



Abstract

The objective of this article was to identify the possible constructs of one or more apparatus of sexuality and of alliance in adolescents living in poverty in Brazil. The research methodology was a qualitative assessment using an ethnographic approach. The principal data collection technique, in addition to ethnographic observation and documentary analysis, was face-to-face in-depth interviews. Fourteen adolescents living in the same Belém neighbourhood were observed and interviewed, as well as their parents. The data analysis revealed an apparatus of sexuality as an apparatus of safe sex whereas an apparatus of alliance, according to Foucault, was described after analysis and confirmation of the data as an alliance of powerfulness. These results is bringing new light on the question of the social construct of sexuality among adolescents living in poverty, put into better position the use of Foucault's concepts, considered till now only as philosophical abstractions, and not as empirical results.

Key words adolescence, apparatus of alliance, apparatus of sexuality, Brazil, Foucault

Foucault's Apparatuses of Sexuality and Alliance Confronted Empirically: The Social Construction of Sexuality of Adolescents Living in Poverty in an Amazonian City of Brazil

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Introduction

In every society, the status of adolescents varies according to particular symbolic, sociological, and legal considerations.[1] Many factors have contributed to this reality: historical and spatial contexts, culture, values, social classes, the institution of the family, etc. An increasingly popular discourse within professional and academic environments, and one that is being reproduced in family

and sociocultural day-to-day life, regards adolescence as a problematic, a difficult and critical stage that has to be faced by family, parents, teachers, and all others who work with young people in this age group. The writing on this subject is multiplying as many authors are trying to explain how to confront this stage of life that is imbued with a complexity presented as pathological.[2-7]

Research problem

One wonders, however, why over the past several decades there has been such a constant preoccupation with adolescence, which manifests itself through what some have declared is a somewhat mythical pathology unfounded on facts and rather biased.[6] Although Michel Foucault is very often considered more of a philosopher than a researcher, his methods of discourse analysis, particularly with written documents, have provided useful research tools. Using a theory of apparatuses found in his book *The History of Sexuality*,[8] the authors of this article argue that this concern over adolescence may have taken root in the particular

construction of western apparatuses of sexuality and of alliance. They intend to apply this concept of apparatuses to contribute to a better understanding of adolescents living in poverty in the Amazon region of Brazil. In doing so, they are taking up the challenge of using empirical research to assess theoretical concepts that, according to the latest literature review, have never before been tested in this way.

Objective and research questions

Building on the definition of an apparatus proposed by Foucault, the objective of this research was to find possible constructions of one or more apparatuses of sexuality and alliance in the lived reality of adolescents living in poverty in Belém in the state of Pará, Brazil. Two research questions guided this objective:

1. What do adolescents think about sexuality in general, sexuality specific to their own age group, and the possibilities of expressing this sexuality while taking into consideration their parents and relatives, school, the church they belong to, if any, the media, and social and health services that offer them services?
2. What do parents, schools, churches, the media, health and social services, as well as the Brazilian State think about sexuality in general and the sexuality of adolescents in particular?

Theoretical framework: Foucault's apparatuses of sexuality and alliance

In the first book of his trilogy on the history of sexuality, Foucault,[8] after a critical analysis of what represents sexuality for western societies--they want to know everything about sex while being reluctant to talk about it--states as a theoretical proposal the possible existence of two intertwined apparatuses: that of sexuality and alliance. He wrote that "Relations of sex gave rise, in every society, to a deployment of alliance: a system of marriage, of fixation and development of kinship ties, of transmission of name and possessions,"[8 p106] which "is built around a system of rules defining the permitted and the forbidden, the licit and the illicit" [8 p106], and "has as one of its chief objectives to reproduce the interplay of relations and maintain the law that governs them".[8 p106]

