

Proxemics of children's experiences of risky play in specific leisure equipment

Proxêmica das experiências infantis do brincar arriscado em equipamento específico de lazer

Proxémica de las experiencias de juego arriesgado de los niños en instalaciones físicas para recreación

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Highlights

The power of the theoretical-methodological combination between Proxemics and the Sociology of Everyday Life for research with children.

Longitudinal field study with dense data on risky play among children.

Recognizing and valuing children's practices as unique ways of cultural production.

Abstract

Proxemics studies the relationship between bodies and the space around them. We adopted it as a theoretical-methodological research model for participant observation in territories of risky play. To this end, we conducted a field study in children's playgrounds. Based on the mobilized reference, we found that children self-organize and build, in a relational way, patterns of bodily approximation that reflect their interests in intergenerational or peer relationships. Because of this, we found in children's proxemics a privileged way of listening to and unveiling children's participation, highlighting how they organize their relationship with others and with the territory of play.

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Keywords

Child. Play. Physical Education Facilities.

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| Introduction

Listening to children and involving them in research is an ethical, political, and aesthetic principle for children to free them from the condition of subalternity and social invisibility to which they have historically been subjected. Consequently, the truth of this axiom urges us to procedurally understand the time and space of listening in the methodology of our studies. In this sense, in our scientific-dialogical work, we were confronted with the complexity of observing children's practices in the playful and intergenerational context of the playground, an educational space outside the school walls. Faced with this challenge, we used proxemics (Hall, 2005) in the light of the study of everyday life (Certeau, 2014) to refine reactive entry (Corsaro, 2011) as a way for adults to enter children's cultural territories at times and places agreed upon by the children.

In this text, we present the aforementioned intersection from the materiality of an empirical study to understand which proxemic interactions are recurrent in the relational context between children or between children and adults, in 18 playgrounds designed to induce situations of controlled risk. Although limited to a specific city, Maringá (PR), the research provides an opportunity to problematize cities and their spaces. Toys are designed to show how children will act without consulting them; on the other hand, children behave on the structure through tactics, subverting the technocratic strategy of adults (Certeau, 2014).

In this regard, Certeau's (2014) concept of practice, in its triple dimension (ethical, aesthetic, and polemical), is powerful in making visible children's resistance and particular forms of cultural production. The cultural goods offered are not consumed passively, because everyday life is contested by the practices that different subjects impose on it. Therefore, a public leisure facility is subject to what Certeau (2014) called productive consumption. Since this aesthetic of reception is perceived in the subtle practices of children's appropriation of the city, finding such productions in children's cultures is a way of highlighting the protagonism they share in their authorial relationships with large toys.

Respecting and considering children as subjects in the constitution of a shared public experience gives the city another dignity, since differences must find resonance in community life, in the sense of a sociability governed by human plurality. Therefore, to exclude children from broader social relations is to deprive childhood of certain experiences and to subordinate it to discursive regimes that do not contribute to its public recognition.

On this premise, it is necessary to improve the fieldwork of how and where to listen to children, as they have a way of enunciating their existence in the world – even capable of bringing new communicative logic (Mello et al., 2021a). In this sense, children's risky ways of playing, how they subvert playgrounds and produce movements and games outside of urban planning, point to proxemics as something related to children as practitioners of everyday life and producers of culture.

Proxemics is the study of how each creature organizes itself territorially in relation to others (Hall, 2005). As adults, aggravated by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, our relationships are socially distant, making touch as a way of socializing difficult (Gomes et al., 2021). But how do children organize themselves in the play space where they find logistical facilities to produce practices of vertigo, of overcoming and challenging risks that they manage themselves? What proxemic relations prevail in these usages? What happens when children interact with each other and with adults?

In order to gain insights that will bring us closer to answering these questions, this work aims to analyze the proxemic interactions between children and between children and adults in the exploration of a specific leisure facility suitable for risky play. In doing so, we highlight their agencies and cultural productions in this unique way of listening to and participating with children.

| Method

This work had an urban ethnographic approach (Magnani, 2000) in which we tried to identify proxemic recurrences by recording communication between bodies. Although different isolated cases attract attention, they do not represent typical behavior. Therefore, we focused on expressive cases that occurred in different observations and outlined a possible pattern. The child/child and adult/child relationships were analyzed.

