

Arts-Based Investigation: A Brazilian Story¹

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Key words:

qualitative
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based
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formation

Abstract: This study was carried out by the "Professional Qualification in Healthcare" research team at the Centro Universitário Feevale (Novo Hamburgo, RS, Brazil). The aim of the study was to learn about the way the children and adolescents from the Canudos' neighborhood who take part in the "Social Indoor Soccer" program understand their living conditions, with the intention of developing teaching plans for training the teachers involved. Through an arts-based investigative methodology, a group of 17 boys who live in the neighborhood and participate in the program were asked to answer in the form of drawings two questions related to their living situations: "What do you like?" and "What do you not like?" The analysis had two categories and four subcategories, as follows: a) What they like: playing football and playing video games; b) what they don't like: violence and personal hygiene. There is a risk of electric shocks due to inadequate sanitary facilities, and poorly fitting electrical connections. The program has a positive effect on the children and adolescents.

Table of Contents

- [1. Introduction](#)
- [2. Problem Definition](#)
- [4. Results](#)
- [5. Discussion](#)
 - [5.1 What they like about where they live](#)
 - [5.1.1 Playing football](#)
 - [5.1.2 Playing video games](#)
 - [5.2 What they do not like about where they live](#)
 - [5.2.1 Violence](#)
 - [5.2.2 Personal hygiene](#)

[6. Conclusion](#)

[References](#)

[Authors](#)

[Citation](#)

1. Introduction

This study conducted by our research team "Professional Qualification in Healthcare," based at the Centro Universitário Feevale (Novo Hamburgo, RS, Brazil). Since 2000 we have been carrying out research on the training of teachers to work in social programs, employing quantitative, descriptive, and interpretive methodology, taking the work of the following authors as a

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<http://www.efdeportes.com/efd122/ninos-y-adolescentes-de-un-programa-social.htm>.

methodological foundation: HAMMERSLEY and ATKINSON (1994), TAYLOR and BOGDAN (1996), CAUDURO (2004), HERNÁNDEZ (2004), MOLINA NETO and TRIVIÑOS (2004), LÜDKE and ANDRÉ (1986), TRIVIÑOS (1987), and MOREHOUSE and MAYKUT (1999). [1]

With reference to the Brazilian context, according to EISENSTEIN and SOUZA (1993), poverty, deprivation, inadequate housing, family breakdown, lack of education and violence are high-risk situations that affect the development of children and adolescents. It is not necessary for all of these factors to occur simultaneously, since any one of them alone can put a person's life at risk. Undoubtedly, this scenario worsens when the person in question spends significant amounts of time on the streets, where the likelihood of coming into contact with many of these problems is greater. The consequence of this is marginalization, delinquency, and the infringement of laws and the rights of other citizens. [2]

Social programs are implemented by private or public not-for-profit institutions, aiming at the social inclusion of minorities. For example, this study is part of larger programs, "Children of Canudos" (begun in 2000) and "Social Indoor Soccer" (begun in 2004). In addition, other programs are offered by the Centro Universitário Feevale (Feevale) to train teachers to work for the social inclusion of children and adolescents who are living in conditions of social risk[3]

From 1980 to 1995 the population of Canudos grew 155.42%, representing 22% of Novo Hamburgo's population. Most of the residents have come from rural areas and from other cities in the state of Rio Grande do Sul who were attracted by the dynamism and growth of the footwear and leather goods industry. This neighborhood developed in a disorganized manner, which was further aggravated by the population invasion of public areas and illegal occupation of land. There is a large number of shared lots with multiple residences on them, especially near the area's streams. There are a total of 19 irregular settlements and estates, which are also a reflection of the economic and financial crises that Brazil has suffered. The district has serious infrastructure problems: there is constant flooding, a lack of running water, an unpleasant smell due to open sewers and access problems in the less-populated areas. Canudos is also known as the most violent neighborhood in the city. [4]

Understanding this social context, the "Children of Canudos" project was designed to help this community, in particular children from the most underprivileged areas of the neighborhood, encouraging them to stay in school and attempting to bring truants back to school. The project created space for children and young people to take part in activities such as *capoeira* (a typical Brazilian game), recreation, athletics, Olympic gymnastics, and volleyball, through regular and supervised work. Classes are taken by Physical Education undergraduates and are supervised by professionals in the area. The activities are held in the playgrounds of some of the municipal schools located in the most deprived areas of the district, in vacant land near these schools and in some

cases in the Feevale sports center. This program has involved approximately 1000 children. [5]

