by criminal factions. The term *involvement* emerges as a local category present in the daily lives of Fortaleza's peripheries, serving as a psychosocial emblem of the perverse relationship between juvenile criminalization and death policies within the current dynamics of urban violence in Ceará. In this article, *involvement* emerges as an analyzer of the modes of subjectivation and subalternation of youth in contexts of violence. This analysis intersects gender with other social markers of difference and inequality.

Notoriously, this category is used as a social and political justification for shirking responsibility by public security agents in the face of high murder rates and mass incarceration. This produces the *involved* individual as a *killable subject*, who is blamed for their own misfortune (Barros et al., 2019). These social dynamics are related to the notion of necropolitics proposed by Achille Mbembe (2017) as a form of social and political management in which neoliberal governments control and subjugate life through the power of death. In other words, it is a large-scale management of death zones. Finally, we expect this research to contribute to epistemological formulations in psychology and the construction of public policies aimed at breaking with the intersectional necropolitical mechanisms affecting the lives of Black and marginalized girls.

Methodological approach

This qualitative research used the cartography method, which, according to Passos et al. (2014), aims to track the production of subjectivity from the collective plane of the forces that engender it. The research method was chosen to trace the lines weaving together the involvement of incarcerated adolescents with criminal factions based on participants' narratives about their life trajectories. The research site was the Aldaci Barbosa Mota Socio-Educational Center, the only socio-educational center in Ceará for female adolescents accused of committing offenses. Participants were included in the study if they were at least 14 years old, received visits from guardians who could be questioned about their participation in the study, and had experience with drug trafficking. The center's psychologists contributed significantly to identifying this profile by suggesting that teenagers who met the criteria and informing their guardians of the best time to visit.

In total, eleven teenagers were invited to participate in the research, and ten of them accepted and shared their life stories. They are: Loirinha, Chinesa, Japa, Duda, Pérola, Lilian, Marta, Novinha, Paul, and Lorin (the latter two chose names that refer to both sexes due to their gender transition). Five of them (Loirinha, Japa, Lorin, Pérola, and Marta) were interviewed more than once because they were still serving socio-educational measures during the fieldwork. The teenagers were between 14 and 18 years old. Seven of them identified as Black, one as Indigenous, and two as White.

The chosen research method was the autobiographical narrative interview under cartographic management. Cartographic management of the interview relies on its dialogical nature and ability to create a space for re-elaboration and repositioning in terms of subjectivation processes (Passos et al., 2014). In this sense, the research makes a micropolitical contribution to breaking the modes of subjection of marginalized youth related to silencing, criminalization, and segregation.

The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and read. With the five adolescents who participated in a second session, we revisited some points from the previous interview to delve into their experiences (Passos et al., 2014). During the second session, we conducted a new reading of the transcripts to identify what was unique to each girl and what was common in their trajectories, which we then divided into analytical scenes. When these scenes are re-edited, they disrupt realities and produce new arrangements in the field of analysis and intervention (Rossi & Passos, 2014).

Regarding the ethical aspects of the research, we met the guidelines of Research Ethics Committee Resolutions 466/12 and 510/16, which were approved with Opinion No. 3,398,916.

Results and Discussion

Based on the interviews conducted using cartographic methods, we identify some factors influencing the *involvement* of interviewees with factions linked to drug trafficking in Fortaleza.

Unequal precarization of peripheral adolescents' lives

When discussing their involvement with groups associated with drug trafficking, the adolescents emphasize that their recruitment into these factions stems from the unequal and extreme precarization of their lives. This precarization is evident in the socio-institutional helplessness they experienced and the limited social opportunities available to them. Pérola's account of her life is exemplary in this regard.

A resident of the Fortaleza periphery, Pérola learned from an early age to deal with the power relations involved in drug trafficking due to the illegal trade's local presence in her life. Later, her mother also trafficked in their neighborhood. According to Pérola's subjective account, aspects that contributed to her joining one of the factions operating in Fortaleza were the lack of opportunities, state neglect, daily exposure to rights violations, and seeing the reality of drug trafficking as more feasible than other options.

"When I started, I saw that the money was easy and that everything was easy for me. I saw that I could do it and didn't want to stop. Then I got pregnant, and I said that I was going to change my life. After I bought everything for my daughter, I was going to try to do so for her. I want her to grow up without seeing what I did. I did what I saw because if I hadn't seen it, I certainly wouldn't be here" (Pérola, 2019, verbal information).