The research began with an exploratory study of the Meu Campinho recreational facility to find the different meanings attributed to the proxemic relationships of children in this complex of artificial grass courts, pergolas, and fixed places for board games. Subsequently, the city of Maringá disseminated rope toys in other public spaces, especially on grassy squares, a city's environment characteristic.

The pilot study consisted of visits and photographic records of the first twelve structures built, carried out during the period of social isolation, in August 2021, with due care for distancing and prophylaxis. Gradually, the empirical evidence pointed to the importance of rope toys for children's expression, including interaction with care activities or playing with family members.

Systematic observations began on November 9, 2021, ended on May 29, 2022, and were resumed in September to refute/validate categories. Initially, the times of entry were drawn until the data were saturated, and the collection concentrated on the days and times with the most public traffic (weekends or holidays and from 5pm to 8pm on weekdays). We observed a total of 612 people, and 539 configurations were recorded over 47 days (68 incursions), which were distributed by category and classified in percentages of occurrence. The children agreed, and the adults consented to the use of the descriptions and images.

As facilitators of the participant observation, considering that the environment is a space for children's leisure, the researchers structured two types of incursions from the pilot study, differentiated according to time, to ensure the incorporation of their

presence in the environment: 1) short incursion – people use the place as a resting place when they go for a walk or to ride a bike. We replicated the practice of resting in the complexes or squares for short observations, with audio recording on the mobile phone of the scenes observed; 2) long incursion – from 20 minutes to two hours, when the researchers went to the places to apply reactive entry with children and adults, in addition to recording through filming, photography and direct notes in the field diary (especially for representation in a sketch of the spatial distribution of people in the playground and its surroundings).

In this sense, proxemics is a promising approach because it prioritizes the relational and contextual dimension of the interactions that living organisms establish with space. The first exponent of this field was the anthropologist Edward Hall, who was interested in observing how human perception of space changes with culture and represents a unique form of communication, despite the fact that territoriality is an innate trait in various animals. The author defines proxemics as the study of "[...] the human use of space as a specialized elaboration of culture" (Hall, 2005, p. 2, translated by us).

We reiterate that the mobilized frame of reference, in addition to supporting the problematization, also guided our data, since it provided greater methodological rigor in first grasping the logic of the children's practices in this context and then following them as tacit rules of interaction in the process of reactive entry. Therefore, the question of the child's consent preceded the word in action, with a gradual process of proxemics, namely: strangeness from a distance, an exchange of glances with quick communication (a shy hello), a curious approach to specific words (holding an object, answering a question, being informed about a game that was about to start), until we reached the moment of a new, provocative hello, followed by an invitation to come closer, to talk, to play according to their rules or to help in a risky game.

Considering the theoretical basis of this study, no interviews were conducted because the most relevant data is found in the way the observed people, especially the children, interact with each other and with the space. For Certeau (2014), it is essential to capture the meaning of the enunciation, which is circumscribed to the socio-interactive environment in which it is produced. For this reason, the field notes favored the speeches in the act, which cannot be removed from their context of production. On the other hand, this methodological option makes it impossible to conclude the actors' representations of their actions and intentions.

We immersed ourselves in different urban areas of Maringá (PR) in order to specifically understand the contextual and relational dynamics present in the experimentation with rope toys (pyramids and crossings) that evoke the ludic sensation of vertigo. Here, in dialogue with the Sociology of Everyday Life, we took as a starting point the tactile proxemic relationship that children have with objects as a way of getting to know them.

A total of 18 facilities were covered, divided into twelve Meu Campinho complexes and six squares. The Meu Campinho structure is characterized by a synthetic grass

field and tables with benches, while the squares are heterogeneous in terms of size, trees and equipment. The pyramid (Figure 1) and the rope bridges (Figure 2) were common structures to all the complexes, while some of the squares already had variations, such as the basket (two squares), as shown in Figure 3. Regardless of the toy installed, there was a rubber floor for protection (Figure 4).