The project "Children of Canudos" was the precursor for another sports-based social project carried out in partnership with Feevale, the "Social Indoor Soccer" program. The objective of this project was the inclusion of children and promotion of citizenship through a methodology that favored learning sports techniques in an exciting way, closely linked to actual games of football, and the basis of which is to learn cooperative attitudes that will help everyone's development. [6]

The Social Indoor Soccer program has been running since 2004 and involves approximately 400 underprivileged boys and adolescents from 7 to 15 years of age who are enrolled at 17 schools in the public education system of Novo Hamburgo. Activities are held twice a week at four different centers, one of which is in the Canudos neighborhood, out of school hours (in general, Brazilian schools have two separate "shifts" each day, so those who study in the morning attend the program in the afternoon and those who study in the afternoons and evenings attend during in the morning). This study involved the children and adolescents who attend this center in Canudos and who attend five of the neighborhood's schools [7]

The varying roles of teachers and student teachers in these social programs enabled our research group "Professional Qualification in Healthcare" to share in the experiences in professional practice, pedagogic training, and scientific research (especially in relation to its epistemological foundations). ..Research conducted thus far has resulted in 34 articles and papers in national periodicals, and a further 19, in national and international periodicals. The scientific knowledge thus generated is also used as the basis of discussions within the Masters course in Accessibility and Social Inclusion at Feevale. [8]

In October of 2007 an exchange program with the University of Barcelona opened a new avenue for investigation with the INDAG-T team. The "INDAG-T" project aims to train professionals to have intellectual autonomy, to work as part of a team in collaborative research, to be creative, and to have a predisposition to continue learning throughout their lives. It is led by Fernando HERNÁNDEZ, The participants shared their experiences with the program with us. Through this opportunity we learned of the possibility of carrying out research investigations using artistic practices (from literature, cinema, , music, and the dramatic arts), and widened our knowledge of narrative through the work of BOLÍVAR (1998), McEWAN and EGAN (1995), LARROSA et al. (1995), and of life history, based on GOODSON (2004), HERNÁNDEZ (2004), and HERNÁNDEZ and SANCHO (2006). [9]

Narratives have different and varied uses. DIAMOND and MULLEN (1999a) explain that narratives can be shared through artistic practices, such as, photographs, letters, songs, lines from a movie, diaries etc. According to them, we would be "exploring the strength of the form to inform" (p.50). We agree with DIAMOND and MULLEN (1999b), when they declare that "in research based on

the arts, we can write visually so that this writing (text) reflects the sense of what it is seen, having in mind that to see is to feel" (p.12). [10]

Inspired by these ideas, we brought Physical Education and the Arts together, since both are centered on and expressed through the body. [11]

2. Problem Definition

The university system in Brazil is based on the close relationship between research, teaching, and extension. This triad is important to ensure that the university is not a mere reproduction of knowledge, but of knowledge production linked to the demands of the social-cultural environment in which it is located. [12]

The extension programs, such as the social programs referred in this work, with the commitment of the sponsoring institution (in this case, Centro Universitário Feevale) to share with the public and government the responsibility for reducing social injustices through projects and actions (MENEZES & CAUDURO, 2004). [13]

The close relationship between vocational training (education) and the extension programs is based on "the need to train professional-citizens towards their effective interaction with society, to either situate them historically, identify them culturally or to relate their training with the problems that one day they will have to face" (MINISTÉRIO DA EDUCAÇÃO, 2001, p.39). [14]

With regard to the current study, the research group "Professional Qualification in Healthcare" of the Centro Universitário Feevale (Novo Hamburgo/RS, Brazil) has the task of conducting research on teacher training with its application in social programs. The aim of this art-based study is to learn how the children and adolescents who live in the Canudos neighborhood and who participate in the Social Indoor Soccer program understand their living conditions. [15]

The results of this study will provide the basis for actions taken by the "Social Indoor Soccer" program as well as the development of appropriate pedagogy for training teachers to work in social programs. [16]

3. Methods

By adopting an arts-based investigative method we are not discarding the experiences gained through qualitative, interpretative, and descriptive methods. However, to a certain extent, the habitual use of these methods and their data collection instruments limited us in terms of procedures, preventing us from seeing how other research methods could lead to different and deeper reflections on the situations being studied. [17]