Regarding the rights violations that mark the trajectories of adolescents accused of committing an infraction, Scisleski et al. (2017) problematize the notion that the state enters into conflict with the adolescent first. When speaking about their trajectories, interlocutors generally expose neocolonial structures of race, class, and gender that permeate their lives. These structures are materialized primarily by the state's production of death zones and its necropolitical management of killable bodies, such as in slums and prisons. These and other rights violations make the state visible as an active institution in producing vulnerable and precarious territorialities. In these places, ostensive police, in line with the war on drugs policy, often serve as the first point of contact with the state (Barros et al., 2019).

When discussing financial difficulties and the challenge of finding formal employment, another research participant, Loirinha, told us that her mother works odd jobs in the sewing sector. She said that her mother's income was often insufficient to ensure the family's subsistence because she earned little money finishing sewing pieces.

In an unequal socioeconomic context with few opportunities to enter the formal job market with good pay and a certain quality of life, this search for money contributed to Loirinha's involvement in small odd jobs in drug trafficking. These odd jobs include standing guard on the corner to report approaching police, carrying goods (mule), or working as a salesperson to earn more money. In the last and rare case, one can be the *owner* of a *boca* (place for selling illegal drugs).

In other interviews, the search for securing subsistence or satisfying consumer needs manifested in three ways: 1. Some interviewees, such as Duda and Paul, reported experiences with early (illegal) work to supplement their family's income, which contributed to the interest of drug dealers in such *labor*; 2. Seeing this reality of precarious jobs with low wages, the teenagers end up being co-opted into drug trafficking based on the promise that, in it, they will have opportunities to earn unimaginable amounts through formal activities, carried out by people from their social group; and 3. Finally, mothers who have already been imprisoned, as well as other people labeled as ex-convicts, especially for the crime of drug trafficking, are unable to find jobs upon release, which consequently leads them back to drug trafficking.

Thus, we are not referring to universal, homogeneous adolescence as simply a stage of life, but rather to trajectories constituted by social inequality and marked by overlapping social markers of race, gender, class, and place of residence (territory). Therefore, we are dealing with an adolescence produced in a condition of systematic and asymmetrical precarization of recognition of an (un)livable life, as proposed by Butler (2019). According to Butler (2017), all lives are precarious. However, certain groups are subject to a politically induced condition that maximizes their precarity. These groups have historically suffered from the deterioration of social support networks, leaving them more vulnerable to networks and circuits of exclusion, violence, and death.

There are older women; there's everyone. There's a woman wearing an electronic tag who keeps selling. Like the ex-convict, some of them can't get a job because they're ex-convicts; others don't want to. That's why many minors are out there doing bad things. If there were more sports and school programs, at least the minors wouldn't be involved in crime. If they had that and a course in responsibility, they would certainly do that. Full-time school is rare. Minors see crime and want to do it too. Instead of distancing themselves from it, they sink deeper and deeper. Once a person starts, they don't want to stop (Pérola, 2019, verbal information).

These accounts are notable for their subjective elaboration of how growing up in an unequal context can lead adolescents to believe that they will not have as many opportunities to ascend socially. This belief can lead them to consider *faster* paths to better-paying *jobs*, with drug trafficking being a naturalized option due to its proximity and the idea of a *profitable* market.

Obstruction of the future and capture of modes of subjectivation associated with the imperative to live intensely.

Another aspect of this *involvement* with factions that stood out in the participants' narratives about their life trajectories is the effect of modes of subjectivation based on adherence to the ethos of adventure

and intensity at the expense of the *moralizing work-longevity* pair⁵, as reflected by Sousa (2019) in her research. This refers, above all, to a risky life with the possibility of immediate profit and ostentation, which supposedly circumvents the *perverse (in)visibility* that plagues poor young people from the periphery who are in a condition of non-citizenship (scarce citizenship). They are also seen as metaphors for violence (Sales, 2005). Below, we can see how Lorin narrates her trajectory and illustrates how this operates.

They called her and told her that she was going to have a lot of money and that she was going to have the best of everything. They said she was going to be famous and respected. Then she said she got involved just to get involved. It's like being well-regarded in the neighborhood. Everywhere we go, everyone talks to us. For example, if you arrive somewhere without money, the guy can still buy something for you. You gain respect and things like that. Women are all over you (Lorin, 2019, verbal information).

