

In the Church and the Street

Reconfigurations of ways of thinking about *affective and sexual desire for people of the same sex*.

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Signs of the times and signs of places

This article reflects on the impacts of Evangelical cosmology and urban scenes on the concepts that young men who are *affirmed heterosexuals*¹ have about homosexuality. These youth live in the periphery of the city of São Paulo and encounter the subjects and practices of homosexuality in the church and in a central region of the São Paulo metropolitan region². Thus, I endeavor to trace among the youth the configurations (Elias, 1970) and possible reconfigurations of the modes of understanding and classifying the affective and sexual desire for people of the same sex³. First however, I will make a brief theoretical and empiric digression.

In 2006, I concluded a study about cultural practices among youth from an Evangelical community in the periphery of the city of Belo Horizonte – Brazil (Gomes, 2006). In 2007, I began a study about practices of socialization

1 The term *heterossexual assumido* [assumed or affirmed heterosexual] is not a native category in Brazil as is the term “homossexual assumido” which is used to refer to someone who is openly gay. It is known that its meanings in social relations have distinct implications. Nevertheless, it is a good term to demonstrate that the heterosexual subject affirms and is constantly required to affirm their affective and sexual desire, or that is their sexual interest. To guide the reader I will clarify that I use quotation marks for statements that I heard among the people studied, without precisely quoting who spoke; I also use quotation marks for instances when I quote literal statements by authors, in this case, the text is accompanied by a bibliographic reference; finally, I use italics for categories that are theoretic constructions of this author.

2 I would like to clarify that this *encontro* is a type of anthropological encounter among subjects, without, however, an adhesion to homosexuality as an experience of this desire for the subjects themselves.

3 Inspired in the conceptual use of the configuration of Norbert Elias (1970) by Maria da Graça J. Setton (2002) to explain the interdependence of socializing instances, I understand that church, street and youth/believer are not metaphysical structures that exist above or below each other, but have a permanent and dynamic relationship.

among the youths of the Comunidade Evangélica Sara Nossa Terra [Heal Our Earth Evangelical Community], which is located in one of the principle neighborhoods in the downtown portion of the city of São Paulo – Brazil (Gomes, 2010)⁴. In Belo Horizonte, I observed that the following issues are points of tension for youth at the church: aesthetics, sexuality and liturgical behavior (Gomes, 2007a, 2007b). In São Paulo, I noted three other issues that create tension: leadership formation, sexuality and ethical behavior. These differences refer basically to the denominational profile of the two churches: while the church in the periphery combines classic Pentecostal characteristics (Mariano, 1999) with a rustic Neopentecostalism (Junior, 2008) – which has closer ties to the poor and the “popular”⁵ classes – and maintains restricted aesthetic principles for men and women, magic elements in the rituals (Oro, 1997) and explanations that give priority to spiritual explanations for sexual dissidences. In contrast, the church in the center of the city of São Paulo has characteristics of high Pentecostalism (Junior, 2008), with closer ties to the elite and middle classes, focusing on psychological explanations based on a moral constructivism about sexuality (Natividade and Oliveira, 2004) which I will discuss below⁶.

I entered the field, in the city of São Paulo, with a theoretical understanding that indicates a reconfiguration of the socializing process of Brazilian

4 The study in Belo Horizonte was conducted with the Federal University at Minas Gerais (UFMG) with support from the Dean’s Extension Office. The study in São Paulo had support from the Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo [Research Support Foundation of São Paulo State] (Fapesp), and was partially integrated to an international cooperation project (Capes-Cofecub) between researchers of the following institutions: Universidade de São Paulo (USP), Universidade Estadual de Campinas (Unicamp), Centro Brasileiro de Análise e Planejamento (Cebap), Université de Toulouse II, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS).

5 Although the term “popular” can be translated from Portuguese to English as “lower class” or “the poor,” in Brazil, its use also refers to cultural productions of the economically less favored in music, religion, work etc. It is in this sense that I use the term “popular”.

6 On a certain occasion, the Bishop of the Heal Our Earth church in São Paulo State asked me: “have you noticed that here we speak more of heaven than of hell?” In fact, he wanted to know if I had observed, as a researcher, the distinctive practices and notions among the different churches. Jair de Almeida Júnior (2008) prepared a classification for the Neopentecostal movement in which he identified two important trends: a) rustic Neopentecostalism, in which magic principles are more persistent, principally represented by the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, in which the figure of the devil has free entrance and is insisted upon and b) high Pentecostalism, formed by a more educated public, although one that is initially linked to the notion of hereditary curses, in which there is less emphasis on magic rituals and objects, and greater emphasis on “heaven”. The main reference for this line is the The Heal Our Land Evangelical Community itself.

youth based on an interdependence of social instances such as religion, schooling, media and family as coexisting, co-fluent and competitive projects (Setton, 2002, 2005, 2009).

Inspired by Mauss (2003), the socialization of sexuality in the Evangelical church can be considered from a notion of socialization as a total social fact. In this sense, one can speak of socialization as a general and generalized phenomenon, realized by the co-participation, even if tense, of social instances and subjects, which expresses itself in the dimensions of “economics” (social origin), politics (ideological position), religion (belief) and aesthetics (desire – taste)” (Setton, 2009, p. 43). This involves a concept that – in addition to allowing thinking of the social dialectically, without giving any preliminary emphasis to subjects (youth) or instances (church, street, family etc.) – also allows understanding two totalities connected in historic and socially defined contexts and understanding the symbolic aspects of reciprocal exchanges as the fundamental axis of the social relations between moral people, as well as the relationship between the distinct projects of the instances and subjects of socialization⁷.

I emphasize the need for anthropology to seriously consider that which the research subjects practice and say they practice, because, they are not mere informants, but producers of what they say. This consideration involves recognizing native theories about the social. The argument of the anthropologist must reveal the alterity and its encounter with the native argument and promote a dialog between the perspective of the researcher and the native perspective by confronting questions, concepts and analyses (Latour, 2005); or, in the terms of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1984), provide a space of encounter between “I” and the “other”. The risk of neutralizing the native discourse in anthropological writing is very much present. For this reason, native thinking must be considered as an “activity of symbolization or practice of meaning: as a self-referential discourse or one that is tautegoric of productions of concepts. That is, of ‘symbols that represent themselves’” (Wagner, 1986 op. cit. Viveiros de Castro, 2002, p. 131).

Based on this foundation of anthropological theory, I have decided to take seriously the expressions of the youth studied: “I like women”; “I like boys”;

⁷ In another study, I had the opportunity to provide greater detail about the practices of socialization among Evangelical youth, analyzing the circuit of symbolic exchanges around sexuality based on a Maussian inspiration.

“I have felt attraction to women, but I really like men”. To take seriously what the natives say is to reflect theoretically on the conditionings that make a person say that they like one thing more than another, of this or that type of emotional and sexual relationship. Therefore, the category of desire is a native category that I seek to theoretically challenge in this text through an analysis of understandings about homosexuality among Evangelical youth.