We sought out a variety of qualitative methods that would allow us to carry out our research in such ways that our results would have both methodological and practical implications. This led to an exchange between researchers from Feevale and the University of Barcelona. Learning of arts-based investigation through our

contacts with the INDAG-T group allowed us to bring together physical education and the arts and to reach a new understanding of qualitative investigation. [18]

In this study we will derive our theoretical methodological foundation from the proposals for arts-based investigations made by HERNANDEZ (2007), which is related to work by EISNER (1998), BARONE and EISNER (2006) and HUSS and CWIKEL (2005). [19]

Within the methodological framework of an arts-based investigation, as developed by HERNANDEZ (2007), we were interested in three concepts. The first of these concepts is related to the meanings to be found in different types of artistic expression, such as literature, cinema, poetry, video, and painting, which portray day-to-day situations and, in this manner, make them public. These methods can be transferred to the context of educational research. [20]

The second concept is of interest to us as investigators in physical education. What are the implications of using the arts in our research and to what degree might they reveal meanings that other methods might exclude or overlook? This concept made clear to us that to use the arts in our research would be a challenge. [21]

The third concept is related to the purpose of arts-based investigation. This refers to the use of the arts as a method, a tool for analysis, a theme, or all of these, within qualitative research. As a form of analysis this would consider drawings, stories, or the use of vignettes or photographs, as ways to connect abstractions to concrete situations by using both personal and collective elements of cultural experience. [22]

Therefore, we view drawing as a means of collecting information on the understanding of the context in which the children and adolescents in our study live. Thus, during the first stage of the research, 17 boys who live in the Canudos neighborhood and who participate in the "Social Indoor Soccer" program were asked two questions related to their living situation and asked them to answer in the form of drawings: a) What do you like?; b) What do you not like? [23]

During a second stage a process of analysis was applied to the drawings (documents) and to interviews, participatory observation, and the research team's investigation diary, kept since the year 2000. This process defined the initial categories of analysis. From these categories, we selected the categories and subcategories most relevant to achieving the study's objective. We then analyzed each category and subcategory with reference to HERNÁNDEZ (2007): "Images visualize a context, whereas text produces a juxtaposition of another place over this context" (p. 11). Therefore, our interest as investigators is not solely focused on the illustrations themselves, but is also focused on relating them to the research that has been published to date within the context being explored. Therefore, the analysis for this article was triangulated in comparison to data published by PILAR (2003), PAZ (2005), BIRK and CAUDURO (2007) and CAUDURO and PAZ (2007). [24]

4. Results

The 17 boys who participated in the study represented in drawings their understandings of the conditions they lived in. They were asked to draw about: a) What do you like?; b) What do you not like? [25]

The drawings about what they like in their living conditions were related to the fondness of playing soccer and videogames. In the drawings of 14 participants playing football was represented as what they most liked to do. In the majority of the drawings the ball is shown either on the way to the goal or already in the net (drawings a, b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m). In one of the drawings (n), both goals can be seen together with one outfield player, one goalkeeper and four balls in different areas of the pitch. More often there is a single player who is kicking the ball into the net (drawings d, e, f, j, k, l, m). In another four (drawings a, c, h, i) the goalkeeper and the player scoring the goal are shown, and in one drawing (g) the goalkeeper and two other players are depicted. These drawings are shown in Figure 1.