Figure 1

Pyramid/tower with ropes



Source: elaborated by the authors.

Figure 2

Different types of rope bridge



Source: elaborated by the authors.

Figure 3

Basket for resting or turning



Source: elaborated by the authors.

Figure 4
Fall-proof flooring



Source: elaborated by the authors.

A point that deserves attention, given the longitudinal aspect of the fieldwork (ten months), is the identification of changes in the object. These changes were observed both in people's interactions with the playground equipment and in the community, with different toys available and architectural designs aimed at varying the pattern of the equipment's floor, pyramid/tower, and bridges. Therefore, for this work, we will not go into detail about these experimental structures, which are located in noble areas of the city.

Another adaptation of the study was the a posteriori finding that there were proxemic differences in the use of toys in central and peripheral areas. The latter observations were concentrated in four environments deliberately selected for their representativeness (two in the center and two in the periphery), using as a selection criterion within the category the location with the greatest flow of people.

Finally, the presentation of findings was structured into two dominant proxemic macro groups (adult-child and child-child), which were not established a priori but manifested in the process. Analytical themes that cut across everyday life, such as ethnic-racial, economic, and gender relations, were identified and analyzed within these two social categories produced a posteriori.

| Dynamics between children and adults

Regarding the type of interaction the adult establishes with the child on the playground, we have categorized three moments: entry, activity, and exit. The entry corresponds to how the adult accompanies the child to the play area, and differs in particular in its knowledge of the child's autonomy in facing the challenges of each play station. In this sense, the age differences between the children are fundamental, since younger children tend to move around or play sitting down on the rubberized floor, so that the entry into the environment is more localized, at the edges; while older children, in general, detach themselves from the adults and initially explore one or more toys away from the immediate action of the adults.

Once the activity begins, the entry, we can see that adults adopt different modes of distance, one of which will always be predominant. Based on Hall's (2005)

typification, distance can be: 1) intimate, when it involves physical contact with the person of affection, which provides security; 2) personal, when there is interaction with proximity, without touch; 3) social, suggesting a more formal interaction, but allowing the other person's physiognomy to be read; 4) public, over 3.5 meters, when more general aspects can be observed, but not the details of the interlocutor's body. However, the author warns that in Ibero-American culture, being a member of the family implies a different relationship between people in the territory.

In terms of empirics, when comparing ethnic groups, intimate distance was practiced more within Japanese-Brazilian families (nissei, sansei, yonsei), with paternal and maternal figures in an equal relationship of providing security while maintaining a vigilant public distance from children outside the family nucleus. Regarding gender, women generally spend more time at a personal distance. Intimate distance is more common for children in early childhood, especially when they climb on toys or ask for parental help.

Another adult pattern observed during the activity is the man standing further back or to the side of the child, adopting a gaze similar to the child's target. In effect, the adult male is trying to direct or suggest the activity: Pick it up; Come up here; Daughter, step on the wood in front of you and hold the rope with your hand; I want to see you get up there. The adult woman's actions are also marked by personal distance, but 78% of the time she looks at the child's facial expressions, creating dialogues that are more likely to capture feelings such as fears or desires. Even when she intervenes to trigger the child's actions, the adult woman adopts a different posture: *Look what that little colleague can do. Would you like to try it?*

When children are older, especially from the age of eight, and when they are accompanied by their peers (siblings, friends, neighbors), adults tend to adopt the public distance, reaching 70 meters in some cases. It's common for adults to bring a beach chair or picnic towel to sit on while they intermittently watch the children from a distance. The relationship between social distance in both sexes is also representative but maintains the difference of frontal orientation for women and lateral orientation for men, concerning the direction of the child. This distance is common in the following cases: accompanying more than one child and alternating distances (leaving the public distance to say something or the intimate distance to carry out surveillance and give the child more autonomy). It is important to note that there is a diversity in the procedures adopted by adults during the activity.