In order to formulate the concept of affective and sexual desire for considering the socialization of youth and of sexuality, I turn to the work of Pierre Bourdieu (2003, 2008), who, systematically analyzed desire (taste) applied to the practices of culture of class in Europe, particularly France. Due to the methodological perspectives used in the collection and analysis of ethnographic data, I will not delve into class differences⁸.

Bourdieu (2008) understands that desire is a social construction revealed as cultural practice, which results from specific conditions of socialization. The author uses the concept of desire to consider the categories of judgment in the realm of cultural consumption. Despite this, I think that it is possible to use Bourdieu’s theoretical construction as an inspirational tool, applying it partially to other modalities of desire and cultural practices. Preliminarily, it can be affirmed that desire results from the social experience of the subject, from a symbolic structure and its opportunities to adhere to or resist a lifestyle formulated in the different agencies, among them the family, the school, religion and the media (Setton, 2002, 2009).

According to Bourdieu (2003), to have desires, it is necessary to have goods classified as being of good or bad, distinctive or vulgar desire. These goods are concomitantly classified and classificatory, they are in an hierarchy and establish an hierarchy, with people being the carriers of the principles of classification of desires and of determination of the goods that agree and do not agree with them. Desire is related to the capacity for judgment, to the way that subjects live, perceive and construct the social. In this sense, I understand that discourses about sexuality express the categories of

8 I located, in the literature about sexuality, the use of the term “sexual tast”, but until then it’s significance had not registered for me. I had not found any author who theoretically addressed this category, which is generally used as a common linguistic resource. As I demonstrated in another study, the theories of the social construction of sexuality found in the work of authors such as Michel Foucault, Jeffrey Weeks, Carole Vance, Mary McIntosh and queer studies, corroborate for a broader understanding, foundation and analysis of the concept. For the most part, Bourdieu partially meets the interests of this paper.

thinking that judge, establish an hierarchy for and socially guide sexual and romantic desires, which are manifest in the body, in social interactions and in erotic interests.

The construct *affective and sexual desire* does not serve as a substitute for the terms sexual “orientation” or option, but as a theoretical articulation that can be used to think of the process of socialization of sexuality. It can imply the existence of different modes with which subjects understand their sexualities and that of others. In my view, the category *desire*, applied to sexuality, allows considering the flexibility, the provisory nature of social experiences of subjects and the establishment of the sexual-romantic disposition in the *habitus*. From an anthropological perspective, this questions the common Brazilian maxim “gosto não se discute” [literally you don’t discuss desire, or “to each his own” desire] we will then show that in the universe researched of the Evangelical church, affective and sexual desire is not left to each one but is discussed, disputed and experimented.

The encounter with homosexuality in the church: prohibited, prohibit, prohibiting

Field notes: On Friday a party called *Arena Pulse* with electronic music was organized at the temple. The young leaders, as is their custom, went out before the event to the blocks of Avenida Paulista and Rua Augusta (in the direction of the Jardins neighborhood) to “recruit” passersby to be guests of the party. With flyers in their hands, they invited everyone, predominantly young people, who were hanging out in small shopping galleries, people who had left work and those sitting on the corners. The music was loud and the temple was not full, as at the other parties. It was free and was not well publicized among the Evangelical churches and the other Heal Our Earth temples in the state. Young people who do not attend the Evangelical church entered the party, some asked if they must pay, went in and danced with everyone else, others only entered, saw what was happening and then left. During the party, two young women dancing together hug and kissed on the mouth. The youth leaders “were visibly startled”, everyone kept dancing, but looked at each other without knowing what to do; they contained their giggles, not because of prejudice against the girls, but from shock, surprise, from not expecting a “gay kiss” within the establishment of the “Church of the Lord”. No one moved to separate them or tell

them that, at that time, the church's institutional social program rejected the exercise of sex and eroticism between people of the same sex. Even the pastor looked on with the same surprised smile as the other youth. A few minutes later, he went to the stage and spoke about his conversion. He said that when he was younger he did not believe in God and that he liked a certain style of music very much. Nevertheless, he learned from the experience of his faith in God, still as a youth, that "He is the greatest love that a person can have in life". He spoke about the sacrifice of Jesus at the cross as an act of love and called up to the front the youths who wanted to "accept Jesus". He tried to send an Evangelical message and at the same time, create an approximation with them, showing that some of the dispositions of their lifestyle, the music and clothes, were similar to the youth, however, they and the others, were orchestrated by their faith in God.

The church in this ethnographic study has a *regimentation of sexuality* of youth that is hegemonic in the universe of Brazilian Evangelical churches, understood in the following regulatory framework: *sex should only be practiced after marriage between two people of affective and sexual desire for people of the opposite sex*⁹. It is an institutional program for the socialization of the faithful composed of a series of temporal and modular interdictions, encompassing all of the subjects, regardless of sex, age, sexual-emotional and religious history¹⁰. Interdictions such as those concerning relationships without intent to marry, access to pornography, masturbation and other practices that can lead youth to pre-nuptial sexual initiation or expand the reference about affective and sexual desires, relate to the temporal factor. The modular interdiction refers to opposition to affective and sexual desire for people of the same sex. In the program, the sexually dissident subject is one who "deviates" from the regimentation in the sequence of emotional events (praying, dating, getting

9 In other studies, I theoretically challenge the categories *exercise of sex* and *regimentation of sexuality*. Pornography is another space of encounter with sexual diversity by means of which boys of all affective and sexual desire, more than girls, organize their modes of judging, hierarchizing and conceiving the body, gender, sex and pleasure. Here, *opposite sex and same sex* refer to people designated at birth, as women and men, of the feminine and masculine sex, respectively. According to Judith Butler (2003, p. 164), "the category of sex is not invariable or natural, but a specifically political use of the category nature" and "concepts, categories and abstractions" commit a certain violence against the bodies to which they are attributed (Butler, 2003, p. 164).

10 In another study I was able to address at greater length the issue of regimentation of sexuality. That is: temporal signifies a sequence of emotional events (praying, dating, getting engaged and marrying) and modular refers to a type of restricted relationship between people of the opposite sex.

engaged and marrying) and or the type of relationship and partnership between people of opposite sexes). Thus, in the church studied, the strategies of socialization for sexuality are constituted from a dialectic of socializing tendencies of a *generational, denominational and spatial* character.

Nevertheless, the church is inserted in a spirit of the time in which the dialog between different generations or authorities is seen as a more effective practice for transmitting values than simple prohibitions. Regina Novaes (2001) indicates that “some say that we are living in a time of ‘liberty approved’ by the parents, which would even neutralize the rebelliousness of the children. But, in reality, the places of the generational conflicts come to be different” (p. 198). The subjects have solicited a more reflexive process (Giddens, 1991); thus, the argument is part of the protocol of contemporary socialization, the subjects want to know more than what is found in the declarations of principles, they are interested in understanding the “whys” and the details of the interdictions presented in the general framework of conduct.

The church studied *tries* not to prohibit by prohibiting or preliminarily repress sexual dissidences. By means of a continued and shared process, it seeks to provide a number of schemes of action based on faith and *arguments of social impact* (pregnancy, disease, non-procreation of children by same sex couples, psychic suffering) that support the experiences of young people. This continued process is the result of the church’s perception that dissident social experiences in youth are provisory and reversible, socially constructed conditionings subject to revision with greater ease than those among adults who have more well defined categories of judgment.