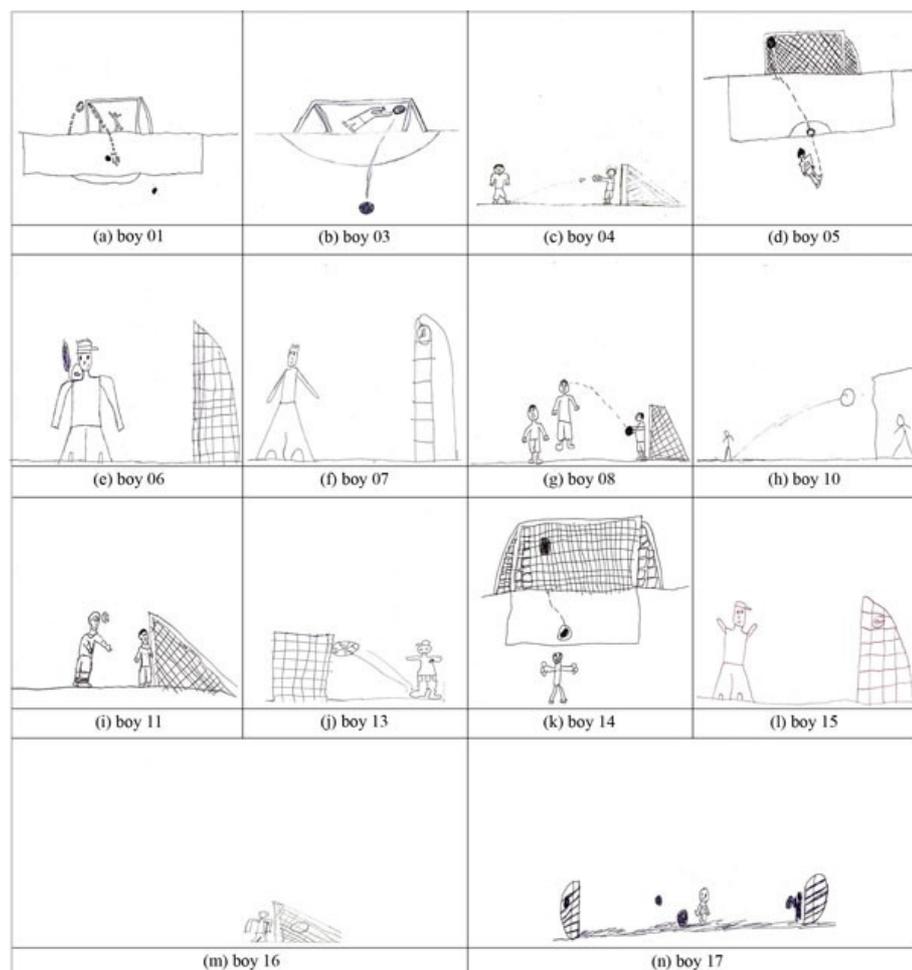


Figure 1: Drawings depicting playing football in answer to the question "What do you like?" [26]

The drawings of three boys revealed that they liked to play video games. These drawings are shown in Figure 2.

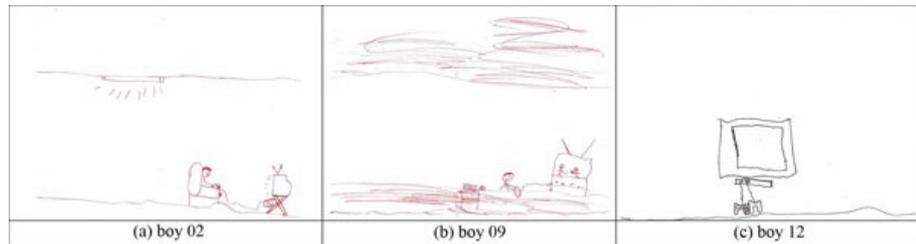


Figure 2: Drawings depicting playing video games in answer to the question "What do you like?" [27]

The drawings about what they do not like in their living conditions were related to violence, hygiene habits, going to the market, drawing, going to school, or playing handball. [28]

Nine participants represented violence in their drawings (assaults, firearms, and fights). Of these, three children connected their drawings with armed robbery (drawings a, b, h). Another five were drawings, some rich in detail, of firearms (drawings c, d, f, g, i). Drugs (crack and marijuana) were also shown with a person under the influence.. Finally, one drawing illustrated a fight between two people. We have selected three drawings, each illustrating one of these types of violence (e), and which can be seen in Figure 3.

