Female crack users: bodies that (doesn’t) matter

Mulheres usuárias de crack: corpos que (não) importam

Received: 2023-11-15 | Accepted: 2023-12-18 | Published: 2023-12-21

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to discuss female modes of subjectivation in the context of crack use, problematizing the concept of “abject bodies” (Judith Butler). Narrative interviews were carried out, Life Stories of seven women, aged between 28 and 37 years old, all from Pernambuco, Brazil. The Field Diary was used and, as an analysis strategy, descriptive analytics inspired by Foucault were used. Sociodemographic data shows women, poor, black, low-educated, lesbians. The interviewees' analysis indicates that, to understand the crack phenomenon, it is necessary to look at the sociocultural and historical context, and at the analytical category of gender. It was concluded that the discourse about “being a woman” produces ways of relating and being, in a process of subjectivation driven by political, normative and cultural strategies, however, the life experience of women crack users is characterized as a complex phenomenon. The subject here is active in his process of subjectivation, producing modes of resistance; These women resist to exist, as women and as mothers.

Keywords: Women; Crack; Abject bodies; Power relations.
RESUMO

Este artigo objetiva discutir os modos de subjetivação femininos no contexto do uso de crack, problematizando o conceito de “corpos abjetos” (Judith Butler). Foram realizadas entrevistas narrativas, Histórias de Vida de sete mulheres, com idade entre 28 e 37 anos, todas de Pernambuco, Brasil. Utilizou-se o Diário de Campo e, como estratégia de análise, utilizou-se a analítica descritiva de inspiração foucaultiana. Os dados sociodemográficos apresentam mulheres, pobres, negras, de baixa escolaridade, lésbicas. A análise das entrevistadas apontam que, para compreender o fenômeno do crack, é necessário um olhar sobre o contexto sociocultural, histórico, e acerca da categoria analítica de gênero. Concluiu-se que o discurso sobre “ser mulher” produz modos de se relacionar e ser, num processo de subjetivação agenciado por estratégias políticas, normativas e culturais, no entanto, a experiência de vida de mulheres usuárias de crack se caracteriza como um fenômeno complexo. O sujeito aqui é ativo no seu processo de subjetivação, produzindo modos de resistência; essas mulheres resistem para existir, como mulheres e como mães.

Palavras-chave: Mulheres; Crack; Corpos abjetos; Relações de poder.
INTRODUÇÃO

According to Butler, the abject “relates to all types of bodies whose lives are not considered ‘lives’ and whose materiality is understood as ‘not important’” (Prins & Meijer, 2002, p. 161). Butler exemplifies using the case of non-Western people, the poor, psychiatric patients, the physically disabled, Lebanese and Turkish refugees. Abject bodies are not intelligible and have no legitimate existence. In this sense, “as each individual produces, so to speak, their abjection, their fluids, their death, each society, each human group, with its own matrix of intelligibility, produces its exclusions, that is, its abject beings/bodies” (Prins & Meijer, 2002, pp. 161-162).

Following norms gives bodies the status of subject, gives them intelligibility, and these norms compulsorily reiterate heterosexuality (Butler, 2010). This process of marginalizing subjects who do not follow the rules alludes to what Butler (2010) called “bodies that don’t matter”. The author uses the concept of “abjection” to talk about bodies that subvert the sex/gender/desire order. It is important to highlight that Butler is not the original author of the concept, she uses the theoretical construct of author Julia Kristeva.

Kristeva (1982) addresses abjection in its individual character, looking at it as a process that concerns the subjective constitution. In his work there are quotes concerning abjection as a social process, however, this is not his concern. The author carries out her theoretical construction within the field of Lacanian psychoanalysis, based on the understanding that the subject is constituted by the spheres of the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic. It is abjection, as a process of subjective constitution, that makes it possible to insert the subject into language, or into the Symbolic field. According to the author, this process of separation by exclusion is an imperative split for the constitution of the Self and that which, in no way, can be recognized as such (Kristeva, 1982).

The author clarifies, however, that the abject is not an equal. This is not a persona with equal coping or bargaining power. It refers to something diminished, smaller, and exactly for this reason it can and should be annihilated. He also states that we are in contact with the abject on a regular basis, and that these are contacts that generate uncomfortable sensations and reactions of repudiation in us (Kristeva, 1982).