Field notebook: Today was the Gay Pride Parade of São Paulo. To reach the church I had to jump over a few people who had fallen down drunk in the street. I didn’t participate in the party, only its collateral effects. One person had thrown up at the door of the temple. Some young people had sold water at the Parade to raise money for a trip. Together with a youth leader and his disciple, I went to a *fast-food* restaurant. During some encouraging talks from the young leader for the disciple to also become a leader, some people in costume entered, boys (mostly) holding hands. The young leader was perplexed by the atmosphere in the restaurant. He decided to express his position about what he saw. “I am hurt, they are people like us, also created by God. You know what makes a person like

that? It's a lack of love from the parents". Then, I asked the young man: "Is it possible that there are millions of people who are not loved, today, on Avenida Paulista? Is that it?" He responded: "No one is born like that. People become like that, and the love of God can reverse it".

The second key of the church's understanding about dissident emotional-sexual desire for people of the same sex has a denominational bias. In the church, messages such as "it is more important to end well than to begin well" (**Bishop Robson Rodovalho**) reveal a **psychological** discourse, the presentation of moralization, which is growing in the Brazilian religious sphere (Duarte, 2005). According to Alexandre Brasil Carvalho da Fonseca (1998), the reading of books with psychological perspectives among middle class Evangelicals, as in the case of the church studied, is aimed at finding responses to daily problems by combining faith with reason. Rubem Amorese (1995, p. 88), an Evangelical author disturbed with this situation, asserts that there is a "Lair-Ribeirização of the faith", an applied and pragmatic psychology that sustains the theology of prosperity (Mariano, 1999), in order to conceive of the Christian life based on a search for living "the wealth", here on earth, of all kinds of goods which previously had been limited "to going to heaven"¹¹.

Thus, The Heal Our Land Church attracts youth with the message that they can be "leaders" in the financial, professional, family, or school spheres etc., and it is not important how they reached the church, but the final point of their journey. The place of symbolic exchanges is reaffirmed, and of the circuit of gift exchanges (Mauss, 2003) among the faithful, pastors and God involving forgiveness: recognizing sin, confessing it, asking forgiveness for having broken with the system of symbolic exchanges between God and the individual and receiving pardon, retributing it with "a life in accord with the principles of God".

This message "touches" in a significant manner young people of all affective and sexual desire found in the church. The Sara Nossa Terra is located within the Brazilian religious field, where there is an intense dispute for the faithful (Mariano, 1999), for which reason the combination of "faith with

¹¹ Lair Ribeiro, a Brazilian, is classified as a "self-help" author who is widely read and criticized by those who have cultural desires considered to be more refined. This comparison with the theology of prosperity reveals the ways of judging and establishing an hierarchy for the cultural practices and beliefs in the dispute for the Evangelical field.

reason” in the composition of the Christian lifestyle would attract a public from the middle class, contributing to its denominational distinction – in the Bourdieusian sense – in the Evangelical field, especially in relation to rustic Neopentecostalism, which is more attractive to the poor and linked to magic practices, as in the case of the church that I studied in Belo Horizonte¹².

This Evangelical denomination invests in youth as the principal spokespersons of its Evangelical message. Its internal organization takes place by means of what it calls the G12 Vision, an organizational system of multiplication of believers imported from South Korean and Colombian churches. It seeks to “win São Paulo for the Lord Jesus” in the geometric progression: 12, 144, 1728 faithful. Towards this goal, it primarily mobilizes young people, so that they become leaders and fulfill pastoral functions of teaching the vision of the church to other people. In addition, an extensive agenda of events, parties, services and trips is presented that seeks to conquer more faithful and mainly affirm a lifestyle in which “being Evangelical does not mean being square”, as I repeatedly heard in the talk of the youth and the pastors. By means of this sociability approved by the church, they seek to attract youth to the temple and socialize them within the vision of the church.

The Heal Our Land church, in addition to understanding the dissidences based on a generational and denominational bias, develops strategies of a spatial character for the symbolic struggle (Bourdieu, 1996) against affective and sexual desires for people of the same sex. A “more aggressive” duel occurs strategically in the National Congress, through the intervention of federal deputy Robson Rodovalho, who is bishop and national president of the church and a member of the Evangelical and Family and Support for Life parliamentary fronts, which resist the approval of laws and actions in support of human and sexual rights. At the public hearing *Life and Family in a Healthy Environment* held in 2007 in Brasília, the official position of the bishop-president of Sara is interesting data for observation.

12 I am calling magic practices: exorcisms, people falling backwards, use of objects that symbolically embody miracles (rock salt, flowers, etc). At the Heal Our Land church on Rua Augusta I observed a certain decline in these practices, which directly implies its mode of thinking about sexuality and its dissidences. Nevertheless, upon going to another temple, in Tocantins State in northern Brazil, I noted that many people at services fall down and lie on the ground “filled with the Holy Spirit”. This phenomenon is a bit uncomfortable for a middle class youth from the church, given that “the people fall because it’s trendy, because it’s in fashion to fall”.

Federal Deputy Bishop Rodovalho: Nature reveals the glory of God. Thus, the family is formed by a man and a woman. There is no way to be born the child of two men and two women. (...) Study all the distortions of the great personalities who were assassins or psychopaths, they had great problems in their family. All of them had family traumas. (...) Without family, forget society, we would have barbarity coexisting with highly developed technology and all the technology that we had would be used for evil. Not to preserve life, but to destroy life and lead man to live below his instincts.

Marcelo Natividade and Leandro Oliveira (2004) indicate that an interventionist and “discursive explosion” about sexuality has been observed in Brazil (Foucault, 1988) in literature, in the media, in temples and among the parliamentarians with Evangelical affiliation. These subjects present themselves as the legitimate carriers and “spokespersons of universal values, as bastions of morality, who combine negative perceptions of sexual diversity to action in opposition to its recognition, which is understood as a threat” (Natividade and Oliveira, 2009, p. 132).

They also indicate the existence of an *Evangelical moral constructivism* that is expressed in modes of thinking and speaking about sexuality and composed of three trends: a first, which considers affective and sexual desire for people of the same sex as a demonic spiritual manifestation; a second, with a notable psychological basis, which judges this social fact to be a result of the social experience of the subject in destructured families and implies an anti-natural route; and a third, influenced by a liberal concept of responsible sexual behavior, removes the focus from the question of homosexuality.

According to Natividade (2006), the goal of this constructivist positioning among Evangelicals is to manage bodies in the experience of a sexuality within the regulatory framework of the Ecclesiastic doctrine. In the data presented here, it is noted that this Heal Our Land church is located, above all, in the second line of moral constructivism, although other positions may occur in other temples of the denomination. Institutionally, the Heal Our Land seeks to conceive of dissidence from a naturalism with its own characteristics, as Natividade (2006, p. 122) described, “an essentialism molded culturally by religion, submit to cosmological and doctrinaire concepts” and, in turn, to the concept that “the nature mentioned is divine nature.”