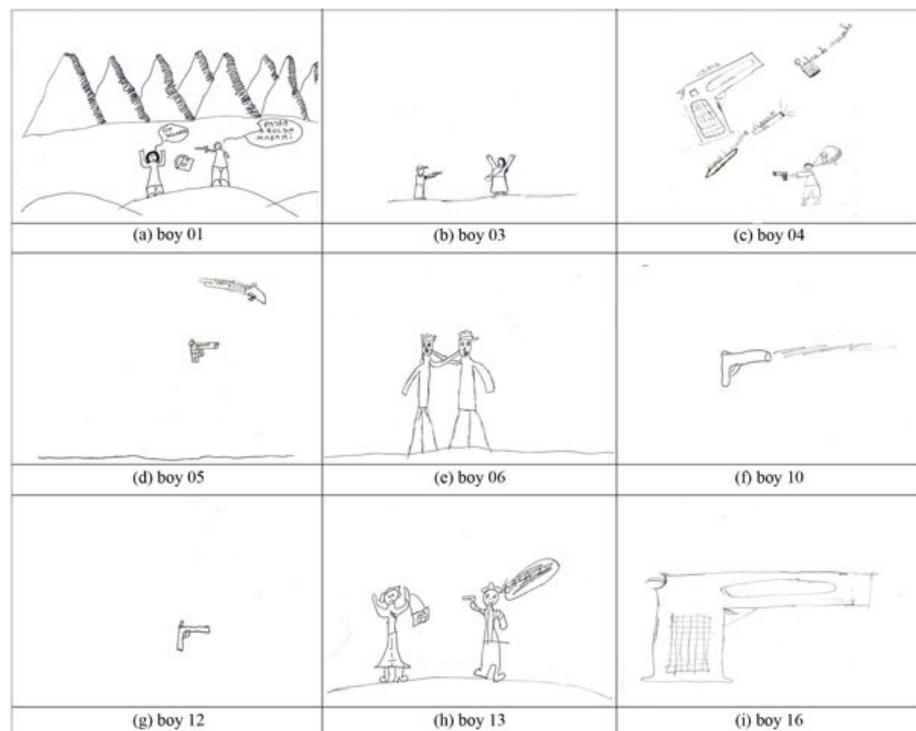


Figure 3: Drawings representing violence [29]

Four participants represented aversion to some type of personal hygiene in their drawings. Of these, three indicated that they didn't like washing themselves (drawings b, c, d), one because of receiving electric shocks while in the shower (drawing d). Another included sexual organs in the drawing (drawing c), which could reflect an awakening of sexuality. One participant did not like brushing his teeth (drawing a). The drawings representing these features are shown in Figure 4.

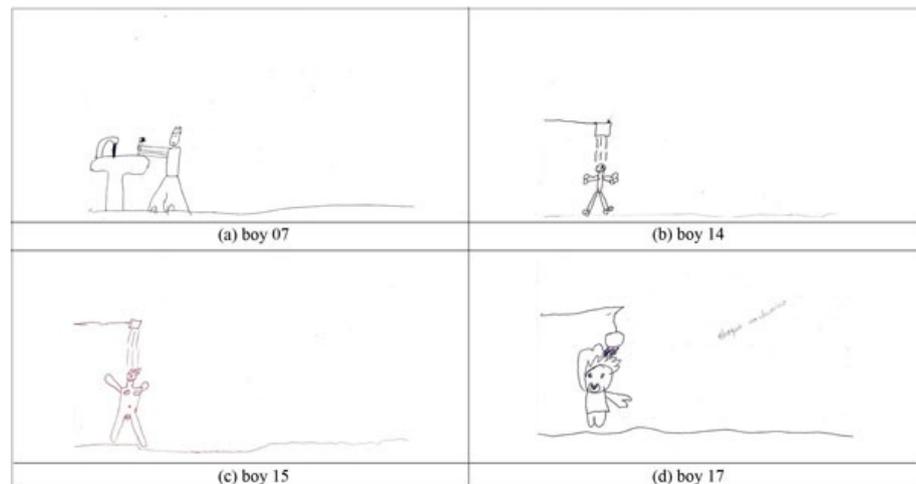


Figure 4: Drawings representing aversion to personal hygiene habits [30]

The other four participants represented their dislike of going to the market (drawings a and b), going to school (drawing c) playing handball (drawing d). These drawings can be seen in Figure 5.