Foucault emphasized the origin of those two apparatuses according to their different links with the economy: "if the deployment of alliance is firmly tied to the economy due to the role it can play in the transmission or circulation of wealth, the deployment of sexuality is linked to the

economy through numerous and subtle relays, the main one of which, however, is the body--the body that produces and consumes. In a word, the deployment of alliance is attuned to a homeostasis of the social body, which it has the function of maintaining whence its privileged link with the law; whence too the fact that the important phase for it is 'reproduction'".[8 p106-7] This linking of the apparatus with the economy may be located in Foucault's perception of the apparatus as a sort of "formation, which has as its major function at a given historical moment that of responding to an urgent need".[9 p195] This relation of the apparatus with economic functions may be seen historically; "on the farm a girl's primary goal was to marry well; marriage was her only source of economic and social gain".[10 p300] Today this reality can be quite different, as women have invested in the labour market and many have experienced freedom and economic independence. And in the specific case of this research on adolescents living in a developing or emerging country, from an economically disadvantaged population in an isolated Amazon region, one may wonder if the apparatus of alliance is still present, if it ever existed at all.

Foucault, in his book *Power and Knowledge*, described the apparatus of sexuality as "a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions".[9] He was trying to identify "precisely the nature of the connection that can exist between these heterogeneous elements".[9 p194] It may be very valuable to consider an apparatus of adolescent sexuality made up of institutions such as the family, the church, health care systems, schools, friends, and architectural forms as mechanisms that are part of a heterogeneous network, each part having its specific characteristics. For example, such an apparatus might be useful in examining a program implanted to improve and/or to promote the sexual and reproductive health of adolescents, where all characteristics might be, as wrote by Foucault himself, "all aligned as bearers of a normative discourse full of power and knowledge, where, in general, each element can change the place where it acts according to the historical and social context [...] in short, between these elements, whether discursive or non-discursive, there is a sort of interplay of shifts in position and modifications of function which can also vary very widely".[9 p195] Foucault always linked power and knowledge in his reflections on apparatuses: "the apparatus is thus always inscribed in a play of power, but it is also always linked to certain coordinates of knowledge which issue

from it but, to an equal degree, condition it".[9 p196] That is, the apparatus represents "strategies of relations of forces supporting, and supported by, types of knowledge".[9 p196] Foucault critiques the repressive social representation of sexuality in western societies by stating that "power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society".[8 p93]

Power thus produces actions and reactions that can be positive or negative. The educational system, for example, can be an instrument of productive power when this power is exercised not only in school but in the heart of the family for children who learn through examples, rules, or standards that are implemented by these institutions. According to Foucault, "power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization".[9 p98] This implies the existence of forces and counter forces in an apparatus, as, for example, in the case of an apparatus of sexuality that is formed through the media, school, family, pairs, programs and laws.

How adolescents react to these institutional mechanisms, with forces or counter forces, may be of great interest. Indeed the concept of apparatus may provide a way to understand in another way the construction of the sexuality of adolescents living in poverty. To this end, the authors have examined the principal structures of family, church, and social networks, as well as the State and its public policies in the framework of reproductive and sexual healthcare, education, the media and urbanization, among others, through legislative, executive, and judiciary powers. All of these institutions may be extremely important in the process of a sociocultural construction of the apparatus of sexuality from a Foucauldian perspective.

But first, how to find if an apparatus exists? From our literature review, it seemed that no one had ever attempted to use this theoretical perspective. This was the challenge we decided to face, hoping to improve knowledge on adolescent sexuality.

Research method

The research was based on interviews with adolescents and their parents, using a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach.[11] The main data collection technique, besides the ethnographic observations and the analysis of documents, were the face-to-face interviews with an open question

method. We moved continuously between the collected data and a simultaneous analysis of that data, all the time relating it to the Foucauldian theoretical concepts of the apparatuses of sexuality and alliance.

Criteria for selection of the sample

Many authors[12-14] claim that nowadays there is no commonly accepted definition of adolescence. Keeping in mind that adulthood in Brazil, as well as in many other countries, begins at 18 years and represents a very significant change of status, the authors have decided for the purposes of this study to define adolescence as being from 12 to 18 years old, as it is defined in Brazilian legislation.