The last moment is the end (the exit), usually given by the adult. It's worth noting that 81% of the time, children don't go alone, which varies when you're in a neighborhood where people know each other. When the adult is present, it's common to call out to the child that it's time to go home; when the child ignores him or her, the adult approaches to ask the child to leave. In the absence of interviews, it is not possible to infer the motivations or parameters used by the adult to stop the activity. When it is the children who take the initiative to stop, they express their desire to stop playing there.

It's worth adding the common strategy of adults bringing water to prolong the children's stay. To motivate them to leave, there is often someone on the premises who ritualizes the end with a picnic. In the areas considered noble, it is common for those in charge to bring complementary materials such as balls and bicycles with wheels.

Although there is a certain loyalty of families to a certain territory, like a habitus that marks each group's place in society, we were also able to uncover nomadic tactics of movement with the public spaces of the city. In our opinion, this can have an impact on the shared role of adults and children in the appropriation of the environment for risky play.

Santos (2004), emphasizing the fundamental importance of the body in the movement for understanding reality, warns that corporeality is determined by spatiality. Therefore, every movement interacts with the spatial dimension, which to some extent stimulates or inhibits the body's responses. From this perspective, the sociabilities of parents and friends participate in the re-signification of these spaces under different tactical categories.

In dialog with the anthropological work of Magnani (2000; 2003; 2018), we can see the family tactics in having this equipment available for cycling. For example, the author identifies the place lived in terms of proximity as a "piece" because it represents a locality in which the inhabitants of a certain neighborhood or village feel familiar. However, to experience leisure, people may have to go to other environments, and they have to adhere to more impersonal behaviors when making the transition, for example, from the "piece" to the Parque do Ingá (Ingá Park), one of the macro leisure facilities in Maringá (PR). In this way, when people leave the piece, they have to take certain routes that lead them to a spot or a circuit. A spot is a concentrated area of attractions, such as Tiradentes Street (with its trendy bars and restaurants), which connects Parque do Ingá (Ingá Park) to Praça da Catedral (Cathedral Square), a meeting point for different social configurations. A circuit, on the other hand, evokes a passage through distant places that mark a culturally significant route for a particular group.

Returning to the empirical, in our records, the Meu Campinho complexes and the squares evoke the circuit. Depending on how familiar they are with the areas, adults and children mostly use bicycles to get around. We've seen adults on bicycles accompanied by children in their second childhood or even teenagers. They make short trips to the playgrounds in a kind of recreational rotation, using the Meu Campinho, squares, or other facilities as stops. In other cases, the circuit is made by motorized vehicles, which makes it possible to connect the area to the recreational areas of the municipality.

Some remarks about the limitations of the scope must be made so that new studies can take a closer look at how adults and children interact in risky play. The contextual results led us to subcategorize adult behavior by ethnic characteristics, gender, and social class. The category of gender was adopted a posteriori because no homosexual couples were identified in the empirical study, and therefore, within

the methodological limits of participant observation, we did not address the gender identity of the adults. However, to the extent that we saw patterns in the proxemic interactions that differentiated between male and female in the adult-child approach, we can also talk about the gender issue in the way the interaction with the child takes place.

The *ethnic trait* variable was present at the intersection of race and heritage in the sense of distinguishing two groups: Japanese descendants and Hispanic speakers. Although 25% of the population of Maringá (PR) is black (brown and black), the observations highlighted their absence, especially in neighborhoods with better urban infrastructure. In addition, it is worth noting that the city has recent and visible black Haitian immigration, but the families were not found in the incursions.

A study of the physical and sports leisure of families in the most socially vulnerable areas of the city showed that there is a high perception that the neighborhood is an unsafe place for children. As a result, adults restrict children's autonomy to go out alone to play in public spaces during their free time (Silva Junior et al., 2021). Although Maringá (PR) has modern urban planning, low rates of violence, and a high Human Development Index (HDI) compared to the national level, the city was designed as a commodity by the company that planned it, creating an oasis at the expense of socio-spatial segregation (Nunes & Santil, 2020).

As a result of this reality, another aspect that can be observed is that the location of the equipment in each neighborhood is associated with the incidence of certain indicators that denote social differences, such as physical posture, voice volume, consumer goods, and clothing. We have used the term social stratum because, formally speaking, the people observed are not strictly speaking the bourgeoisie, but rather different layers (in terms of residence, class tastes, access to consumer goods) within the working class.