In the National Congress, the deputy-bishop strongly argued that “the cell (family) is being destroyed” by the desire for the same sex, and that

he “fights” and “battles” like David against Goliath to mobilize hearts and minds to his “moral panic”, and to have all Evangelicals unite under the same banner of “collective fear” in the *political encounter* with sexual diversity¹³. Nevertheless, this involves a specific mode of a symbolic struggle against the desires that place at risk the church’s regimentation of sexuality.

In the temple studied, far from “aggressivity” from the parliamentary environment, I noted an institutional strategy to *welcome to transform* the subjects who experience affective and sexual desires for the same sex, in which persists the notion of the practice of homosexuality as sin¹⁴. There is a predominance of finding psychological reasons, characteristic of the higher Pentecostalism, applied to sexuality to explain its origin, “antinormality” and the psychic dysfunctions of subjects who have affective and sexual desires for people of the same sex, which can be observed in the talk both of the bishop in Brasilia, as well as of the youth on the day of the LGBT Pride Parade. Nevertheless, the strategy of ideological and spiritual combat of dissidence has peculiarities in the universe of the temple¹⁵.

The dissident subject is welcomed to the church, which seeks to offer conditions so that the dissident can be inserted in “in the plans of God” according to the time and the intensity of his immersion in the *circuit of care* for sexuality. That is, be inserted into a system of symbolic exchanges, in the Maussian sense, involving various types of exchanges among the subjects of socialization (the faithful, church and God) based on elements of Evangelical

13 The concept of “moral panic”, originally formulated by British sociology, is understood by Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda (2009) as a consensus between a certain number of people that there are other groups or practices that place the social order at risk, requiring an effort and unity to fight the threats. The concept of “moral panic” was emphasized by Carole Vance and Gayle Rubin in the United States as an analytical tool to understand processes of repulsion of subjects that experience dissident sexual practices (Piscitelli et. al., 2004). In Brazil, Richard Miskolci (2007) indicates that the “moral panics” emerge from the social fear related to changes, including same-sex marriage. This panic seeks to disseminate “fear” in relation to non-conventional behavior, and conjugalities and cultural practices considered “threatening”.

14 The discourse “welcome and transform” was also observed in Natividade (2006); Natividade and Oliveira (2009).

15 Although psychological remedies are strong in this denomination, there is a persistence of analytical keys that associate sexual dissidences to the notion of spiritual evils, expressed as “attacks” and “temptations” from the “enemy [devil]”. This discourse is found in different spheres of life and denominations (Mariz, 1997; Birman, 1997) and its persistence results from the interaction of cosmologies and faithful among the temples and denominations. That is, even if there is a decadence by the part of spiritual explanations, significant points persist among the faithful who lean closer to the traditional Pentecostal discourse.

cosmology: conversion (“accepting Jesus”), denial of the past (“giving up everything”) adopting the principle of the church (“following the path of the Lord”), and others.

In relation to youth, it is understood that youth experience a transitory moment, more likely to be reversible (Pais, 1993) of desires and experiences, and are also not easily subject to merely prohibitive prescriptions. For this reason, they *do not prohibit by prohibiting*, by not first accusing the subjects who experience dissident desires is a way of *giving time to time, of welcoming to transform*. Following the logic of the church, if it would maintain that the dissidence of desires for people of the same sex is a unilaterally evil manifestation, it would have required a rapid intervention, for example, for the two girls who kissed at the party at the temple. For this reason, the strategic silence in relation to the “gay kiss” at the party is important so that they and the other youth of affective and sexual desire for people of the same sex “feel good at church and can come back”.

Boy (01): you saw that day, the girls kissed. Imagine if someone had gone over, ouououou... Lets break them up, lets kick them out... It would be the end, they would never come back to the church. First you have to win them over, to later consolidate, make them disciples and so on. The task of the leader is to have patience. Through passion, dedication, patience and maturity. You have to plant the seed.

The socialization for adhesion to the regimentation of sexuality at the Heal Our Land – Rua Augusta occurs in a private space, making the individual a disciple, a process through which a young leader teaches, hears confessions and creates strategies for the resolution of problems experienced by other youth, as was already shown by Natividade (2003) in his study about homosexual experiences among Pentecostals in Rio de Janeiro. At the church that I studied, this private approach to sexuality occurs for all the affective and sexual desires, given that the adhesion to this model does not occur homogeneously among the faithful¹⁶. In these spaces, they do not immediately

¹⁶ I noted three modalities of care for sexuality among the youth: *sharing*, in which the young leaders of groups of the G12 share with adult leaders and pastors the task of hearing and teaching about the regimentation of sexuality by the fact that they consider themselves and are considered to be immature and also, because, at times, they experience the same crises; an *autonomous care*, in which the young leaders negotiate different principles of sexuality, not limited to the regimentation proposed by the

say to the new youth at the church what “is not permitted” or defined as “flesh” in the cosmological polarization between “spirit” and “flesh” referring to the regimentation of sexuality. They do not ask right away if a person is “Gay” or “Lesbian”, they wait for her to “open up” to their leader to be able to “receive care”, or that is, the biblical teaching, the reaffirmation of the regimentation of sexuality and the application of strategies so that they can “give up everything to follow Jesus”.

In some way, they count on the fact that the person does not seek the church by chance, but because they are also interested in inserting themselves (even if partially) in the symbolic universe of the church, as recalled by Bourdieu (2002), for whom, in all systems of domination, the partnership of the dominated is necessary. At these parties, services and activities in small groups, they seek to stimulate the approximation and familiarization among subjects (“become friends”) favoring the creation of an *environment of trust* to “consolidate” the youth in the church, so that he can, over time, recognize, in himself, that which is sin, as well as perceive the need to talk about their dissident experiences and receive the care of their socializers¹⁷.

To have a group of friends, to feel welcomed, to have fun in the city, function as a starting point so that a dissident youth can be inserted in a circuit of care, of symbolic exchanges around sexuality. The socializing practices for adhesion to the regimentation of sexuality preserved by the church are based on communicative processes, initiated in leisure, parties and in services and intensified in an *environment of trust*, in which the initial mediator is the youth leader of the G12. In the realm of desire for people of the same sex, the mediators of the socialization of the dissidents are heterosexual youth who

church, but, for example indicating the use of condoms even though they should not have sex or express support to the experience of affective and sexual desire for people of the same sex; and a *self-care*, in which the youth (both in the position of leader as well as disciple) does not share aspects of his or her sexuality with the leaders so that they are not cared for by someone who does not share the same perceptions. I noted that youth of all affective and sexual desires (for people of the same and opposite sex) cross through the three modalities both concerning their own sexualities as well as that of their disciples. The church has a group to disciple “people who have a problem with the question G”, understood as people of *dissident desires*, or that is, homosexuals.

17 In the field, I noticed that, at the same time in which the youths adhered to a perspective of autonomy in the construction of perceptions of the world, they are also led thoroughly through some of the conditions of socialization to which they are submitted. Therefore, in that in which the youth are controlled by the church, they are complicit with the control, even if at various times they express tensions, initial resistance, or even, if they submit to a certain “domination” for a given time and later break with it.

have *secure desire*¹⁸. At times, they pass on to the adults and pastors the task of caring for the youth with dissident desires. In the autonomous care, these *affirmed heterosexuals* need to train, prepare and place in practice their ways of judging and hierarchizing desires, practices and subjects. They need to turn to their experiences to establish close relationships and dialog.