Inclusion criteria for the main sample

In order to obtain a homogeneous sample, composed of a total of 16 female and male adolescents, the recruitment criteria were that:

- 1.All lived in the same poor neighbourhood in the city of Belém;
- 2.All were 12 to 18 years old.

Along with the interviews with the adolescents, we planned to interview their parents as well as other professionals who worked with these young people on issues related to their sexuality, whether at school, in the healthcare system, or at their place of worship. As a way of understanding more about the relationship of these adolescents to the space around them, we also interviewed the planning and urbanization secretary of the city of Belém.

Given the focus of this research in trying to build one or more apparatuses, it was deemed necessary to ask the same questions of all interviewees in the study, and a check list was used to see if every dimension had been covered before officially ending the interview. In order to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the sample, interviewees selected their own identity representation: colours for each adolescent, names of flowers for parents, names of fruit for the professionals.

Data collection began after receiving ethics approval from the Université de Montréal. We first held an information meeting with the proposed participants to explain the nature of the research and to assure them of confidentiality. We also distributed and explained the written forms at this meeting, and time was allowed for them to consider the study and their participation. After being given this information, and after having considered the object, modalities, conditions

of participation, advantages, disadvantages, discomfort, and possible consequences of their participation, they were told that they were free to leave the study at any time without prejudice. Those who agreed to participate were then invited to give their consent in writing. At this time, a new meeting was arranged with them for the interview. The consent forms were all signed prior to beginning the interviews. A copy was given to each participant and the main researcher kept another. The consent of the mother, father, and/or tutor was a "sine qua non" for participation in our study.

Data analysis

Before undertaking the analysis of the results/data, the authors followed the recommendation of Erickson,[15] who proposed that the data should be read several times in order to have a global view of the entire text. The material was recorded, transcribed, listened to, and read many times with meticulous attention, with the objective of acquiring a fair perspective of the whole as well as familiarizing ourselves with the different particularities of the text and allowing us to anticipate possible difficulties. This procedure also permitted us to determine categories under which we could sort specific statements, helping us to build themes for analysis. The method selected to analyse the data was 'content analysis', which was drawn systematically from the text of the interviews according to Bardin's methodology.[16] We included the smaller contextual units in wider segments of content; specifically, we used the themes from the check list to determine if every dimension had been covered and then these themes were decomposed into thematic analysis units. Each question from the interviews was taken into consideration and words such as sexuality, safety, prevention, pregnancy, sexual pleasure, among others, were chosen as categories. The categories and the subcategories were later transformed in semantic themes that were more easily used.

The data coding was made with the help of the Atlas.ti. Software, which simplifies and transforms raw information through coding in relation to themes and dimensions of analysis. A coding guide with 65 different codes was built. The fidelity of the coding process was verified at different moments, which allowed us to review the coding rules in order that the same information was classified in the same way at each moment and that the analytic categories were complete.

Given the objectives of finding apparatuses, the data analysis was extremely complex because of the great amount of material. We undertook a vertical analysis of all the interviews with the adolescents; this was followed by vertical

analyses of the interviews from the mother and father of each adolescent (it was decided to group all analysis from mothers and fathers even when the interviews were made with a couple, taking care to note individual differences). We followed the vertical analysis with a horizontal analysis of all of the interviews, both adolescent and parent. The study was completed by simultaneous cross-analysis of all the data.

Only after this detailed and exhaustive procedure did the apparatuses clearly appear. The apparatus of sexuality first appeared in the discourse of the adolescents and only later in that of their parents, while the opposite held true for the apparatus of alliance.

Results

Final sample of the study

Eighteen adolescents were interviewed but just fourteen interviews could be analysed in-depth. Two (one 14-year-old boy and one 15-year-old girl) asked to leave during the interview because they were not feeling comfortable with the themes being raised, one was excluded after the interview because it became clear during it that he was only 11 years old, and finally, another one was also excluded after her interview because it was impossible to book the meeting with her parents soon afterwards. Because the grant allowed data collection only during July and August, which are the winter school holidays in Belém, it was impossible to recruit adolescents from the same classrooms, as was intended in the research project. The solution to this impediment was to interview adolescents participating in an extra-curricular health program exclusive to teenagers.