Abjection, in Kristeva’s theory, is present in both the subject and the culture, since it can be glimpsed at the same time in individual and group rituals, thus forming a border between the social body and the group body (Tyler, 2009).
Butler (2011), in the book Bodies that matter, informs us of the distinction between his understanding of the abject and Kristeva's. The term abjection comes from the Latin (abjicere) and means to exclude, throw away or far away, alluding to a field of differentiation, in which something is part, something is not.

Butler's (2011) interest is in the “abject zones”, considering them as broad social processes that, even though they concern the subjective constitution, go beyond the social domain, oppressing bodies that seek intelligibility (Butler, 2011; Carvalho, 2014).

Kristeva calls the abject the excesses of the body, expelled and discarded: feces, urine, vomit, tears, saliva (Kristeva, 1982). The abject body is what we do not want to see in ourselves: our excrement, our excesses and, ultimately, our corpse. The abject body is our illness, our death. The abject bodies of society are those that we execrate in the same way that we execrate our excesses and that which rots within us, leading to our death.

In Butler's abject there are strong political markers, although the author does not cancel, or forget, the subjective individual markers. For Butler, the abject is in no way restricted to sex and heteronormativity but rather encompasses all unimportant lives, without political and social value (Butler, 2011).

The figure of the abject subject becomes socially incarnated by a set of prefigurations that paradoxically makes it invisible, but also stigmatizes it, associating its performance/existence with a kind of “underworld”, denying and neglecting its practices.

Based on this approach, it is possible to think that female bodies that use crack become socially “abject”, in the sense attributed by Butler. Based on this concept, we intend to discuss female subjectivation modes in the context of crack use.

In this study, the method was not taken as an already constructed reality, because, in view of several studies carried out and already produced, we started from the statements of women crack users and their subjectivation processes to identify which discourses cross these processes, their experiences of life as crack users. Our motivation was to understand the strategies of subjectivation, the subjection to these discourses today, even after years of the existence of crack and processes of women's emancipation in the social sphere.

**EPISTEMIC-METHODOLOGICAL PATH**

Foucault considered that the method should be chosen on a case-by-case basis, that is, taking into account the construction of each problem or research object. The method should assist the researcher in choosing action strategies, instruments and
arrangements. For Foucault, the method is not an a priori, the path taken to reach a research result is something that can be reviewed, rewritten and changed throughout the research process. Much of the contemporary literature on qualitative methods is in tune with the discussions promoted by Foucault, a philosopher who worked to pose problems in “their most singular and concrete forms” and therefore always dealt with “localized and particular issues”. (Ferreira, 2015, p. 413).

What Foucault emphasizes and suggests is a look at the active subject, in its political, aesthetic and ethical dimensions, characterized as an expression of the power of life to resist forms of domination. It tries to highlight how bodies were captured, subjectivized, shaped, based on a series of discourses, institutions, architectural structures, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions. In other words, how through these devices an experience of self and others is possible.

From a Foucauldian perspective, it is not a question of discovering the truth from the subject, but of studying the games of truth and the concrete practices on the basis of which the subject is historically constituted. Foucauldian studies tell us about a particular use of history. Foucault’s proposal is a subject crossed by historical, cultural and social influences, which point out the conditions of possibilities for reacting in one way and not another to an imposed reality.

THE FIELD AND DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH

The research was developed in the Comprehensive Care Program for Drug Users and their Families in the State of Pernambuco (ATTITUDE), more specifically in the Regional Intensive Care Center for Women. This institution provides services in the reception modality, guaranteeing full protection/shelter and reception for women who use drugs with weakened or broken family ties, in areas of great exposure to violence, who experience situations of threat and conflicts arising from the use of crack and/or other drugs, offering a favorable environment for establishing bonds and biopsychosocial restoration for these women.

The service has a regional character, and is organized in line with the principles, guidelines and objectives of the Public Social Assistance Policy (PNAS). It operates 24 hours a day and has a multidisciplinary team, which follows the precepts of the typification of Social Assistance in the shelter and/or home model.
Data construction took place from January to June 2017, after approval of the project by the Research Ethics Committee of the Catholic University of Pernambuco (UNICAP), under number CAAE 61434116.1.0000.5206.