Elias: But what did you say to him [a disciple who has “gay issues”]?

Boy (02): Well, I said he should stay away from things that made him think of another boy, like going to parties with gays, spending a lot of time on the internet, to come more to church, that the parties at Sara are good, have good looking people, good DJ’s. I told him to look for the pastor, that he could help him. To pray so that his family surrenders to the feet of the Lord, and his friends as well. I said he should relax and that God would do his work [the reconversion of desire] in his life. I gave a few of my examples, of what I was able to overcome, for him to see that it was also possible¹⁹.

In this encounter with dissident affective and sexual desire in the church, the *affirmed heterosexuals* at the church, in the socialization of their disciples, need to negotiate the principles of exclusivity of desire, the strategies of *psychological* explanations, of *welcoming to transfer*, of *not prohibiting by prohibiting* and of *giving time to time*, as well as understandings resulting from the significant set of experiences of their socialization in family, in school, in the media, among friends and in the urban space. This encounter could provoke a “tremendous” impact in their categories of perception. For example, a youth from a rustic Neopentecostal church or traditional Pentecostal church could not accuse the girls who engaged in the gay kiss of being devils, and

18 The *security* of affective and sexual *desire* is public and intimate proof that the subject has a certain clarity of desires, generally expressed by a conviction of what and whom they like, if they like a person of the same sex, if they like the opposite sex, if they like both sexes, and others. They are responses in terms of corporal performances, social interactions and emotional history that are offered to be recognized as such. Given that the expression of the security of desire does not always correspond to lived experiences, and at times is seen as ambiguous and hybrid, which generates accusations against subjects who do not express the security of affective and sexual desire for the opposite sex.

19 The socializing care offered to convert affective and sexual desire offered by boys who are *affirmed heterosexuals* is quite experimental and they know little about the “gay universe” and its “wiles” (public bathrooms, sex clubs for men, dark rooms etc.). According to dissidents with affective and sexual desire for people of the same sex, they do not tell the leader about “these things” so that he is not “shocked”, or that is, so that the bewilderment, judgement and hierarchization of desires is not greater, distancing even more the subjects by inciting “old prejudices”.

insist that they reconfigure their categories of understanding of faith and of dissident desire for people of the same sex, requiring that they attribute *psychological* meanings to the dissidences, as well as a new posture in the reception of the dissidents in the church. No less interesting is understanding the smile in the case of the gay kiss. It reveals both a strategic “patience” with individual time so that in the near future they can “earn the person for Jesus”, and it reveals a shock (estrangement) upon encountering an *other* that “is only known because they heard about them but never saw”, because it is not outside, or close to, or alongside but inside the church.

The encounter with homosexuality in the street: the crossroads of the city

Field notebook: Upon ending the service, (name removed), the young leader, called his disciples to a “special night” for a get together, which was constantly emphasized as a declaration of care for and friendship with them. It involved a mode that he called the “collective discipleship”. We walked through the neighborhood of Avenida Paulista. We went to a luncheonette close to the Rua da Consolação, but the young people thought the food was expensive and we kept going. Then, one by one, they jumped over boxes piled on the sidewalk, sliding on the handrails of a bank, crossing the street running before the light changed, posing for photos, they decided to go to a snack cart at the corner of Rua Frei Caneca with Avenida Paulista, a public street known as “the city’s most gay street” because of the number of leisure establishments attended by the LGBT community of the city and tourists. The snack was an “excuse” (a term used countless times by the socializers to explain this process) for the youth socializer to teach Christian principles and speak about the importance of Evangelization to “win São Paulo for the Lord Jesus”. The group was composed of three boys of affective and sexual desire for people of the same sex, but only one was from the church, the others were his friends, three boys who liked people of the opposite sex, one who had had relations with boys, but no longer does (is now “hetero”), by the leader who is about to get married to a young woman from the church and a girl about whose sexuality I have no information and who, theoretically, should not have been with the group, given the division of gender for the disciplined individual and collective (“boys with boys” and “girls with girls”), but who wanted to accompany her friends (the “gays”).

Until then, the groups of youths interacted without explicit demarcations of their affective and sexual desire. All of them treated each other in the same way. They talked and played. It was already after midnight and, after we ate, we walked down Rua Frei Caneca towards the old center of the city, close to the region of the church. We passed in front of and close to the “gay” individuals and establishments (bar, sauna, shopping center, nightclub, sex club). I had three particular informants in the group, the leader, the “gay” and one “hetero”. The leader paid persistent attention to the youths in the hope of teaching them general Christian conduct (work, family, love etc.). The two other informants lived downtown, however, in that situation, they maintained a relation with the environment different than that observed in other trips through the region. The “gay” who, had previously circulated with me in the region and showed me the GLS establishments and told me his life stories of sexual dissidence, “kept in line”, was reserved and did not comment about the sexual references of the street. His “gay” friends, in turn, tried to integrate to the Evangelical symbolic universe without mentioning their sexual conditions. The “heteros”, in turn, “threw themselves” into the environment, were completely at ease. They played, pushed each other, jumped on each other, slapped each, and were much more agitated than the others. The girl, who was closest to the “gays”, interacted with the two groups. Walking together, those familiar with the region made a point of maintaining a certain distance in relation to it, while the “outsiders” appeared much more familiar with it.

Rua Augusta, where the Heal Our Earth Evangelical Community is located, is frequented by Brazilian tourists, foreigners and by a certain middle class population of the city, all interested in the bars, movies, museums, street fairs, stores, bookstores and other attractions) which are located there. The flow of people and of interests in the region is not homogeneous, it is concentrated in groups on certain blocks, forming “cliques” and “circuits” of leisure (Magnani, 2005). Rua Augusta can be observed to have at least two portions. The division between the two occurs precisely at the intersection with Avenida Paulista, a street that is nationally known because of the political and cultural events that take place there, such as the LGBT Pride Parade and New Year’s celebrations.

The first portion runs from Rua Augusta as it heads away from the Centro or downtown neighborhood of the city towards Avenida Paulista, and its surrounding region which has many bars, restaurants, bakeries,

nightclubs with music and shows, cabarets and houses of prostitution. The second portion, is located between Avenida Paulista and one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in the city, Jardins, and has more expensive and sophisticated bars, restaurants, stores of the finest international brands and designers and luxury apartments. The temple being researched is in portion 2, it is two blocks from Avenida Paulista. For this reason, people pass by who circulate mostly in portion 1 and who are going to a movie or bar located near the Evangelical temple. These passersby include many people who have affective and sexual desire for people of the same sex, most of whom are not interested in the church, and as was observed on various occasions, some make sarcastic comments against the church and the young people who go there, as if in response to the resistance of the Evangelical churches to their desires and lifestyles.