The fathers and mothers

Two couples were interviewed jointly; nine mothers were interviewed alone. Four fathers were unable to attend the interview; five adolescents were not living with their fathers.

The professionals

Sixteen individual interviews were held with professionals, seven of whom occupied strategic and management positions. Besides these interviews, a collective interview was held with four professionals of a non-governmental organization (NGO) working with children and adolescents in the same neighbourhood as these adolescents and their parents lived.

In summary, the study focused most intently on what participants thought of the sexuality of adolescents in order to establish if one or more apparatuses from a Foucauldian

perspective could be observed. In total, 56 interviews were done, with 26 adolescents and their parents codified and analysed. The remaining interviews were not codified but were nevertheless analysed deeply in relation to the results showed by those codified.

Conceptions of sexuality

For all the adolescents interviewed, sexuality was associated with copulation, but half of them also made reference to fun, pleasure, attraction, and desire. Religion seemed a determining factor in the social construction of adolescent sexuality: the elements of sin, prohibition, and temptation were constantly mentioned by both the adolescents and the parents who practised a religion.

Female adolescents sought out their mothers to talk about sexuality, while male adolescents talked to their fathers, thereby reinforcing gender relations in this context. Only in fatherless families was there a dialogue between mothers and sons about sex. Most sexual awakening began in childhood within the family circle, and often with older cousins. Childhood games allowed the important discovery of touching and being touched by others. Sexual games were mentioned in almost all the interviews and it was through these infantile games that the first sexual contacts were made, always in secret, and the adolescents spoke of them with a certain culpability and shame. The concept of sexuality presented by all the participants of the study (adolescents and parents) in relation to themselves and their understanding of school, the church, the media, as well as the State and its politics and healthcare services, concurred with the idea that sex at this age was prohibited, but if it was happening, it must be completely safe.

Family

Eight of the fourteen (57%) adolescents interviewed mentioned that parents contributed to a healthy and clarifying dialogue about sexuality. Six (43%) related that they did not talk much with their parents about sex; only one, however, said that he never talked about the topic but then contradicted himself later by admitting that sometimes he did talk with his father about sex and women. The adolescents felt that friends and teachers were able to discuss matters of sexuality, but health professionals significantly less so.

Parents believed that the most important site for the transmission of sexual knowledge to their children was the family. When they were asked about the participation of the school as a collaborator in preventing pregnancy, HIV, and other sexually transmitted diseases, around ten (80%)

were favourable to the intervention of this institution, with three opposed. Those who opposed believed that discussion of sexuality in school would be harmful, promoting sexual precocity and leading to unwanted pregnancies.

Parents appeared to have a pathological perception of adolescents as immature and irresponsible regarding matters of sexuality and believed that they were influenced negatively by their friends, the media, and, above all, by the physical environment around them. It is worth highlighting here that the surrounding neighbourhood, as is the case in general in Brazil's disadvantaged suburbs, contained drug dealing, prostitution, and other marginal activities.

Religion / church

The interviewees perceived the church as an important participant in building an adolescent's sexuality, because of the concepts of sin, temptation, and prohibition. This perception was given greater emphasis by adolescents and parents, Evangelists as well as Catholics, who declared that they practised a religion. Eleven adolescents (79%) were Catholic and three (21%) belonged to an evangelist religion (Quadrangular, Assembléia de Deus).

However, some adolescents see the prohibition by these churches against sexual activity as a challenge--they admitted that they were stimulated to have sex: "... adolescence is the beginning of life where everything is new and, because of that, having sex during this period is tempting because it is prohibited" stated Blue Marine, a 14-year-old Catholic boy. In his opinion, "people like to do what is prohibited because they think it is interesting and they would like to try it." Government health, education, and communication institutions also appear to have, for parents as well as adolescents, a fundamental role to play in education and in the implementation of programs that attempt to prevent transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies.