During the six months of data construction, the Intensivo Mulher was visited weekly by the researcher. During this period, it was possible to observe the daily dynamics of the institution, the relationships established between users, between them and children and babies (in the case of mothers with their children), between them and professionals and between team professionals.

Within this routine of exploring the study campus, service users who met the research inclusion criteria were called and the nature of the study and its importance were presented to them. After this explanation, those who showed interest in collaborating with the research were presented with the Free and Informed Consent Form (TCLE), which was read and signed. The protagonists of the research were seven women, aged between 27 and 38 years old, all from the state of Pernambuco.

The interviews took place in individual rooms, and lasted an average of 30 to 40 minutes. The narratives were recorded on a digital voice recorder and later transcribed, strictly following the words of the collaborators, trying to maintain maximum fidelity in relation to what was said. Relevant gestures were also recorded, such as crying, laughing and comments.

From this perspective, Life History (HV) was used as a data construction method. This method makes use of personal trajectories within the scope of human relations, seeking to understand the information contained in the personal lives of one or several employees, providing a wealth of details on the topic.

The initial question of a narrative interview, called the triggering or generative question, is open-ended and focuses on the investigation work. This question aims to encourage the generation of ideas (Fontanella et al., 2006). In this sense, it began with the question: “Tell me about your life story and your experience with crack use” and, from then on, a conversation developed.

A Field Diary was also used. “The field diary became a basic technique for recording observations known as field notes.” (Fontanella et al, 2006). The Field Diary was used by freely recording in it the experiences lived in and through direct or indirect
interaction with the field. The diary was part of the research routine, being, in the end, composed of a set of notes that highlight the affective processes caused in and by the observed events.

When conducting the interviews, priority was given to creating spaces for listening to life stories, making it possible to accommodate other themes that could emerge. Throughout the text, fictitious names were used to preserve the identity of the participants.

Working within a Foucauldian perspective requires us to deconstruct models of modern thought to consider analytical strategies for understanding the questions of reality. The meaning is to understand what was allowed to be expressed and understand the relationships established between what was said and the game of power that manifests itself in the speeches (Jeronymo, 2005; Lourenço, 2018). It is in this sense that we take descriptive discourse analytics, inspired by Foucault, as the main analysis strategy used in this study.

In this study, the focus of interest is on understanding the life experience of women crack users, understanding that the notion of experience refers to the process of constructing oneself, of ways of being – processes of subjectivation

WOMEN CRACK USERS, THEIR LIFE EXPERIENCES, THEIR SUBJECTIVATION PROCESSES: A DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

Lima (2015) emphasizes that the process of subjectivation is not something that happens or affects the subject causing something, it is something dynamic, it is from crossing the historical field of events that the possibility of this individual taking on a certain form as a subject emerges. Subjectivation is an effect, in other words, the individual does not have experiences, he is his experiences (Foucault, 1984). This process does not occur by passively transforming the subject in a subjective way, as the subject will always cause tensions and set in motion all discourses in a configuration and reconfiguration.

According to the sociodemographic data collected, all interviewees lived in extreme poverty, declared themselves black women, lived in poor and violent neighborhoods and were in a life-threatening situation due to drug trafficking. All of them experienced situations of extreme vulnerability, lived on the street and suffered sexual violence. Furthermore, one of them is not literate, five interrupted their school careers in
elementary school and only one managed to reach higher education, but was unable to complete it. They all reported that they never had access to formal employment.

Regarding the use of psychoactive substances, on average, young women started using crack during their adolescence, and the drugs most frequently mentioned during their first use were marijuana, nicotine, alcohol and crack. The young women reported years of experience using crack, ranging from six to twenty years of use.

Below, I present, one by one, the protagonists of this research, based on the way they refer to themselves:

Jacke: I'm nothing, a crazy woman, who sometimes doesn't even take care of herself, if I die I don't think I'll be missed by anyone.

Bethy: I lost my children to crack, a pleasure of seconds, the boys' father can use crack all night if he wants, he's a man, he doesn't even remember there's thread [son], right? When I was caught using it, I immediately lost my pets [small children]. It's not easy, being a woman, a black woman and a crack user. I lost my life just to use this disgrace.