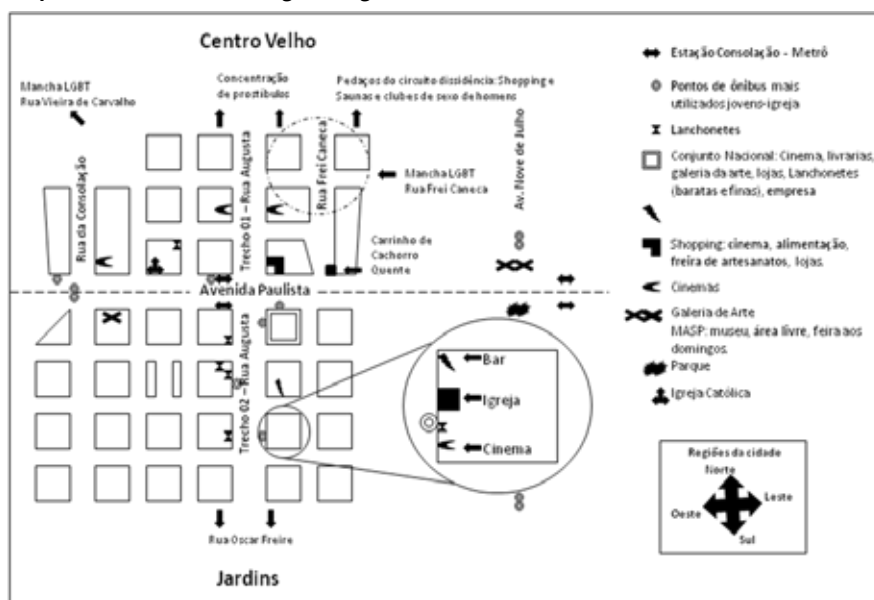
Ronaldo de Almeida (2004) indicates that the spatial distribution of the temples of the Evangelical churches in the city of São Paulo could take place in accord with the profile of sociability and administrative management of the denomination²⁰. In this sense, the interests of the Heal Our Earth appear to interact with the profile of the street, because the denomination is interested (not only, but originally and principally) in a middle class public, business people and youth, which would express a modern lifestyle (that is not “square”), differentiating them from other Evangelical denominations.

Field notebook: Last night, I walked along Rua Augusta, from the church to the Centro neighborhood of the city, together with a young man who liked people of the same sex who attended the Sara. He told me about his sexual experience and made many allusions to the establishments found in the region. He explained that he understood the street as follows: Portion 1: hell and Portion 2: heaven. The hell was represented by bars, houses of prostitution and dance clubs; heaven, by the wealth and sophistication visible in the more expensive restaurants attended by wealthier people. This same notion is also found in the statements of a young non-Evangelical hair stylist, who had gone to the church months ago, to dress the youth for a fashion show that was part of one of the parties. She said that: “(Rua) Augusta runs from glamour to garbage”. On a previous Saturday, I took my girlfriend to Rua Vieira de Carvalho

20 Ronaldo de Almeida (2004) used as empiric data the Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus [Universal Church of the Kingdom of God] and the Igreja Assembléia de Deus [Assembly of God Church].

to see the other and more popular “gay territory” of São Paulo. Around midnight, the same young man passed us by, accompanied by a “friend”. He told me that he had gone to the religious service and that, at that time, he was “walking around a little”. According to his logic, in a single night he could go from heaven to hell; at other times, he said he moved in the opposite direction (In the afternoon dissidence, and at night, a religious service).

Map: Portions of the Rua Augusta region



In these terms, the church would be in the region of heaven, combining both its Evangelical perspectives of “taking more people to heaven” as well as approximating itself to a public that circulates in the urban heaven, the middle class. Nevertheless, contrary to the adults of the church, most of whom are from the middle class and upper middle class, most of the young people are from the lower middle class, and come from the periphery of the city, in neighborhoods that may be an hour and a half from the temple²¹.

Boy (03): When I went to Sara Augusta for the first time, I was shocked. I saw one guy kissing another. I’ve never seen that in my neighborhood. I thought

21 The urban space of sexuality in which the church is located is stratified based on languages, and cultural habits and desires. The flow of dissident pleasures and their subjects in the region of Rua Vieira de Carvalho, Rua Augusta, Avenida Paulista, and other circuits, do not lose sight of the social markers of difference (color, class, phase of life, gender), which, at times, serve both for social demarcation of those who frequent these places as well as the “erotic transgression” of the subjects and urban flows (Simões, 2004, Braz, 2009).

it was very strange, but they are in the street. But what was cool is that at Sara there is no prejudice. It receives homosexuals kindly, if you realize there are some that attend the church. It does not accept the practice, but each one is given their own time to understand things.

Mother of the boy (03): That church is classy, isn't it? There are very sophisticated people there. When (name removed) began to go there, I thought it treated him poorly, because I heard them speaking poorly about (Rua) Augusta. There is prostitution, gays, all kinds of stuff. But I saw that he was safe there. I told the girls from the street here to go there, but I think that they aren't interested in God. They just like to stay here on the corner.

I had the chance to go to the houses of some young people and see that the polarizations between Portion 1 and Portion 2 of Rua Augusta were closely related to the relationship between downtown and the peripheral neighborhoods. The young people were respected by the family, siblings and friends because they went to a "sophisticated" church, transforming them into *outsiders*, in an established home (Elias and Scotson, 2000), or in relation to the youth from their old churches or their neighborhoods. The route that runs from the church towards the downtown Centro neighborhood along Rua Augusta is not seen to be calm, and some fathers and mothers think that it is strange for their children to be walking around late at night or in spaces of GLS sociability, leading the young people to deconstruct prejudices towards the street found in their homes so that they can go there, while creating less tension. Some young people, for example, hide the fact that they circulate in Portion 1, giving the idea that they only circulate in the heaven of the city and along Rua Augusta²².

The fact that they are shocked by encountering same sex desire (gay kisses, affection, clothes and sociability) in the street should reach their homes with a certain neutrality so that their route in the city does not startle their families. Thus, at home, those youths with desire for people of the opposite sex need to use arguments that distance themselves from the dissidence. They try to show to their family that the place is safe, not only in terms of the

22 When Gilberto Velho (1999) studied the Copacabana neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil he identified that residing in or frequenting this location placed the subjects in a situation of prestige and social recognition that attributed to them a certain notion of social ascension. At times, the shift from the neighborhood (suburb) to downtown is not experienced calmly, but marked by tensions and accusations by those who do not make this shift.

violence of a large city, but in terms of a *safety of desire*, in which the fact that they attend a “church that has gays” and walk on a “street that has gays” does not make them “gay”, and will not reshape their affective and sexual desire. For their leisure activity to be approved of by their families, they use a certain constructivist instrumental morality of sexuality (Natividade and Oliveira, 2004, 2009). In other words, the meanings of the game are known (Bourdieu, 1996) and the psychological argument about homosexuality is used to make visible the urban mobility and that of religious transit.

Conversation on MSN:

Elias: But your friends said that there were lots of gay people on Augusta...

Boy (04): Yeah. But it’s no big deal. God loves everyone. Those guys (the gays) are on the wrong road. That’s all.

Elias: But, it’s the work of the devil, that stuff?

Boy: Only in my old church, at Sara there is none of that. You think that if I thought the guys had an [evil] spirit I would go there. I would not even go close. I’d stay away.