In short, in the suburbs, there is a predominance of wear and tear on toys due to increased use, with adults also using these objects as well as excursions from neighboring towns. In many cases, especially in the case of adult men, large toys are explored by them together with the children. The equipment in the central areas of the city is better maintained, and there is an additional toy in the equipment, the cube (Figure 5).

Figure 5
Cube, a large toy



Source: elaborated by the authors.

Finally, when it comes to the behavior of adults, the power of the structure seems more obvious. But even they, as everyday subjects, know how to use tactics to evade the panoptic gaze. These arts of deception, dissimulation, and disorientation of established power were revealed as participant observation improved. One example of a subtle trick is how some parents mix class markers, such as clothing, so that their children won't be discriminated against by other adults when they go to the facilities in the prime areas. This evidence, in our view, supports Certeau's (2014) proposition about the power of ordinary everyday people to resist structures through the productive consumption of new practices.

Children's relationship proxemics

Concerning the group of 612 children observed, we selected patterns in terms of social strata and development (early and middle childhood, with gender issues identified in the latter).

The configurations that children form among themselves are not necessarily standardized, but they do follow some elective affinities. The most common association is the grouping by age group, followed by the tendency to look for pairs of children of the same sex. As the observations deepen, the exception to these two patterns is the presence of siblings, since the older child, depending on the context, associates participation in interactions with the other children with the inclusion of the sibling. In addition, as already noted, the location of the equipment is accompanied by differences between the proxemics. In the city center, there is more distance, while in the suburbs there is a greater tendency to play in large groups and interact face-to-face.

Another variable present in the child/child configuration is adult intervention, which is generally conducive to safe interaction with the equipment, especially in the case of bridge models. Considering that these toys are 150 cm off the ground, many

children need adult intervention to climb up and feel supported by intimate proxemics to make the journey. According to Bowlby's attachment theory (1989), certain close figures are essential to provide security in challenges and comfort in frustrations, so that a mature personality can develop to explore threatening environments.

However, the presence of anxious adults who discourage experimentation with risky play is detrimental to both learning to manage risk and proxemics (moving away from/closer to others). For this reason, when the children reached a certain level of proficiency with the toys, they wanted to explore them again, some of them suddenly, like twisting the ropes of the basket to spin at high speed, feeling dizzy. However, they often wanted to cross the bridge faster or climb the pyramid/tower. In some cases it was necessary to outwit the adult, even counting on the complicity of other children.

For their part, it was possible to find tricks and tactics of resistance to the power of the adult to interfere in the activity or to decree the end of the game by an arbitrary time (chronos) that takes place in lived time (kairós). We would highlight as effective and repetitive the action of moving under the ropes of the pyramid (some call it a tower) because it is difficult for the adult to keep up with them because of their size. But what were the children doing when they adopted this tactic? We noticed that they began to play games with each other, especially games of catch, some of which included fights. In this case, their productions are close to what is meant by playing aggressive games, as discussed by Barbosa et al. (2017).

In this respect, we can add to the analysis Parlebas's (2014) discussion on the internal logic of the antagonism between bodies in space in game situations. For this author, the relationship between motor action, space, and other people can be typified as psychomotor, when the interaction is between the subject and the physical environment; or sociomotor, in other words, with direct human contact, which is subdivided into opposition, cooperation, or hybrid. The environment is somewhere between the poles of standardization and unpredictability.

In our analysis, the equipment surveyed has the potential to be open to different appropriations. In terms of frequency, the initial interactions at the sites tend to be psychomotor interactions on the bridges, with public proxemics and low incidence of risk. Gradually, as the child becomes more comfortable with exploration, we see approaches based on sociomotor activities of opposition (tagging), cooperation (climbing the pyramid/tower), and hybrids (team games inspired by games). There is also, in the apparent form of psychomotor exercise, an exploration of toys with more risk (hanging from ropes, for example) and/or approach movements (proxemics from public to social).