Isis: So there I felt that that man was tearing me apart, raped me, beat me... He even said that noobs like me are only good for that!!

Betania: Being a mother, it's better to abstain from crack, right? Any drug, anything that keeps me away from my son, I'm either a woman or I'm a girl, right?

Miquelle: People judge women more; it seems to have a greater weight. No one wants a woman who uses crack, she uses it and throws it away, I've experienced this a lot!

Mily: My brother never used drugs and I, a woman, use drugs, I'm worse than a man, that's why my mother doesn't even want to know about me . . . . Lately I've been feeling like crap.

Valéria: Being a woman and a drug user, she is beaten, raped, she is abused, she loses her Value in everything, at work, in the family, in the community... today I fight for the respect of the people and no one respects me.
“Abjection”, socially speaking, constitutes the experience of being feared and rejected with repugnance, as its very existence threatens a homogeneous and stable vision of what the community is, with all its moral codes. The term refers to the space to which the community relegates those who are considered a threat to its proper functioning and to the social and political order (Miskolci, 2016).

The discrimination and violence suffered by these women leave their marks. These signs are even more pronounced in the lives of black women, due to the conditions resulting from poverty, low education, and precarious health in which most of them live. Some cases of problematic drug use by women, for example, are closely related to social exclusion, unemployment, prostitution, violence and racism, so that this entire situation must be the subject of intervention and care, which in reality they are not carried out socially (Rodrigo & Ordaz, 2012).

One of the interviewees tells us the following: “I discovered crack out of curiosity, I went to the favela and bought it. I always lived surrounded by people who used crack, I had never thought about using it, I'm already poor, people hardly even see me, imagine how crazy it is.” (Jacke, 33 years old).

Jacke always lived with her aunt, her mother's sister, as she reports that her mother never cared much about caring for her children, says that she had mental and learning problems, was illiterate, had four children, one from each father, and who She and her siblings were always looked after by her maternal grandmother. Since she was little, she always liked her aunt and the care she received from her, but she missed her mother, she understood that her mother only cared about the companions she found. Jacke states that before the abusive use of crack, he worked collecting cans to sell and, sometimes, selling water and popcorn, always doing odd jobs, as he only had one job with a formal contract and lost it because he was unable to control his use of the drug. Jacke calls crack “the destroyer” and claims to have lost a lot of things after starting to use the substance, says he became estranged from his brothers and aunt, and became infected with the HIV virus.

Isis, 27 years old, self-declares as female, heterosexual and a black woman. She is currently single and has a child from her first husband. She mentions having discovered crack at the age of fifteen, with her first boyfriend, who was a scout for a smoke shop and was murdered by drug dealers. Isis reveals that she started using the substance motivated by the desire to get closer and get to know her boyfriend better, and that she was unable
to stop using it after his death, prostituting herself on the street to maintain her addiction. He adds that he has been in contact with drugs since he was seven years old, as his aunt, his mother's sister, always used cigarettes, marijuana and alcohol. She claims to have started using cigarettes and marijuana at the age of eleven, hidden from her parents.

I've always been a crack user, and I've always been a whore, a street girl, right? That's what we crackheads call?! Because if I have money, if I work hard to earn change, I'll smoke crack and if I don't have money to smoke crack, I'll have to prostitute myself, so in prostitution we make an agreement, everything is in return, if he's paying me, it's a job, he's paying me. Now, yes, I use condoms. I'm not going to catch the disease from others, I did all the tests and it didn't show anything, I might be mad at it, but I'll use it. (Isis, 27 years old).

Negative signifiers are associated with crack, which stereotype and exclude those who use it. Women, because they are perceived as errant individuals, find themselves in constant conflict with society, because they are women and, in some cases, also mothers.