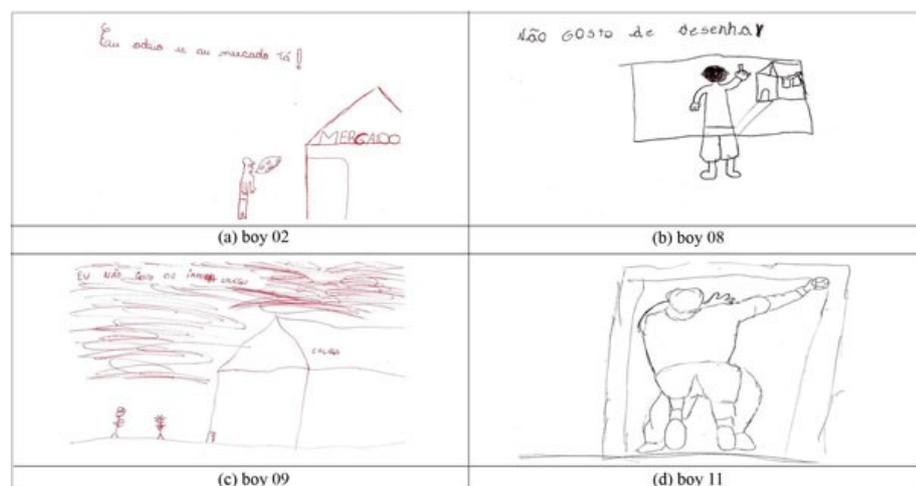


Figure 5: Drawings that represent other things that the boys do not like in their living conditions. [31]

5. Discussion

The understanding that the children and adolescents living in the Canudos neighborhood and who are taking part in the "Social Indoor Soccer" program have of the conditions in which they live can be analyzed within two broad categories and four specific subcategories, as follows:

- What they like about where they live:
 - Playing football
 - Playing video games
- What they do not like about where they live:
 - Violence
 - Personal Hygiene [32]

5.1 What they like about where they live

5.1.1 *Playing football*

Play and games are part of the development of children and adolescents, irrespective of the conditions in which they live. Since these questions were asked during one of the "Social Indoor Soccer" program classes, we believe that this may have had an influence. During interviews with the principals of the schools in the Canudos neighborhood who are collaborating with us, it became clear that football is something that their students adore and that this is one of the reasons they enjoy being in the program. Indeed, there are not enough places for all of the students who would like to take part. [33]

The following is a translation of a transcript of an interview with a representative of one of schools:

"[Through the 'Social Indoor Soccer' Program] you are offering them [the students in the Program] a different perspective, they are finding out that there is a cool place for them to go; some of the children, at the end of their time there—they have set times to be there—want to stay there and help out, 'oh I'll do anything to be able to stay there, ' because it's cool there, it's a good atmosphere, a nice atmosphere, healthy, they make friends and the teachers are really good with them, caring. [...] but sometimes the life they have here is so complicated that I think it sometimes sends them the other way, they compare the lives they have and whether there's another way to live. There are two sides to it, it can either draw them in, or alienate them, it affects them so much." (Interview with a school representative,, "Social Indoor Soccer" program, 2007) [34]

BIRK and CAUDURO (2007) stated that the teaching-learning processes in the "Children of Canudos" program resulted in a broadening of the children's worldviews that went beyond their own situations. In other words, the teachers working on the project came to be a reference for the students and this was not

only evident when they said they wanted to follow the same profession (i.e. be teachers), but also in dialogues involving exchanges of experiences between the teachers' and students' social worlds. The transcripts translated below demonstrate this:

"The children come here to Feevale to play football, to play a game, engage in recreation, do capoeira; this getting to know, traveling from Feevale to Canudos by bus, for them this is an important journey, it's marvelous, not paying for the bus ticket and coming to play, [...] For them it's a way of forgetting the bad times at home." (Interview carried out by PAZ [2005, p.60] with a teacher from the "Children of Canudos" program, 2004).

"In 2000, in an interview with the students they were asked the question 'What do you want to do when you grow up?' and the majority of them said they wanted to be drug dealers, bus drivers, supermarket workers [all professions that are not valued socially in Brazil]. In 2004, they said they wanted to be teachers like us." (Investigators' Fieldwork Diary, "Children of Canudos" program, 2004) [35]

Furthermore, BIRK and CAUDURO (2007) found that the students participated more and made more effort, both in activities proposed by the project and in school. This was observed by PAZ (2005) in an interview with a teacher from the program:

"[S]he [the child] improved in relationships, she's better in fact in everything to do with all areas of learning, whether in mathematics, whether in Portuguese language... She is more adaptable to situations. Without doubt there is evidence of many improvements in her behavior, particularly in sociability, body expression, self-knowledge." (Interview carried out by PAZ [2005, p.61] with a teacher from the "Children of Canudos" program) [36]