School

Although school was important to these adolescents, nine out of fourteen (64%) of them said that they had received no sex education at school, and five (36%) said that they would have liked to have had teachers and specialists inform them of the importance of sexuality and its implications in their lives, as well as provide them with pertinent information to help reduce the number of teenage pregnancies.

Media

As a means of transmitting information on sexuality, television was found by eleven adolescents (78%) to have a

positive preventive influence, while only 3 (22%) elected it as a negative influence. For example, 15-year-old Red, when asked whether television provided useful information to help him live with his sexuality, responded positively: "it is always there, they talk about it, the sexuality ... sometimes about experiences ... isn't it?" Black, a 17-year-old girl agreed. "Yes ... they show ... when they show that teenagers ... [are] selling themselves for money ... that ... [they] get pregnant too young, then ... that shows me that ... I shouldn't do the same thing, that I shouldn't follow the same thing ... I don't have to follow ... I must go another way." And another 14-year-old Catholic girl, White, answered: "many people [...] talk about sex, yes ... like those girls on TV always talks about prostitution ... I think this helps a lot [...] I think it helps to show this is not a good way [...] for people."

Among the few who were against the use of television, Blue, a 14-year-old boy who belonged to the Evangelist church, answered that "[...] there are a lot of porn movies, there are a lot of magazines, many erotic magazines, sometimes even the beer ads [...] show women who are almost naked or maybe only wearing bikini parts [...] in TV programs too, there are women with very sensual clothes for men to see [...] Gugu TV show... sex channels [...] should be over." And 16-year-old Yellow, a Catholic girl, stated that "on television there is a lot more than just kisses ... there are many heavy scenes on TV... now ... I think that this is what influences most of the teenagers to start sex early..."

All of the adolescents in our sample felt that the Internet was a positive influence, never negative, as they sometimes viewed newspapers and magazines. Gray, a 16-year-old Catholic boy said: "I like the Internet ... (laughs) it shows people having sex ... positions ... I like, I learn a lot, sometimes I learn with movies... [...] I rent and watch DVDs too."

Parents and professors, however, were unanimous in diagnosing TV and the Internet as being pernicious to adolescent sexuality and affirmed that it would be more appropriate if they showed more educational programs.

Apparatus of sexuality

From the analysis of all interview texts, it can be seen that for all of the adolescents interviewed in this research an apparatus of sexuality was present, one that we might call an apparatus of "safe sex." According to this apparatus, the practice of sex should always be carried out in a safe manner, whether or not pleasure was involved in the act. Red, a 15-year-old Catholic boy, presented a coherent discourse across his entire interview. To him, his concept of sexuality

should be shared by all social actors: many adolescents don't always have safe sex; the school should teach safe sex; health professionals and government programs should enforce preventive approaches, such as continuing to offer free condoms during carnival, the most important event of each year—an approach he considers more important than any other kind of spoken publicity. Red demonstrated the relevance of an apparatus of "safe sex." "My mother and father, they have always given me advice so that makes it easier, doesn't it? [...]" *Interviewer*: And what kind of advice do they give? *Red*: To always use a condom, I should always use a condom. *Interviewer*: And what is the advantage of using a condom? *Red*: It's so ... we don't catch a disease and don't get pregnant." Beige, a 15-year-old Catholic girl who had lost her virginity at age 12, stated, laughing "Me ... I think that my sexuality is ... my relationship with my boyfriend is good, as I have just said.... It is good, but, to say ... we think a lot about it in order to not regret it later."

Testimonies of the interviewed adolescents who had an active sexual life showed that they were adamant about the use of a condom to avoid an undesired pregnancy and to prevent sexually transmitted disease. To us, this clearly demonstrated that they were fundamentally concerned with being responsible. For example Beige admitted that "Ahhhh... Ahhhh... [laughs]... uhuh [...] having sex is good ... *but I think that in the middle of this good there is a responsibility ... to think about what we are doing.*" We contend that these results demonstrated that a Foucauldian apparatus of sexuality, a "safe sex" apparatus that was shared by all social actors and institutions, can be found in the lived lives of teenagers from a disadvantaged part of the city of Belém in Brazil. The theoretical consequences will be discussed later in the discussion section.