Miquelle, 28 years old, female, self-declared as bisexual and a black woman, is single and has two children. She reveals that she had a very complicated childhood, as when she was little her (biological) mother had problems with alcohol and gave her up to be raised by her neighbor. He remembers seeing his (biological) mother drinking alcohol and smoking when he spent the weekends with her. And he adds:

I didn't understand why she told me not to look like her, but then I understood, she smoked a lot of marijuana and I saw the ends in the ashtray so I got curious, I started smoking marijuana when I was twelve years old. (Miquelle, 28 years old)

Miquelle says that she has always lived closely with drugs, but started using crack when she was thirteen years old. He adds that he discovered crack through his stepfather, at his (biological) mother's house, on weekends, when he went to take care of his younger sisters. “I started smoking crack when I was thirteen. I also started doing wrong things, prostituting myself, hooking up with older men.” (Miquelle, 28 years old).

She used crack for a long time, until she met a friend of her foster mother, who became aware of her situation and took her to the interior of the state and proposed to take care of her. During the period he spent in the interior, he met the father of his youngest son, with whom he lived for a few years. But his partner got involved in drug
trafficking and was arrested. According to her, during the four years he was imprisoned, they continued dating and she spent that time without using or missing crack, however, when he was released, they relapsed, as he started bringing drugs into the house. In his report, he says that they thought they had control, but they were constantly relapsing. She intensified her programs, to use the drug and to buy food for her son, as they were already in need. Miquelle adds:

I went to prostitute myself, when I got there I went to use it, I left my son sleeping at home and I went to use it, in the building next to my house, then when I got home the police had just taken my son, so at that time I was left without floor. (Miquelle, 28 years old).

Miquelle states that losing her son was the worst thing she has ever felt in her life, as her eldest son already lives with his godmother, who takes very good care of him while she takes care of herself, and losing the youngest would be terrible, because she intends to take care of herself and move back in with the two of them together. Miquelle returned to Intensivo Mulher and restarted her health treatment and, with the help of the program, as well as the service’s lawyer, she managed to gain custody of her son again. She also reports that she dreams of becoming a “real woman” again, who takes care of the house, the children, who works, is strong and can achieve the things she wants.

Being a woman and a crack user is a challenge. Women, often in such intense use, have no place to work, earn their money, they stop working and the only way they can is to prostitute themselves, they have no one to leave their children with, the man does. We lost our children (…). You become more vulnerable to a disease, because sometimes when you're on drugs you accept everything, you go without a condom when taking drugs. I've already had syphilis (…) I feel like a nobody, a nothing. (Miquelle, 28 years old)

Hegemonic discourses deny these women places of responsibility, considering them devoid of practices of love, care, among other so-called feminine and maternal behaviors. Such discourses “invite” crack users to occupy the place that alludes to evil, to incapacity, a space that denies their own experiences.

The processes of resisting to exist are created from the moment these subjects deny the stereotyped place and demand consideration from their perspective regarding their own experiences.
The vulnerability of these poor women, in the public space of use, makes them easier targets of violence. This is a result of their personal practices, the social context that naturalizes violence against women and has few government and civil community actions to reduce this practice (Freitas, 2015).

In the context of crack use, conflicts easily end in physical violence, due to the “craving”, that is, the intense desire for use that some users experience. The women cited the frequency with which their relationships with drug trafficking take violent turns, manifesting themselves in constant death threats and attacks due to debts with drug trafficking. This can be seen in Miquelle’s speech, transcribed below:

I remember sleeping on the street, sleeping in cars. I traveled alone, I hitched a ride on top of the truck without knowing what the truck drivers were doing. I stopped because once I met a truck driver who beat me, raped me and forced me to get out of the truck at night. There were years of suffering, I suffered a lot of violence, a lot of loss, I lost the trust of my family, I lost the trust of my sisters, my father, I had a lot of loss, just defeat. (Miquelle, 28 years old)

Miquelle's speech resonates society's discourses about the meanings attributed to these bodies. Discourses understood here in the Foucauldian sense, which covers both discursive and non-discursive practices. His speech reveals the way in which negotiations surrounding the sale of crack are surrounded by violence, marked by unequal relationships in which men and drug dealers hold the product and the power in the negotiations.

This naturalization of unequal and hierarchical gender relations supports actions of domination, including over the body, in the violation of physical integrity, violation of the other's body. Regarding the meaning of violence and all the consequences that arise from its occurrence, Saffioti (2004a) remembers that in the patriarchal society in which we live there is a strong trivialization of violence, so that there is tolerance and even a certain encouragement from society so that men can exercise their virility based on strength/domination with a focus on the social organization of gender.