In terms of changing the proxemic status of child/child, a common action seen in the higher socioeconomic capital strata was the simple act of sitting on the ropes to talk out of earshot of adults. In the child/child relationship, they often socialize and talk while sitting on the pedestals between the ropes (Figure 6). In addition to the children's incorporation of the bourgeois habitus in the sociological sense, the fact

that they are usually showered, wearing new clothes and closed shoes, limits the more intimate and playful-aggressive proxemics observed in the peripheral neighborhoods, which is an adult strategy to prevent physical contact.

Figure 6

Square rubber seat bases



Source: elaborated by the authors.

In these cases, although urban planning is not friendly to children's kinesthetic world (Agamben, 2005), we understand that they can act and resignify spaces, with peer production of culture and their speech taking place in the act, and it is possible to observe children's protagonism in play (Mello et al., 2021b). It is worth adding that these interactions are also shown in variations of play in a more risky way. So, considering culture in its uses (Certeau, 2014), how does this relationship show itself in the play spaces and beyond in the squares and complexes of *Meu Campinho*?

In terms of play, there were two other public ways of initiating play. One of the most common child-child conjunctions that crossed the territoriality present in the center and the periphery was to call another child to play, simply by saying hello with a provocative intonation. In terms of effect, it was as if, through this intonation, a child was invited, at a public distance, to approach the other and touch him in an agonistic way (at an intimate distance).

From the occurrence records, we can see that this form of summoning occurs predominantly among children between the ages of four and seven. There is value in this type of contact, as the child development literature suggests that there is a tendency for children to adopt more individualized forms of proxemics (Fiaes et al., 2010). In an analogy to reactive entry (Corsaro, 2011), these children present mutually understandable ways of breaking down the barrier of distance and creating opportunities between them by changing the proxemic status with which each of them entered this rubbery ground in isolation.

The second call is collective, when people go around the room and ask each other if they want to play. This practice is most often led by the older boys in that

configuration at the time and predominates in the neighborhoods on the outskirts. Within this practice, during the first observations, we noticed the hegemony of "pega-pega" (tag), whose rule is that after delimiting a space, everyone runs from the pegger who must touch someone to make him the new pegger. Over time, we recorded new forms of play dynamics, demonstrating the possibility for children to produce new ways of doing things on standardized leisure equipment.

As we continue to listen, we notice that the children we observe are refining the forms of interaction with unexpected uses. In one of the squares, boys adapted narratives from electronic games (Free Fire, Fortnite, and Among Us) to the game of tag, promoting new rules and tactics inspired by the signs of the games. Here we see how children's culture enables productive consumption, a concept introduced by Certeau (2014) to refer to the active ways in which each person recreates mass cultural products.

In one case, the children collected coconuts from the *Butia capitata* palm, which is typical of the Cerrado and was introduced to the plazas a long time ago as part of the city's landscaping proposal. They then divided into two teams and set themselves the goal of throwing the most fruit at their opponents. The field was extended to the grass with a fluid alternation of offensive movement to get closer and hit; and defensive movement to get away from the other and make it harder to aim. This action went on for 17 minutes until it was exhausted. After the game, one of the nine-year-olds said: "I'm glad it was Fortnite, which I like better because Free Fire is violent." The game leader nodded.

We concluded that, at least in the eyes of these boys, evoking the imagery of the game Fortnite and not another (Free fire) presupposes a tacit contract of playful-aggressive play under more controlled risk/violence. Thus, in addition to productive consumption, children can manage risk in play. In addition, these childhood arts and crafts also show that children have adopted dynamic forms of proxemics. In this risky play, the experience of the terrain and the pain caused by the coconut leads to an experience of optimal distance for the enjoyment of the game.

As the study shows, relationships of shared protagonism are more pronounced among children than between adults and children. One reason for this is that many children are socialized and learn through the movement of peer culture. Every distance between people is associated with a way of communicating (Hall, 2005), and in our empirical study, it is the children who use language most quickly and actively to reduce interpersonal distances.

Since learning occurs when someone mirrors the more developed, more objective conditions of exchange, proximity is an opportune condition for children to be more proficient in meeting challenges. For this reason, peer learning seems to require more intimate proxemics to generate development from the objective conditions of physical sports equipment.