In Sousa's research (2019), which was also co-produced with young people from Ceará who participated in drug trafficking and factions, financial and affective ascension, as well as the renunciation of the legal market, which *grinds down* the lives of workers and does not allow access to an intense life, were reasons for belonging to criminal factions. Also, according to the author, the vast majority of people who enter the drug trafficking market aspire to meteoric careers and imagine that, in the future, they will earn enough money to leave the business. Added to this is the fact that they are the most victimized profile in urban violence plots (Barros et al., 2019). This reality reinforces the idea of living, enjoying, and consuming intensely.

I went to too many parties. [...] That's how it was. When I got there, there was alcohol and everything I wanted to drink because drug trafficking is the law where I live, and it makes a lot of money. I even bought a motorcycle. [...] I wasn't going to stay in the drug trade, though. To have fun, you can go out whenever and wherever you want, and you're also more respected by the population itself (Marta, 2019, verbal information).

In the face of imminent death, the prospect of longevity is considered *unfeasible*. Living intensely becomes a way to outwit death "[...] as a metaphor for not letting life dwindle" (Oliveira, 2001, p. 114). These processes of subjectivation produce forms of life marked by adventurous intensity (Sousa, 2019). Furthermore, the mechanics of trafficking, embedded in capitalism, have the same machine-like logic of exploitation and oppression as well as the illusory idea that one will reach the top with *effort*. There is also a perverse logic of (in)visibility based on consumption, in which adolescents become what they consume and flaunt. This should be interpreted carefully, as we are referring to the fact that this perverse logic reinforces ways of being that are permeated by ostentation and the supposed respect that comes with it.

I ate, bought clothes, that's all. I don't have any objects like that, even though [...] I don't have anything that was bought with drug money. It doesn't seem like it. The money seems to fly out of our hands. I don't even like working (Loirinha, 2019, verbal information).

In Loirinha's statement, the dilemma of acting in a subordinate position within the retail context of drug trafficking is materialized: while the teenagers manage to earn a living, a capitalist-colonial subjugation is applied daily in the form of guilt for committing illegal acts instead of pursuing other opportunities. Paul relates this as well, saying that the *hard-earned money* she made at the market fair lasted longer because it was *blessed* (in her words). However, the money from drug trafficking quickly runs out due to various expenses in addition to basic subsistence costs, such as rent and food. Although they consider their work important for survival, the *involved* teenagers understand that it is harmful to themselves and others. In general, the *modus operandi* of this illegal market exploits the desire for ostentation and euphoria in teenage girls, which are not always feasible in other forms of sociability. These modes of subjectivation have been reinforced by the *lifestyle* sold by the factions.

⁵ In this case, the notion of desire departs from a moral parameter; thus, desiring productions are complex and do not necessarily pass through the morality that imposes precarious formal work as the ideal. We also indicate the need for caution regarding the idea that ethics conforms to what is morally accepted.

I bought clothes, flip-flops, and a lot of things. [...] I also gave her money [...] I only went to the favela dance sometimes [...] They [other women] sell drugs to earn money, some sell drugs to buy things for their children whose fathers are in prison. They sell drugs to buy things for the house and for their children (Duda, 2019, verbal information).

Like a cycle, drug trafficking leads teenage girls to join factions, making them more susceptible to necropolitical webs. This is due not only to the politically induced precarization of their lives, but also to the belligerent disputes that factions wage against each other in pursuit of a monopoly on local drug trafficking. In Loirinha's words, "[...] since I traffic, I can only traffic if I get involved, because I don't have access to the drugs" (Loirinha, 2019, verbal information). Furthermore, in neighborhoods dominated by factions, or even those with divisions, people cannot sell drugs except from those who control the territories. "To sell drugs, you have to be faction-bound. A person can't sell drugs anymore if they're not faction-bound; it's difficult now" (Marta, 2019, verbal information). The girls also report that, after being labeled as *involved*, whether or not they are members of a faction, it is difficult to change their lives. According to them, this is not due to any impediment from the faction but rather the antagonistic nature of their lives, which causes them to remain in the factions in search of *security*.