Analysis at different points in time during our investigations in the Canudos neighborhood and the social programs indicates that we are advancing in terms of finding solutions for these children and adolescents. It also demonstrates that there is an ever-growing need for integration of the work of researchers, teachers, and family members in the day-to-day situations they experience to achieve a higher quality of life for all those involved. [37]

5.1.2 Playing video games

Access to electronic multimedia (television, cellular telephones, computers, video games, the Internet, etc.) has undergone extremely rapid growth in our society. According to SILVEIRA and TORRES (2007), electronic games do not only represent that which is most modern and innovative in electronic entertainment, but are also one of the cultural expressions of the process of globalization. [38]

Although electronic games are an ever more significant part of the lives of children and adolescents, there is a social interpretation that they are addictive, that they draw children away from social and learning environments and also that

they fail to include anything educational, and many of them depict violence.. It is possible for these reasons they have not become a frequent element in educational proposals. [39]

On the other hand, some authors claim that video games can constitute places of learning, as SANCHO (1998) pointed out, writing on technophobia in education:

"[...] some educational theorists and practitioners, in the manner of new Molières, propose defending students from the dangers of the new technologies. This option does not tend to acknowledge that, without the chance of deciding on the advances and applications at all levels of day-to-day life, lack of knowledge of the technical, political, economic and ethical aspects of these technologies may impede students from developing their own informed positions on them and abandon them to a dangerous ignorance of the world they live in" (p. 44) [40]

We agree with SILVEIRA and TORRES (2007), who highlight the points made by COSTA and BETTI (2006) about the need for school-based physical education to take ownership, in a critical manner, not just of electronic games, but of the entire field of multimedia as it relates to the world of children. Watching, practicing, and playing video games, talking about the games, adventures and battles of the characters in cartoons, films and electronic games, playing with and fantasizing about them; all of these experiences are both part of and create the childhood culture of learning through play. It is therefore an opportunity for physical education, in turn, to update its teaching practices. [41]

If social programs, in common with schools, have not so far incorporated this understanding of the electronic culture into their educational processes, it is necessary, in the first instance, to create educational strategies to reduce prejudice with relation to video games on the part of parents and educators, and to include multimedia culture in their lessons in such a way that they do not deny their students the opportunity for constructing critical practices and understanding that culture. Furthermore, as SILVEIRA and TORRES (2007) point out, there is still a great deal that must be studied in the relationship between children and videogames. The psychological, educational, and communicative aspects of electronic culture need to be analyzed in detail. [42]

5.2 What they do not like about where they live

5.2.1 Violence

Violence is of such complexity that it would be very difficult to approach it holistically as its interpretation is intertwined with a plurality of social perceptions and judgments (RISTUM & BASTOS, 2004). [43]

RISTUM and BASTOS (2004) classify the causes of violence identified in scientific research into two major categories: contextual causes (distal or proximal) and personal causes. Distal contextual causes are produced by economic, social, political, and cultural conjunctions. This category, for example,

includes poverty, social exclusion, unemployment, hunger, social discrimination, impunity, authoritarianism, the violation of human rights, etc. When present it has a marked effect to the extent that these causes mold the entire manner in which a society exists and functions. Proximal contextual causes are the events related to violence which are present in the environment and with which those individuals who practice violence have direct contact. For example, models of violence at home, in the streets or on television, family breakdown, the frequent use of punishment in a range of social institutions, etc. Personal causes, whether biological or psychological, include drug and alcohol abuse, emotional imbalance,, issues of passion, temperament, and character. [44]

In studies undertaken by CAUDURO and PAZ (2007) with 29 children from the "Children of Canudos" program, the principal and four teachers from municipal schools in the community were interviewed and described the high-risk situations to which these children were exposed. A total of 41 episodes of violence were identified, as can be seen in Table 1.

Number of Episodes	High-risk Situations
6	assault/robbery
6	aggression
6	family breakdown
6	depression
4	child prostitution
4	learning difficulties
3	teenage pregnancy
3	alcohol consumption
2	use of illegal drugs
2	rape
1	child labor

Table 1: High risk situations to which the children in the "Children of Canudos" program were exposed [45]

PAZ (2005) highlighted what one of the teachers said on the subject:

"The issue is broken homes. The father walks out, is never present, does not pay any alimony or child support, the mother has other children to look after. Older children have to take care of their younger siblings. We have had children here who have been mistreated, beaten. Really, violence does exist." (Interview carried out by PAZ [2005, p.49] with a teacher from the "Children of Canudos" program) [46]