Apparatus of alliance

When the fourteen adolescents who were interviewed were asked about their desire to get married, twelve (86%) answered positively without hesitation, while only two (14%) of them seemed confused. Among the twelve who viewed marriage positively, it is worth highlighting the words of Green, a 14-year-old male evangelist, who answered that he would marry any woman because he wanted sex urgently and his religious beliefs prevented him from having sex before marriage. Of the two adolescents expressing a reticence to get married, Red answered that he not thought about this topic yet and characterized himself as a confused person. His parents sometimes talked about love, telling him that he couldn't get married and expect to divorce quickly

afterwards. On the other hand, White said she would like to have sex before marriage because she doesn't think about marriage and, a bit further in her interview, she put as a condition to marriage her graduation as a teacher or a nurse. Nevertheless, she said she would get married as a virgin and after marriage she couldn't get a divorce. If by accident she did have sex before marriage, she recognized the risk of getting pregnant and the man not wanting to accept responsibility, reinforcing the importance to her of having sex only after marriage. It may be that her ambivalent feelings arose out of the experience of her mother, Todo Ano, who got pregnant before marriage with her first daughter, White's sister. It seems relevant that the two teenagers who appeared somewhat ambivalent about marriage were the only ones to talk about divorce being prohibited after marriage.

Marriage, considered to be the end of adolescence in this population, appeared to be the basis of an apparatus of alliance for people living in poverty, ideally helping them to become more socially mobile. The most important thing to both the parents as well as to their children was to gain upward social mobility through better education and a good job, and the best jobs available were related to a high level of education. Getting married was a means to make an alliance with a partner who also had a decent education and a good job, offering an opportunity to move up in the social scale rather than staying at the same level or, ever worse, dropping into deeper poverty.

What also came through in the interviews with both the adolescents and their parents was an apparatus of alliance based on professional graduation and a good job. And for girls to get pregnant, or for boys to get their partner pregnant, was putting an end to this aspiration for a better social position. No differences between boys and girls were found in either the adolescents or their parents on the issue of pregnancy.

This apparatus is characterized as the means by which parents wanted to do everything they could so their children could be successful and, for their children to achieve this objective, they needed to study and become part of the labour market. Because of these desires, parents wanted their children to take extra-curricular activities so they could enrich their social and economic world and thus remove themselves from poverty. Many parents thus were watching and controlling the activities of their children to reach this goal.

To illustrate this type of alliance that may be called an apparatus of "powerfulness," the testimony of Red's mother, Margarida, was instructive when she was questioned about the future of her son: "I want my son Red to study, that he take

courses, [that he becomes] mature [and] has a vocational course." And she adds: "Here in Brazil *they* [those who decide] *prefer* that our children remain illiterate, [that they] do slave labour so that they can not compete with theirs." Red's father, Cravo, agrees with his partner. Blue's mother, Rose, said: "[Before he is] ready to get married ... he has to study first, [...] he has to be someone in his life. [...] I want him to finish elementary school, high school, take a course, study to be someone in life.... Then when he works and [can] support himself financially [he can] find a woman who is also gifted, who can do things, who can do the laundry, who can iron the clothes and cook." Gray's mother, who agrees in the same way, added a note on race: "I wanted him to study, graduate and show to his father that a black person can make it."

This same discourse is repeated to the daughters as well, and Açucena and Girassol, Black's parents, affirmed that they are used to saying to their children: "You should finish your studies." Referring to their son Green, they stated that: "He is a man, he has to study, find a good job and later he may think about getting married... (laughs)."