Narratives incorporating an ideal of disposability and a certain fatalism regarding immutable destiny were common: "[...] It's strange to know you can die at any time" (Loirinha, 2019, verbal information). These cornered ways of life, which are inert to the logic of the war on drugs and its effects, such as factions and the growing militarism on the part of the State in the peripheries of capitalism (Barros et al., 2019), are living conditions that contribute to the internalization of risky behaviors and illicit activities that provide adrenaline, such as hard drug use, the practice of robbery, participation in parties, etc.

Socio-spatial segregation and internalization of the stereotype of the *dangerous girl*

To present the other line of involvement, we return to the concept of the *involved* that adolescent girls internalize through their modes of subjectivation, as discussed by Judith Butler (2017) in her theory of subjection. In the author's words, "[...] as a form of power, subjection is paradoxical" (Butler, 2017, p. 9). Because subjectivities are produced by power relations, the process of subjection by which the label *involved* subjects adolescent girls occurs in the following ways: 1. through media and social discourses that reiterate the device of criminality, especially reinforcing the death or deprivation of liberty of these people; 2. framing them as *abject* (Butler, 2017), rendering them not subject to mourning. In this framing, the state reiterates its disclaimer of responsibility for these deaths, as they do not generate public commotion 3. reducing adolescent girls to illicit activities, especially within factions, due to their identification within the group by a number representing a crime defined in the Brazilian Penal Code; 4. the intertwining of markers of race, class, gender, territory (place of residence), and age (being young); and 5. the subjective production of these young women as superfluous and disposable lives based on this subordination. The figure of the *involved girl* is, therefore, an abject identity that frames young women in lives that are not considered lived. Consequently, their annihilation is not only expected but desired (Barros et al., 2019).

Thus, we point to the segregation and exclusion produced by the state and society that causes adolescent girls to be seen as abnormal. This generates the internalization of the sign of superfluity. This aspect can be seen in the following statements: "That there will always be [...] One dies, another is born, one falls, and another takes their place outside. Anyway, I think it doesn't matter to him, whether he falls here or dies" (Lorin, 2019, verbal information) and "I think this is orange, but we make a mistake and can't get out of it" (Lilian, 2019, verbal information).

The idea of scarce citizenship proposed by Mione Sales (2005) is revisited here in the concepts of *having and being*: having respect, having fame, being considered, being loved, and being desired. In other words, their existence is validated (they are allowed to live, even if only briefly), their lives are recognized (they are made visible), and their voices are heard (speaking ability), even if through illicit acts. This is a driving force for involvement and its perpetuation. Our interlocutors are not *considered* by the media, society, or the state, primarily due to the classist and racist processes that structure Brazilian society. They seek social

recognition in a society that positions them as nobodies, enemies, *abject lives*, and therefore not worthy of mourning (Butler, 2017).

Institutionalization on the (re)framing as *involved*

The penultimate line of involvement refers to institutionalization as a subscription to involvement. The framing of those *involved* in factions occurs, above all, through territory, which is understood as the line that composes the power games affecting the girls. This means that certain behaviors, aesthetic styles, and lifestyles are influenced by one's place of residence and the faction to which one belongs. For instance, when a young woman arrives at the Socio-Educational Center, she is asked which faction she belongs to. Even if she claims not to belong to any, her place of residence and the dominance of a faction in the territory where she lives will determine her affiliation. There are two types: initiated (those who officially register) and sympathizers (adolescents who commit illegal acts and live in neighborhoods with specific dominance).

I'm nobody, I'm in two different areas, but right now, I'm nobody. Then, the girls consider me to be involved. If you're here, then you're involved. If you're here, it's because you did something, and you're involved. Then, the girls do this to me [makes two with her hands]. I take it, and I do it. Then, when I sing a song from other areas, the girls say to me: "Hey, Lorin, if you go to the areas and the kids find out you're singing that song, you're going to get in [inaudible]. Then, I can't sing anymore; I only sing CV songs. Now, I can't sing GDE songs anymore. So, like, I'm stuck in this situation because I don't want to get involved in these things. I didn't want to, and I still don't. (Lorin, 2019, verbal information).

Institutionalization reaffirms this framing within a faction, so that the Center's employees, newspapers, and other media end up reinforcing this logic and discourse that establishes the *involved* label. Institutionalization, therefore, acts as a symbolic stamp; a target that further vulnerabilizes adolescents and, consequently, makes what is understood as *resocialization*⁶ even more difficult.