It’s less dangerous to circulate in a space in which there are people with psychic problems and improper constructions of sexuality than in a demonic spiritual environment. In this aspect, the Evangelical cosmology of prosperity that adds a psychological perspective to the experience of faith and sexual dissidences contributes to having circulation in regions 1 and 2, or even attending the LGBT Pride Parade to be with the girls be experienced with less “guilt” than, for example, the experience of a space spiritually charged with “evil spirits”. One young man, who was an important informant, made it very clear at an interview over a snack that he was quite relaxed about going to the Parade to be with girls, because there was a *security of desire* and that he could ask for forgiveness for having “gone out” with girls (“I know what I like and this [going to the Parade] did not influence me to stop liking girls”). In this case, the young man found himself on the side of the dissident by experiencing his own dissidence in relation to the temporal regimentation of sexuality proposed by the church, while simultaneously affirming his adhesion, conviction and a certain naturalization of his affective and sexual desire.

The encounter of the Evangelical youth of affective and sexual desire for people of the opposite sex with subjects with desire for people of the same sex on Rua Augusta also stimulated that “discursive explosion” (Foucault, 1988)

about sexuality. To find oneself with the *other* is a phenomenon in which the Evangelical youth need to think and negotiate their modes of thinking about faith and affective and sexual desire, their own and those of other subjects. The spatial mobility directly influences the formation of categories of thinking of these youths who may or may not assume the church's principles. Affective and sexual desire for people of the same sex is considered a dual dissidence (temporal and modular) based on ecclesiastical parameters and is assimilated by most of the youth. Nevertheless, in the encounter with the *other*, during the circulation in the region of the church, modes of thinking are provoked about relating with the subjects and their dissident practices. They are led to construct modes for co-existence of visions of the world and of distinct affective and sexual desire in the same urban space. The spatiality of Rua Augusta is not only disputed to Evangelize, but for leisure and sociability.

Thus, the harsh words of the Bishop no longer appear in the talk and form of acting and judging of many youths in the church, because the space of Rua Augusta is not only disputed to Evangelize, but for leisure, which has, in itself, a final meaning (Simmel, 2006). In some cases, one perceives homosexuality is no longer focused upon or seen as central to the experience of faith, with the "strange" becoming "familiar" (Velho, 2003).

Elias: You said that you considerably changed your way of seeing homosexuality. What changed?

Boy (05): Look bro, I am not going to say that it's not God's work, because you know the guys and girls, go with each other because they want to, because they feel like it. Bro, there are guys you look at and can see. Those two who left here. Man! The guy really loves the other one. At times, they go out just to go out, but at the church, you also find this. In my house I learned that a gay person is not God's work, at the church too, all my life like that. I don't know if I'm wrong, but I think that if a gay man wants to go to church they should go, no one should look at that strangely, I don't even know if they should try to convert from the way they are. Who knows, it's their right. I don't know, I think it's all very complicated, but I've already changed my way of seeing things a lot since I've come here from Sara. I was a bit closed, with my eyes covered. Before, I thought it was strange, now I look and see, they are there and I am here in the same luncheonette. One day, I thought: "is it possible that a person accepts Jesus and is gay and goes to heaven?" Don't tell anyone...it's a bit contradictory...

Elias: You said it! You can't censure it, no! I'll only publish this in the four corners of the globe, but I'll take out your name.

Boy: It's a bit contradictory... I was thinking "the guy goes to heaven, sure, because he accepted Jesus as his savior and master, sexuality is a mere detail". Imagine if I would go crazy with everything that I've done that the church says is wrong, I would already be crazy. If I don't want to go crazy with this, why should I want these guys to go crazy? Understand? I was thinking things like that. But, man, I don't know. I think that Jesus loves everyone, that's all. The rest is the rest.

In these aspects, the very spatiality of the street is educational, because the phantasmagoric vision of the homosexual as a distant other, which only exists in jokes and biblical interdictions, gives place to an "affectionate" look at the subject, that who wants to "win for Jesus" or who is a "partner" in the occupation of the same leisure space. For some youth, as well as for some ethnographers, the "emotional experience" (Favret-Saada, 2005) becomes an object of analysis to understand the dissidence of the other. In this case, the way of judging is based no longer on an idealized homosexual, but on a subject that loves, has affection and is eroticized, "as I am". Nevertheless, this "emotional" dimension of encountering homosexuality can involve repulsion ("gay, I don't want to see them close to me"), or inclusion and one that removes the focus ("I think Jesus loves everyone. The rest is the rest"), ("relax and God will do his work") or pragmatic ("I went to the *Gay Parade* without a problem").²³

Among the *affirmed heterosexuals* boys who I met in the field, there were a few cases of youths who were repulsed by homosexual subjects and practices. Those who act with this line of thinking, generally come from "rustic" Pentecostal churches (Junior, 2008). Thus among the group of heterosexual youth with whom I spoke in the field, there is a strong trend to *welcome to transform* the homosexuals, so that they convert their affective and sexual desire, and an inclusionary/"non-focusing" minority, respectively those who consider the dissident modalities of desires to be legitimate social experiences or which are not important for the "final judgment".

23 I use the term pragmatic, about the possibility of briefly erasing it based on other theoretical constructions about the social formation of affective and sexual desire in the Evangelical church. In this case, I am thinking of the young men from the church who go to the LGBT Pride Parade to "be with the girls" and sell food to earn money for their church youth groups.

Signs of the times, signs of the places

According to Bernard Lahire (2006), the subjects coexist with, since they were children and increasingly more so, a social scenery in which they confront heterogeneous competing situations, at times, those that are contradictory to their socialization process. The coherence of their schemes of action thus depends on the coherence of the principles of socialization to which they are submit. Nevertheless, in this plural social scene, their stock of schemes may not be so homogeneous and can vary according to the social context which they are led to respect.

I conducted an ethnographic study of a temple that is quite peculiar because of the fact it is inserted in an urban space in which homosexuality is outside the closet. I observed that among the male youth with affective and sexual desire for people of the opposite sex who come from the periphery, the modes of thinking about homosexuality are in a process of reconfiguration based on an encounter with the other in the church and in the street. The young man who came to the church who had been repulsed by dissident subjects and practices was socialized by the pastors and leaders in an attempt to have him place his repulsion to the subjects in the closet in order to not interfere with the institutional “goal” of *welcoming to transform* and not appear to be a “square” church. In the street, the *spiritualizing* or *psychological* ways of thinking, are at times placed in the closet so that the mobility of the city can provide them prestige and host their own dissidences. At the same time, that youth who came to have an “emotional” eye for the subjects and their dissident practices, needed to keep his new way of thinking in the closet in order to remain united with the community of faith and to the compulsory nature of affective and sexual desire²⁴. In these factors, all of these youths are attracted to interpret the complete social fact of homosexuality, in its economic, social, aesthetic, and religious dimensions, in a selective manner that is in keeping with the configuration of the times and places, of faith and of the street.

24 A weak declaration of “sympathy,” or the absence of a focus on sexuality as an important phenomenon in the experience of faith is due, above all, to the way that the affective and sexual desire for people of the opposite sex are placed in a hierarchy by the heteronormative value (Chambers, 2003; Cohen, 2005). In this sense, the subjects who approach a model of “sympathy” for subjects with their practices do not declare their new thinking in the group so that they are not “judged” as “outside the principles of God” or outside the principles of heterosexuality.