In this way, it is seen as “normal and natural for men to mistreat their wives, as well as for fathers and mothers to mistreat their children, thus ratifying the pedagogy of violence” (Saffioti, 2004a, p. 74). The author adds that the rupture of different types of
integrity, such as physical, sexual, emotional, moral, leads to the establishment of a social permissiveness that converts male aggressiveness into aggression against women, a factor that harms not only the victims, but also their aggressors and an entire social web that lives with or is forced, for countless reasons, to endure such subjection.

The violence experienced by research participants is strongly influenced by gender norms. The markers of class, generation, race and the fact of being users of illicit drugs are intertwined with gender, resulting in greater vulnerability of these women to gender-based violence, be it domestic violence or, more especially, sexual violence.

Sexual violence has always been strongly related to gender. Historically, in patriarchal society, the violation of women's bodies was always a possibility. In unequal and hierarchical relationships between men and women, they are more easily attacked and violated, since they are in positions of less power in the relationship, subjugated to men (Freitas, 2015; Saffioti, 2004b).

Regarding black women, Davis (2016) clarifies that both men and women worked hard on the farms. For them, strength and productivity were more relevant to both than issues related to sex, as they were required under threat of the lash, however “women also suffered differently, because they were victims of sexual abuse and other barbaric mistreatment.” that could only be inflicted on them” (Davis, 2016, p. 19).

Slave women were completely vulnerable to all forms of sexual coercion. They were “flogging, mutilated and also raped” (Davis, 2016, p. 20). Rape was nothing more than the ostensible representation of the domination, possession and control of overseers over women in working conditions.

Black women and crack users appear as an even more vulnerable group, since historical stigma and exclusion place them at greater exposure to violence and the violation of their sexual and human rights.

Mily, 30 years old, female, self-declared as homosexual and a black woman. He lives in a stable relationship with his partner, has two sons and a daughter from previous relationships. She is currently unemployed and says she has never worked with a formal contract, having always done odd jobs to earn money. She tries to help her mother financially in raising her two children, as her daughter is raised by her neighbors, who are the girl's godparents. Mily states that each child has a different father and that she has no
contact with any of them, and adds: “I never wanted [to have contact with any of them],
I didn't like them, in fact I don't think I ever liked men, I prefer women, always. I liked
women, I understand myself better, and my children stayed with me and my mother.”
(Mily, 30 years old).

Mily reveals that she has always lived around drugs, and that before crack it was
just loló, glue, cigarettes and marijuana. His entire family worked selling drugs out of
their own home to survive. At the age of thirteen he started using crack and says he hasn't
stopped since. Mily adds: “So I started to learn about crack even in my own home, seeing
people using, selling, buying and I kept seeing people using it and I was curious why they
were like that.” (Mily, 30 years old).

Mily says that she was always the despised one in the family. She never had
parents who worried about her, her health, her education, her well-being, her
development, her friendships. She says that she doesn't feel like a “real woman”, because
she doesn't know how to take care of her children, the house, or be the woman her mother
always wanted her to be. She adds:

My mother was never like that, her whole life she only cared about drinking and
money. When I arrived with the money, she was the good one, she was her love, she didn't
care if I had eaten, if I had showered, if I had used drugs, if I had been raped, if my period
had started, if I was a girl ... (Mily, 30 years old)

Mily states that after her period came, her biggest fear was that of being raped, as
she says she always heard about these stories in her family environment and in the
community where she lived. She reveals that she has not had much luck in her
heterosexual relationships, in all of them she has suffered violence, she has always felt
alone: “I never had anyone to defend me, not even when I was stabbed by my daughter's
father, the police officers to whom I asked for help said that It’s a good thing I hadn’t
done...” (Mily, 30 years old). And he adds:

I wanted to report them one by one, I've had my arm broken, I've been raped, I
have stab wounds and I've never reported any of them because I've always been afraid of
dying, I don't trust the police, our laws, I know my worth, you know that song that says
“the cheapest meat on the market is black meat...”? Well, I'm not cheap, I'm worthless,
I'm a black woman, lesbian and crack user... (Mily, 30 years old).
Bethy, 38 years old, female, self-declared as heterosexual and a black woman. He had four children. The first is under the care of his father. He currently lost two children to adoption due to the abusive use of crack, and takes care of his youngest daughter, a six-month-old baby. She mentions having discovered crack after she was an adult, aged 32. She reports that after losing her mother, at the age of fifteen, she experienced moments of significant suffering, as her mother was everything to her. After her mother's death, she decided to live with her boyfriend, the father of her first child. He then joined his second partner, with whom he had another child and who introduced him to crack.