On the other hand, Hall (2005), a sociologist working in the American (USA) context, brought up proxemics because of his biosocial concern to guarantee vital

private space to promote the psychosomatic health of each individual. One of the points he makes is that overcrowded environments lead to impoverished development. Therefore, the reduced variety of toys, the lack of maintenance, or even the insufficient number of facilities in a neighborhood have a negative impact on protagonism and free proxemic interactions.

One example is the aforementioned presence of seats between the ropes of the cube toy, which is limited to the parts of the municipality with the highest HDI. As the ropes are sometimes hard and rough, they become uncomfortable if the child, especially barefoot, stays on the toy for too long. In this sense, the equipment on the suburbs of the city already has an incentive to vary its use, which makes it difficult for a certain group of children to talk together.

Therefore, by bringing in different complementary references to think about interpersonal spatiality in play, we incorporate new concerns such as social mobilization. In all cases, it is striking how socio-cultural variables are present in the forms of interaction. One of the aspects highlighted in the activities was the affordance (programmed accessibility) provided by the architects of the toys, in the sense that there was a forecast, a strategy for the use of each station of the equipment. In this way, we could also trace the structural limits in the circumscription of proxemic relations and risky play to the cultural dimension.

Although tactics are forms of resistance to the ordinary subject of everyday life, Certeau (1995) warns that capitalism no longer feels threatened by these ebbs and flows of creativity in leisure activities. For the author, any form of cultural expression must be explored from at least three points: "1. doing something with something; 2. doing something with someone; 3. changing everyday reality" (Certeau, 1995, p. 247, translated by us). Now, when we see people doing something with the toys on the equipment in the squares or the Meu Campinho complex, and doing something with each other in proximity, the new gap seems to be the extent to which everyday life and lifestyles are deconstructed.

Certeau (1995) argues that power already knows how to exploit leisure as a consumer sector. Therefore, cultural expressions would be limited in terms of reinventing everyday life, while users would remain an anonymous mass. For the author, seeing oneself as a group and wanting to exist as such is the political unity necessary for a new subject in history, but this means risking the existence of its resistance.

Therefore, these forms of risky play, though powerful, are subject to capture. The pedagogy of adventure itself, from a neoliberal perspective that glorifies entrepreneurship in the ability to take risks, can be a strategy for reproducing traditional structures. Therefore, any positive reading of the popular occupation of leisure spaces must be accompanied by the prediction of a counter-offensive by the established powers: "every cultural reaction that can cause a shift in acquired positions seems to produce its antidote" (Certeau, 1995, p. 217, translated by us).

Despite this fundamental warning to improve the analysis of reality, we believe that the ecological understanding of these relational configurations provides clues to refine physical education's pedagogical mediation in contributing to these movement biographies. Returning to the assumptions about the educational value of risky play (Sandseter et al., 2021), we understand that the appropriation of the city by the population for risky play also has a political value. Being active in place is a condition for people to move from distant to close proxemic configurations. Furthermore, existing as a social unit is still an option, a task, and a challenge.

In this respect, we share Freire's (2022) concern about the structural and ideological limitations on the experience of adventurous bodily practices. The author denounces the fact that the school environment shields students from the uncertainties and risks of life on the street, which paradoxically is dangerous for children because it doesn't qualify them for the experience that exists outside the safety of the school. For this reason, we believe that risky play is a child's right, starting with the physical education curriculum and extending to the whole family in appropriate public leisure facilities.

Finally, we can return to the impasse of the limits of adventure activities, whether in school or on the street, to create a cultural scenario of greater shared protagonism. What is powerful or revolutionary about adventure seems to be built into the affordance of the toy itself, reinforcing increasingly poor proxemic relations. This is problematic because, as Lindón (2011) suggests, the contemporary situation tends to reduce proxemics and accelerate spatio-temporal rhythms.