This apparatus is explicitly present in the discourse of ten (75%) parents, and implicitly in the other three (25%). Moral and emancipatory values emerged, along with those of education and hard work, as foundations of a social process that can be called a Foucauldian apparatus of alliance, a concept that was empirically found in the population studied in Belém. Linked to present-day social expectations, and based on the search for professional and financial autonomy, this apparatus could be more precisely called, as previously written, an apparatus of an alliance of "powerfulness."

This apparatus is evidenced when the majority of the parents interviewed affirmed that they wanted to give their children an education that would allow them to enter the ranks of the powerful. Here, the choice of their future spouse was not important as they (the parents) were sure that if their children were well educated, *they would automatically know* how to choose spouses who were also well educated.

Space as an important component of the apparatuses

Space emerged in the results as a component of the two apparatuses, confirming the idea that architecture is important, as Foucault believed. To us, though, it seems more useful to use the concept of space that encompasses something larger than architecture.

Squares, shopping centres, Internet cafés, and tourist places

in the city constitute reference points in the imagination of teenagers, while the promenade is considered the most convenient space and provides the most opportunity to be with the desired person.

The school and extra-curricular activities are also privileged spaces to connect with peers emotionally or even sexually. While the school was often seen as a space where contact with the desired other person was forbidden, alternative strategies were found to hide from supervisors and to live those exciting experiences. Finally, the space most suited for intimacy was definitely not in the family home, and even if dating at home was allowed in some families, the majority of teenagers were uncomfortable engaging in sex there.

Another important point to underline is the close relationship between sexuality and the ambient space of poverty, violence, and marginalization: parents were often preoccupied with an environment full of prostitution, drug dealing, and other marginal activities while the teenagers themselves, particularly the young women, seemed unwilling to show that they were worried about such threatening issues. But it was still possible to find their preoccupation with these issues too by reading between the lines.

Discussion

Although the institutions of family, school, church, media, state systems of health, education, and communication, the legal system, as well as state urban planning are heterogeneous, all present the same discourse on sexuality. They created and formalized this discourse by regulatory decisions of such various places as the adolescent health program, the Brazilian Constitution, the law on the child and the adolescent, and the national parameters of education and training. The administrative tools, scientific results, philosophies, moral rules and philanthropy, and all that encompasses these institutions and mechanisms, have built a network, both verbal and non-verbal, which is composed of each of these elements in conformity with Foucault's theoretical perspective discussed in the introduction.

Adorno[17] acknowledged that "it [was] commonplace for adults to be concerned and to have a moralistic outlook towards youth and to treat them as dangerous perverts regarding sexual issues, since they consider them to be bearers of uncontrolled sexual behaviour." However, in contrast to this kind of discourse, which is held by the media, professionals, families, and relatives, the results demonstrate that the adolescents in the present study, while sharing the pathological vision that adults and society in general

have of adolescents, don't include themselves, confirming the necessity to fight[18] against this erroneous vision of professionals and scientific researchers. It seems increasingly more important to understand this vision: Are adolescents a real danger for society or are our societies dangerous for adolescents? Adopting a new perspective on interventions with adolescents has consequences yet to be analysed.

Existing forces encourage, on one hand, a super- or hyper-sexualization through programs disseminated by national and international media that may be stimulating a new social order, exaggerating sexuality in order to increase the profits of the sex industry, and in which the human body is promoted as a mercantile product.[19] On the other hand, other forces spreading throughout medical, scholarly, family, and religious discourses work against the stereotypical sexual image presented by the media. It may be that existing contradictory forces are converging to strengthen desirable behaviours, which is clearly the case with the "safe sex" apparatus, but at the same time, they may exchange roles in such a way that at any given time they may act in the same manner rather than in opposition to one another. To illustrate this point, the media may present a different discourse, for instance, in the case of a religious TV channel that sends out a different message on sexuality than a mainstream television channel does: in this case, the church uses its power to generate the information it wishes to broadcast, but there are other channels that have access to this same power in order to disseminate their own very different information. Therefore, these forces may be different but can also, according to their specific interests, also present some of the same perspectives.