Bethy claims that after starting to use crack, she was unable to stop, and that she suffered a lot of violence, which led the couple to separate.

She says: “I got pregnant with him, I left him seven months pregnant. Then I went home, but I didn't give up my crack addiction. I kept using it” (Bethy, 38 years old).

Bethy cries when talking about her children. Feels wronged. He reports having tried to stop using it several times and was unable to do so. She appears indignant at not having anyone to count on. She refers to the abandonment of her children's biological parents, who did not support her, stating that if they had helped, she would not have lost the children to justice.

Betania, 32 years old, female, self-declared homosexual and black woman, in turn, says:

I got it into my head that I need my abstinence to take care of my son, my son is only five years old, and every Sunday he comes, when he comes to visit me he says: You need to get well, because my children’s mothers friends take them to school, and you're never there, so that makes me very sad, then he leaves and I'm left like this, right? (…) I didn't want that, I really wanted to be a better mother for my son, but I can't. “Being a better mother means abstaining from crack, right? Any drug, anything that keeps me away from my son.” (Betania, 32 years old).

Betania states that she was born into an evangelical cradle, and that until she was eighteen her life was all about study, church and home, without contact with any type of drug.
She played sports, she played futsal, and at the age of seventeen, a scout from the Santa Cruz sports club invited her to play on his team, in the state of Paraná, but for her to go, her mother would have to sign the contract, because at the time she was underage. Her parents did not sign this contract, because they said that futsal was a lesbian's business, for dykes, not allowing Betania to pursue a career as a football player. At seventeen she finished high school, and at eighteen she began drinking socially with friends, left church, and from then on began using powder (cocaine). She got married at twenty-three and at the age of twenty-six she became a widow, her husband was much older than her and died after suffering a heart attack. In his report, he emphasizes how painful it was to experience this loss:

[It was] more of a frustration for me, because we really got married, we really loved each other, I had his son, when he passed away my son was two years old, and what happened is that it was more of a frustration for me. life. (Betania, 32 years old)

Betania claims to have tried crack shortly after her husband’s death, during meetings with friends, and that after her first experience she was unable to stop using the substance. She claims to have used it to alleviate the symptoms of alcoholic intoxication, because when she drank she immediately became drunk and dizzy, and after using crack she improved considerably, being able to use both substances. And she adds:

I went to try it because I didn't believe it was possible, so I drank, I got in that drunken state, and I did that, I smoked crack in a pipe, and in two, three minutes I was fine, totally fine, someone just told me that I had I was drunk by the breath of the drink, but I was completely fine, I was no longer falling over, I was no longer stuttering, and that was great for me, I spent the night using, they had taken a lot of crack. And even today, at thirty-two years old, I can't stop. (Betania, 32 years old)

Betania worked in several institutions caring for drug users, therapeutic communities, Caps AD, psychiatric hospitals and social assistance programs. She feels frustrated, alone, helpless. He ended a romantic relationship and says he can't deal with so much frustration. She mentions having to get well to take care of her son, as her parents are already elderly and have difficulty taking care of their grandson and themselves. Betania's son is currently five years old, and they both suffer from each other's absence.
Valeria, 29 years old, female, self-declared of homosexual orientation and a black woman, says that she currently does not feel like a woman, she feels like nothing, and adds:

Being a woman is an experienced person, a mature person, a woman is a responsible person, an intelligent person, a respectful person, a person who fights for her rights. A woman who uses drugs loses her beauty, she loses her name: Being a woman. A woman is criticized for everything, when she is not a good daughter, a good student, a good mother and when she is a crack or drug user, she is seen with indifference, she is beaten, raped, she is abused, she loses her value, she loses her value at all. (Valeria, 29 years old)

Valeria reports that she has lived with drugs in her home since she was a child. He has always witnessed the use and sale of multiple drugs. His mother made a living from selling marijuana and crack, sometimes selling clothes, and accepting money so that people could use drugs in her home. Valeria did not know her father, who died before she was born, and speaks with a tone of revolt about her mother's relationships.