EINSENSTEIN and SOUZA (1993) state that a characteristic of marginalized children is to attribute little value to their own lives, demonstrated by caring little

about their own existence, as though this were a form of dealing with the neglect with which they have grown up. Such children will not even attain the status of an individual, since that which could demonstrate their individuality is suppressed or, subordinated to the daily struggle for survival. [47]

This evidence, highlighted here, leads us to reflect on the importance of sharing the results of our research with social agencies and opening a dialogue with the community (parents, students, teachers and public and private organizations) about the knowledge that has been gained during this investigation and its potential to guide practice and services aimed at these children. [48]

5.2.2 Personal hygiene

In Brazil municipal administrations promote programs, primarily within schools, to encourage good hygiene habits, such as brushing teeth daily and applying fluoride weekly. They also provide education and prevention against transmitted diseases, and conditions carried by animals and flies. Nevertheless there is a dichotomy here: While development in the region is geared to improving the quality of life of the population the problems faced by the residents of the Canudos neighborhood prevent them from improving their lives.. The inferior housing in the Canudos neighborhood include have a large number of houses near rivers, and have serious infrastructure problems, such as a lack of running water, electricity, sewage, and waste collection. [49]

Thus, the boy who indicated that he did not like to wash himself because he suffered electric shocks in the shower is a reflection of inadequate electrical installations. Lack of access to adequate sanitary installations (bathrooms) is also conducive to a dislike of bathing and brushing teeth. [50]

In addition to the efforts made in the schools, the physical education teachers in the "Children of Canudos" program also encourage care for personal hygiene, as illustrated by a quotation highlighted by PILAR (2003):

"I try to talk to the kids about hygiene. I sit down with them and go from mouth to mouth checking their teeth. Some of them laugh and say, 'this teacher should have been a dentist not a physical education teacher'." (Interview carried out by PILAR [2003, p.67] with a teacher from the "Children of Canudos" program) [51]

Actions taken in conjunction by families, teachers, and schools can have a great impact on the acquisition of hygiene habits by children and adolescents, even those living in deprived conditions. [52]

6. Conclusion

An arts-based investigation employing drawings as a method of eliciting our participants' understanding of their own living conditions has not only served as a new resource it has also provided us with a medium through which they were able to express, with richer information, the subjectivity of the context in which they live. We believe that an interview alone would not offer this level of scope and depth. [53]

Nevertheless, if on the one hand the method of drawings provided a medium for the expression of subjectivity, on the other, the task of analyzing those drawings was a challenge for us. In order to achieve an analysis could account for the depth that the drawings themselves represent, it is necessary to form a research team including professionals from other disciplines, such as psychology and sociology. Each different perspective could identify different evidence for analysis. [54]

In this study it has been possible to see within their drawings what the children and adolescents of the Canudos neighborhood who take part in the "Social Indoor Soccer" program like and dislike about the context in which they live. We have related this with what has already been produced using qualitative, descriptive and interpretative research. [55]

We were able to reveal from the data analyzed above that playing football and video games are what these children and adolescents most like to do. Playing football is related to what we offer in the "Social Indoor Soccer" program, and which we have confirmed is beneficial for those taking part.. In relation to video games, it is necessary to plan educational strategies to teach both parents and teachers about the content of these games and to encourage teachers to incorporate multimedia culture into their lessons in such a way as to encourage a critical approach to them. [56]

With respect to what our participants did not like about where they live, their drawings revealed that their greatest concerns were violence and personal hygiene . Many drawings depicting armed robbery, firearms, illicit drugs, and violence. We found that our participants live in close proximity to these high-risk situations and that their drawings demonstrate that these situations upset them. Dislike for personal hygiene does not appear to have the same intensity as risk to violence, but does indicate problems involving inadequate sanitary facilities, even including risk of electric shocks due to badly fitted electrical connections. [57]

The fact that they love to play football suggests that they are more likely to persist with the soccer program and thereby incorporate the benefits of their participation into their lives, particularly in terms of broadening their worldview beyond their own living conditions. Nevertheless, the way in which the drawings involving violence appear is evidence of the importance of continuing to intervene in this environment. [58]

In order to take this investigation further, we suggest that the perspectives of other professions be incorporated in order to extend the analysis presented here and to propose educational interventions within this environment. [59]

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