We emphasize that this also happens in other places, such as slums and prisons. Regarding the latter, Chinesa described how she became known to her boyfriend's rivals when she visited him in prison. From that point on, she was labeled a *bandit's woman*, a *member of faction X*, and *involved*. In her words: "In prison, I was already marked by other factions [...]. That's when I started getting involved because I didn't know any drug traffickers who were rivals of our faction" (Chinesa, 2019, verbal information). Given this, we realize that, rather than resocializing, institutionalization reinforces and, in some cases, creates the stigma of being *involved*.

Objectification of women within the cisheteropatriarchal system

The penultimate line of involvement that we present here is closely related to the objectification of women within the cisheteropatriarchal and colonial systems. We refer to involvement based on affective relationships with factionalized people. In referring to the cisgender, heterosexual system under the aegis of patriarchy, Akotirene (2018) articulates the interconnections of markers of oppression that formulate ways of managing social life. In Akotirene's (2018) analysis, it is crucial to acknowledge the interconnectedness of racism, capitalism, and cisheteropatriarchy in the unequal production of women's lives.

The idea reinforced in the modus operandi of violence is the objectification of women by men, subordinated to them, reduced to the bandit's woman, and belonging to the logic of the faction to which their partner belongs. This is intimately linked to the increase in deaths of adolescent and young women in Ceará and their perception as a territory of dispute and display of power, as torture and murder are carried out brutally, filmed, and disseminated en masse. This expresses the power of one faction over another within the warlike, masculinist logic that sustains the factions (Barros et al., 2019).

It is common, therefore, for young men to not want to date young women who are involved in factions or who are routinely involved in drug trafficking, until they are arrested and need help to keep their business *active*. This happened with Chinesa and Loirinha, the latter of whom said that if her boyfriend found out she was trafficking, she "[...] would get a beating" (Loirinha, 2019, verbal information).

⁶ Resocialization is a problem that will not be addressed here, but it should be researched, especially in light of the reorganization of urban violence.

Because, like, I didn't have to traffic anymore, but I wasn't that involved, you know? With the guys, with the traffickers; then, when my partner was arrested, I went from zero to even worse, I got more involved. I got so involved that I ended up here (Lairinha, 2019, verbal information).

Using the problematizations pointed out by Lugones (2014), we observe in vogue the coloniality of gender as a structuring element of modernity, alongside the coloniality of knowledge, power, and being, as highlighted by Aníbal Quijano (2009). The coloniality of gender is a driving force behind the machismo intertwined with colonial patriarchy, such that, according to Lugones (2014), gender and race are canons in the formulation of the world-system and the ontological framing of subjects. Therefore, we observe the continuation of the subalternized objectification through the feminization and genderization of adolescent and young women in their affective-sexual relationships.

Something similar was also seen in relationships between women: Marta only joined the faction after ending her relationship with the young woman who led the local drug trafficking operation. In her words: "Because when I lived with her, she wouldn't let me get involved with any of that. Then, when I separated from her, I went to her and said, 'Come on, let me join the movement?' and she agreed and let me" (Marta, 2019, verbal information). Marta then began to reproduce the same logic of not dating people *involved* in crime; regarding this, she said that it is not interesting to date someone who, like her, has death lurking nearby.

Intersection of gender, class, race, age, and place of residence.

Finally, the last lines refer to the subordination of women to this capitalist logic in drug trafficking, which is closely related to the diminishing and gendered nature of the roles women play in drug trafficking. Furthermore, they also relate to the previously discussed topic of affective involvement with members of factions and sexualization. As a way to circumvent police approaches and arrests, it seems that these criminal groups often *sexualize* and *diminish* the workforce in trafficking, thereby reinforcing the subordination of women. When asked about the possibilities of women entering the system, Marta replied: "They really only want girls who don't attract much attention. Not men; men are easier [...] for the police to see and approach. There aren't always pefem⁷ in the patrol car to approach girls, you know?" (Marta, 2019, verbal information).

The relationship between the submission/subjugation of women and the emotional involvement of faction members becomes evident when the young woman takes the blame for the illegal act to the detriment of her partner (assuming the role of a front). Lorin recounts: "There are girls who only end up here because they take the blame for their partner's involvement. Then they take the blame and come here as fronts" (Lorin, 2019, verbal information).