All of my mother's husbands were drug addicts, they always liked the wrong man, thief, drug dealer, that sort of thing. Since I was a child, I have been harassed by my stepfather, I always told my mother, but she didn't believe it. So, I started working early, I didn't want to stay at home. (Valeria, 29 years old)

Valeria says that her dreams were stolen, she was unable to achieve anything, she was always a sad, depressed child. He started using alcohol at thirteen, and at fourteen he started using loló.

Due to the abusive use, he remembers that he lost custody of his children, the youngest to his mother and then to his sister, who has taken care of him until now, and his oldest son is in a shelter for adoption.

Butler (2010) will work on standardization always articulated with its inseparable binomial, exclusion. Unlike “bodies that matter”, abject bodies will present something that does not make sense and should not exist within our cultural matrix. Female crack users should not exist – as they contradict the norm of what it means to be a woman and what it means to be a mother in the face of motherhood related to instinctual and sacrificial love – in such a way that they cannot even be thought of, understood or named. Abjection
then occurs, not only through the denial of rights, but also through the lack of recognition of the legitimacy of these women's experience.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study sought to focus on the relationships established with crack, not as a disease, but rather on understanding the socially constructed meanings for the drug, as well as for the woman who uses it. These constructions have ethical and political implications, as they can result in non-accountability of the State and/or civil society, increasing the exclusion of young women and making it even more difficult for them to enjoy and exercise their rights.

The participants' narratives pointed to the existence of subjectivation processes crossed by discourses of knowing power over being a woman as unquestionable truths, which end up affecting the dynamics of women's lives which, according to hegemonic discourses, are outside the norm, as is the case of women who use crack.

The results found indicate that these women's experience of motherhood is influenced by gender norms and the social construction of the mythical maternal place, as they reiterate, in their speeches, the dominant discourses when defining mothers as responsible for care and a source of unconditional love, for sons and daughters. In their practices, however, they are agents of a process of rethinking the gender norms that establish and position women and men and that naturalize the love directed towards children as something instinctual for women.

They sometimes express indignation at being punished by the courts with the removal of their children from their custody, when the parents are not even questioned about this fact. Their motherhood experiences are not homogeneous, but they were all fraught with suffering. They reported numerous difficulties in accessing healthcare and entering social programs. They faced trials for the loss of their children, under the strong argument that “women who use drugs are not fit to be mothers”. To this day, they face processes to recover custody of their sons and daughters. This reflects the distance from State care in these women's maternal experiences, since the arrangements between race and class markers influence their vulnerability to a greater or lesser extent. The State, most of the time, appears in their territories to punish the practice of infractions by them, but not against what is done to them.
The reductionist view of the conduct of these women ignores that their experience is crossed by markers of gender, race, generation, and social class. The discourse that blames women disregards the living conditions that influence their decisions, restricting their possibilities and, above all, holds civil society and the State unaccountable for the difficulties they experience, since, based on neoliberal ideals, it considers them as the only ones responsible for their experiences (Freitas, 2015).

Despite repeating hegemonic discourses in their speeches about what it means to be a mother, these women build resistance to them by positioning themselves as capable of also being mothers, even using crack. These resistances are built in their narratives based on the possibility of, being crack users, providing care and provision, through the use of strategies that become possible through the activation of the family support network. In this way, it is worth highlighting that the protagonists, here, resist to exist as women, as mothers.

The use of drugs, especially crack, still carries a strong social mark that is based on prejudice and stigma. The association of use with marginal, perverse behaviors, promiscuity, lack of responsibility, among others, is reinforced to this day by discursive practices that construct the female crack user and that corroborate the discrimination of social groups. However, discussions built around studies on gender linked to scientific and political discourses support indicators of the complexity involved in understanding the lives of people who use crack, especially when they are women.

REFERENCES