In the effort to live a lifestyle that is integrated with modernity, the church and the youth encounter the homosexuality found in the street in a process of familiarization and estrangement, as well as that of an approximation and distancing that is not at all disinterested. Thus, the way that the Heal Our Earth Church cosmologizes (thinks) of faith and dissident affective and sexual desire can be a trap. By what I saw in the field, many youths *sympathize* with the *psychological* perspective and those that demonize homosexuality wind up adhering more easily to the position of *welcoming*, and there is a decline in explanations involving magic related to sexual dissidences. Pragmatically, they do not want to be seen circulating in an urban and “spiritually” charged space, or they do not plan to understand their own dissidences from a spiritual point of view, but from a social and psychological one, which causes less “fear”. This is the challenge of the Evangelical church, to offer the faithful a new scheme of action that would be more attractive yet that, contradictorily, could remove its authority in the explanation of things via magic, as we can see in the statement of the youth who said: “you think that if I thought that those guys had the [evil] spirit I would go there? I wouldn’t even go close. I would stay far away”.

Thus, the psychologist and the social scientist are experts (Giddens, 1991) who have “fed” “the Word of God” with arguments, they are subjects of fields of knowledge that have demonstrated that faith is also socially constructed. The Heal Our Earth Church on the Rua Augusta has placed a certain *spiritualizing cosmologization* of affective and sexual desire, of faith and of life in the closet, in an attempt to attract hearts and minds to its institutional socialization program. It knows strategically with whom, where, how and when to struggle against homosexuality. Young people are its principal target and spokespersons, it knows how to distinctly dose the “aggressivity” of the symbolic struggle in parliament and in the temple, in order to *welcome to transform* and to *give time to time*, “struggling” so that a transformation does in fact occur. This reconfiguration results from the dispute for people and the faithful in a highly competitive religious field, where class, phase of life and schooling are social and cultural marks of difference that orient its “focus”. Concomitantly, the temple is located in an urban space in which the categories of thinking about affective and sexual desires are also in dispute, requiring new forms of encounter among subjects and their dissident practices.

While in the church of the periphery of Belo Horizonte, at the heart of

conflicts with drug trafficking and violence, I perceived a more *spiritualizing* discourse about the dissidences of affective and sexual desires for people of the same sex. In downtown São Paulo, at the heart of the São Paulo middle class, I observed a more *psychological* and *welcoming* discourse. Since the borders within the city are not well defined, the illicit coexists with the licit and downtown with the outer neighborhoods. The youth of the periphery are found at Rua Augusta reconfiguring their modes of thinking of the dissidences of affective and sexual desires, which can occur silently, even if with tension, in their homes, neighborhoods and new churches that they may attend.

Based on the analyses of Louis Dumont (1992, 1997) about individualism, it is possible to observe, at the two churches studied in my research in Belo Horizonte (which were on the periphery) and São Paulo (in the Centro or downtown region), that at least two significant differences are found in the value systems employed to analyze sexuality. Respectively at the first, a traditional/holistic characteristic was found that conceives of the social in an hierarchical mode and a second, of an individualist-modern character, which conceives it from an egalitarian perspective. These two modes of thinking of the dissidences of affective and sexual desire involve processes of estrangement and familiarization with the practices and subjects that do not adhere to the regimentation of sexuality proposed by the Evangelical church. These two models of social agency can partially explain the greater estrangement of some youths of the periphery, who come from classic Pentecostal churches, with the dissident subjects, at the same time that youths who are closer to the middle class are less startled by the homosexuality found within the church on Rua Augusta, and at times turn to the notion of “right” to freely live and express their sexuality²⁵.

The encounter between affective and sexual desire within the Evangelical scenery has guaranteed new forms of conflict. It is also interesting to observe the religious conflicts involving the *right to have faith in God* in the Brazilian religious field with the emergence of inclusionary churches. Amid the accusations, the *spiritualizing* argument reappears and comes out-of-the-closet of

25 At Heal Our Earth, it is known that social class is an important mark of difference in the group of youths and in the church. Some authors write about the *ethos* particular to the popular classes (Fonseca, 2000; Duarte, 1987) and the middle class (Velho, 1999, 2003) in Brazil, which are important interpretive keys for this study. Given the limits of this article, I should recognize that, despite not being approached here, educational level is another mark of difference that significantly influences a fixation and or changes of perceptions about sexual dissidences.

those churches which had stored it away, because of condemnation that the pastors of these churches would be “pastors of the devil” (Natividade, 2008).

The anthropological observation of the history of struggles of social minorities within Evangelical churches reveals the signs of the times. In Brazil, in 1960, what Pentecostal would be able to imagine the proliferation of women pastors, with pants, earrings and make-up on the pulpit? Or a traditional Brazilian Protestant church with a guitar and dance group? Who could imagine inclusionary churches that preach the Evangelical interpreted from the perspective of sexual diversity? In the case of Protestant churches, the changes have occurred, above all among the youth. According to Regina Novaes (2006, p. 119), “young people are like a rear view mirror of society”, but young people today are undergoing an “unprecedented” social experience.

The Heal Our Earth Evangelical Community of Rua Augusta intends to “heal” the youth of a generation who live in a faster and interconnected world, in a city in which the illicit and the licit have been “capillarized” in the web of social life (Telles and Cabanes, 2006), in which sexuality is much more politicized and visible, even, in the church. For this reason, it is no less interesting to think of the signs of the times and of places from the perspective of youth, seeking not only to understand how the subjects of affective and sexual desire for people of the same sex meet with faith and with the church, but also how *affirmed heterosexual* youths confront sexual diversity in the street and the church.

In this “discursive explosion” about sexuality in the encounter of these *affirmed heterosexuals* youths with homosexuality, new rules and new forms of control (Bozon, 2004) over oneself and others emerge. For this reason, in studies about religious cosmologies about sexuality, it is necessary to keep one eye on the religious instance and another on the faithful, “one foot in the church and another in the world” (temple and street). In summary, in the daily life of the youths studied, there is no single source of socialization of thinking and positions about homosexuality: either the church is, for some youths, the principal explanatory authority, or, for these and others, it loses this monopoly, as a result of the growing flow of symbolic exchanges on the process of formation of subjects in the contemporary world. This appears to be the case for a significant portion of the youths of the periphery who shift in direction of a downtown church, in a middle class environment of LGBT sociability, and which are provoked to reconfigure their ways of thinking the dissidences of affective and sexual desire.

Some important research questions remain: what does the faithful do with what the church wants to do with him or her? What does the faithful do with what the other social instances, such as the street, want to do with him or her? The signs of the times and of places will tell us what they want from this street and this church so that they are for these faithful. Only in this way is it possible to understand the subject as a participant in her socializing process and her culture, given that she is not a mere reproducer of apparently coherent symbolic systems, but a subject that is “affectively” involved in symbolic struggles and violence, socializing her way of thinking not only of the dissidences of others, but also her own, and thus creating forms of approximation and familiarities between affective and sexual desires and faith.

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