In hypo(thesis), we would face increasingly rapid and short face-to-face approaches, followed by long periods of physical isolation from interactions with other motor skills (Lindón, 2011). On the other hand, in line with the findings of this study, the quality of social interactions was one of the benefits provided by risky outdoor play, in line with findings in other realities (Brussoni et al., 2015). Thus, in our analysis, the proxemic tactics currently found in risky play would be evidence to the contrary and therefore need to be valued as a counter-hegemonic art of doing.

Thus, in light of the empirical data, there is a diversity of proxemic interfaces in this leisure attraction. Second, there is a population that enjoys these urban facilities. By characterizing the concrete configurations (pairs or groups of children, male and/or female adults), we confirm the arts of doing as productive consumption elaborated by Certeau (2014) to situate singular appropriations concerning a standardized space.

Finally, it is necessary to recognize that it is limited to risky games to think of an adventure for childhood, since the architecture reproduces social inequality, disfavoring the chance of child protagonism in facilities located in the outskirts, with less objective conditions. Therefore, given these aspects, one of the responses through education would be to broaden the understanding of these childhoods and to think of adventure from the point of view of children and not only for them.

| Conclusions

The adventure spaces in Meu Campinho and the squares are not exclusively used for risky games, but there are different uses and connections. Tagging and conversations stand out, reiterating the predominance of traditional games over unusual ones. The forms of risky play in each toy are exploratory, while the intermittent (empty) spaces between the toys are dominated by ludic-aggressive play.

Proxemic relationships are more representative between children of the same age, typical of peer culture, but there are still mediations when the older child intervenes to include the younger one. Shared protagonism is less common in intergenerational interactions, and it is reiterated that the presence of an adult figure of affection has a positive impact on risky play behaviors, especially with toys that swing or are high.

For this reason, intimate proxemics are more common at the beginning of adult-child interactions, whereas child-child proxemics begin at a public distance, become social in early childhood, and intimate in older children. Because proxemics is linked to language, the findings suggest that children's cultures use many interactional markers with a phatic function, which serve to attract the attention of the interlocutor. Incidentally, when we say that it is necessary to give children a voice, in this case, they are not given anything. They produce even when they consume: children know how to produce because they produce knowledge.

The equipment is not limited to a single model with the same toys, so it is expected that the relationship of the population will also change with this dynamic. Therefore, not only the visible operation of the internal logic changes but also the meaning (to be better unraveled). However, the study highlighted the uses rather than the meanings given by the groups, which already allows us to move forward with future research to interview children and adults to compare their actions with social representations.

The description of these repetitive manifestations, even if they are disaggregated by gender, age, or social class, comes close to the discussion that the Sociology of Childhood has concerning the field of leisure/animation, of how child protagonism is materialized. It is important to consider what everyday play shows us, because there is not one childhood, but many. That's why children not only know different things from adults, but we also find among them different arts of knowing and doing in proxemic relations.

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Resumo

Proxêmica estuda a relação entre corpos e o espaço circundante. Nós a adotamos como modelo teórico-metodológico de pesquisa para observação participante em territórios de brincar arriscado. Para tanto, realizamos um estudo de campo em parques infantis. A partir do referencial mobilizado, identificamos que as crianças se auto-organizam e, de forma relacional, constroem padrões de aproximação corporal que refletem seus interesses na relação intergeracional ou entre pares. Frente a isto, encontramos na proximidade infantil uma possibilidade privilegiada de escuta e de desvelamento da participação das crianças, enfatizando como elas organizam a relação com o outro e com o território do brincar.

Palavras-chave: Criança. Brincadeira. Infraestrutura de Educação Física.

Resumen

La proxémica investiga la relación entre el cuerpo y el espacio circundante. Lo adoptamos aquí como un modelo teórico y metodológico que implica observar participativamente territorios de juegos de riesgo. Para ello, llevamos a cabo una investigación de campo en parques infantiles. Identificamos que los niños se organizan y desarrollan relacionamente tácticas de proximidad corporal que reflejan sus intereses en la relación intergeneracional o la relación entre pares. Ante eso, encontramos en la proxémica infantil una posibilidad privilegiada de escuchar y develar la participación de los niños, enfatizando cómo organizan la relación con el otro y el territorio del juego.

Palabras clave: Niños. Juego. Instalaciones para la Educación Física.

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