The processes through which young women enter the illicit drug market highlight the relationship between gender and recruitment into trafficking. This relationship is evident through the feminization of certain tasks, such as packaging, which require more care, and the possibility that women might not attract as much attention from law enforcement agents. This dynamic is evident in the following account: "He didn't have any drugs, so they would call someone else, and then I would go get them [...] The boys there are all adults, right?" Only the minors went more often. Because adults are kind of tricky" (Lairinha, 2019, verbal information).

Gender and sex power relations are present in all social spheres. The division of sexual labor and the subordination and submission of women to masculinist logics in drug trafficking place women at the forefront of this market. Regarding this, Japa (2019, verbal information) states: "That I, being a woman and being a minor, am less... they think that in their view I am seen as less [...] disregarded."

We observe the subordination of women to masculinist structures, whether through the affective relationships constituted within the heteronormative system and the maintenance of illegal drug and arms markets. Women are especially subjugated to the masculine figure represented by the faction when they act as mules. Therefore, it is a dual relationship of *importance* and disposability.

⁷ Female police officer. It was common for the girls interviewed to say that, in police approaches, only men were susceptible. Lorin recounted that, in many instances, it is not necessary to bury drugs while waiting on the corner for a buyer; however, young men need to, because if a police car passes by, the man is searched, but the woman is not.

Based on the above, some aspects stand out at the intersection of these last lines: 1. gender structures are also present in power relations within the framework of urban violence; 2. affective relationships within the cisheteropatriarchal logic subjugate the feminine to the dominant masculine; and 3. a girl's involvement in local drug trafficking is subordinated to the power dynamics of the drug trade. If a woman wants to sell drugs, she must be recruited into a faction as either an initiated member or a sympathizer. It is also important to address the issue of race in this context since non-White women are culturally hypersexualized and commodified in our culture. For example, women who have experienced objectification and subordination at the hands of their partners are predominantly Black.

Final considerations

In this article, based on narratives from adolescent girls accused of committing offenses similar to drug trafficking, we map these adolescents' life trajectories and their involvement in factions in the city of Fortaleza, Ceará. This label of *involved*, produced by narratives that criminalize poor, Black adolescents living in peripheral neighborhoods and also sexualized (in their homoaffective dimension or association with vulgar women, such as *bandit's women*), is reiterated. This label operates in the psychosocial production of the *involved adolescent*, an *abject* identity. A psychosocial analysis of urban violence intersecting with gender reveals the perverse (in)visibility of youth existential territories amidst webs of violence, networks of affection, and worldviews constructed by young women within their contexts and living conditions.

The research has some limitations, since a more longitudinal or even ethnographic follow-up would provide additional insights into the psychosocial effects of violence on the trajectories of these adolescent girls. It is worth noting that the research site was a socio-educational center for adolescent and young women (who were within the age range for socio-educational measures), in the state of Ceará. During the fieldwork, some of the girls completed their measures and were released without us having the chance to conduct follow-up interviews. Among the adolescents with whom we had a second meeting, we observed that they found it interesting to reflect on their lives and prospects, further exploring topics discussed in the first meeting.

Finally, we highlight the importance of this study for further analysis of how the relationships between youth and the psychosocial dynamics of violence in urban territories are permeated by gender, which should be viewed in an intersectional and counter-colonial way alongside racial issues. Based on the results and discussions, gender and race are key categories for understanding the psychosocial effects of violence on the life trajectories of adolescents who are labeled as *involved*, as well as one of the predominant aspects for understanding their differential precarious inscriptions in criminal groups competing for illegal markets and urban territories.

Addressing the issues of gender and racial inequality and examining how, intersectionally, social relations and subjectivities of adolescent girls and young women in Brazil are constructed is of paramount importance for developing public policies aimed at guaranteeing and realizing the rights of these groups, confronting politically induced vulnerabilities. In addition, gender should be highlighted as a counter-colonial category that challenges the maintenance of coloniality in the constitution of gender hierarchies and the patriarchal system that dominates how adolescent girls and young women are subjugated, subordinated, and murdered within the web of violence in urban territories.

First, we emphasize the importance of psychology engaging in critical studies of coloniality, although we understand that such articulation is still recent in Brazil and requires greater insertion and theoretical problematization. In this sense, critical epistemic shifts regarding coloniality are necessary for considering the ethical and engaged practice of social psychology with dissident ethnic and racial minorities and for social commitment. This is a praxis that reiterates its political character regarding life while problematizing ontological frameworks concerning humanity from a critique of coloniality.

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