The apparatus of alliance is a means to an end to attain higher social standing. But while in the Victorian era alliances occurred for financial reasons, currently it seems that professionalism is the way to achieve a better financial and social position, at least in the social group studied here. An inter-relationship exists between the "safe sex apparatus of sexuality and the alliance apparatus for both adolescents and their mothers and fathers, since being pregnant might be seen as threatening to the children's emancipation from poverty and endangering the apparatus of "powerfulness."

Teachers, health professionals, family and relatives, friends, the church, the media, and the State, all are contributing to the construction of "proper" sexual behaviour for present-day adolescents, even if the discourses may be contradictory within the same institution. The "safe sex" apparatus of sexuality is predominant and is overcoming all other discourses, whether they are verbal or non-verbal, stimulating all the different social actors as Foucault intuitively understood

in his discussion on the general apparatus of sexuality. As is demonstrated here, for example, while the Church prohibits the use of contraceptives, it may at the same time sanction the sexual abuse of young people. Adolescents are exposed to this well-documented reality through television, newspapers, documentaries, and even movies. They establish their own points of view inside these contradictory discourses because the most important focus for them is the "safe sex" discourse of the apparatus of sexuality.

Some televisions broadcast pornography by putting explicit sex on national and international networks, such as on the so-called reality programs, but they can also present other programs depicting the negative sides of sexuality, particularly those of prostitution and drug abuse, which are against the predominant neo-liberal scheme of autonomy through educated professionalism. While exploiting sexuality may be profit making, educated professionalism, through a "safe sex" apparatus of sexuality embedded in the apparatus of the alliance of "powerfulness," is presented as the only way to achieve the desired social expectations.

Strengths and limits of the research

According to the authors' knowledge, no study has ever been undertaken using empirically constructed research tools related to Foucault's concepts of the apparatuses of sexuality and alliance. Many researchers make reference to them but do not use them during data collection or analysis. The finding of a unique apparatus of sexuality pertaining to all social actors and linked to an apparatus of alliance was a great surprise and may contribute to create new knowledge on sexuality. Using data from all the actors involved in the lives of adolescents (parents, health professionals, the media, the State, etc.) provides evidence of a network, which is characteristic of Foucault's concept of apparatus and was something that was fairly new in 1976, the year of the original publication of *The History of Sexuality* in French.[20]

However, this research is limited, because the sample consisted only of adolescents enrolled in a health program exclusively for teenagers. Even if participation in such programs may be the best, if not the only, way to access services that are difficult to get by poor people who have no health plan, and even if the great majority of teenagers told us that they were not steadily attending this program, and there may be no difference between these adolescents and those in the regular educational system, we cannot consider that there are no differences between the two categories. More studies must be conducted within and outside Brazil in order to validate or invalidate the results, in totality or partly. The

only certainty is that the results of this study constitute valid constructs for the group under study and that this validity put into a good position the use of Foucault's concepts, considered until now only as philosophical abstractions and not as results of an empirical study.

Conclusion

In this study with adolescents living in poverty in Brazil, the finding of empirical concepts of apparatuses of "safe sex" as an actual apparatus of sexuality and an apparatus of alliance of "powerfulness" can be, even if not already confirmed in other groups and societies, an incentive to revise traditional approaches on sexuality and reproductive health with adolescents, and even the population in general.

The empirical data may offer support for a renewed interdisciplinary and intersectorial approach: all social actors and institutions could be involved through new technologies such as the Internet, which are appealing to teenagers today throughout the world. Visions of the adolescents themselves should be the starting point of supporting programs on sexuality and reproductive health as well as on violence and the use of illicit drugs, with professional disciplines and institutional actors such as parents, schools, the media, and state mechanisms using a positive, health promotion framework instead of the actual counterproductive adult and societal vision that perceives adolescents as perverts, unaware, immature, and, at the same time, naïve. Theoretically and methodologically innovative research could be the basis of rethinking sexuality, knowledge, and power in the light of the concepts of Michel Foucault.

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