

**(Re)recognizing sexualities:
adolescents, deprivation of liberty, and family**

**(Ri)conoscere le sessualità:
adolescenti, privazione della libertà e famiglia**

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Abstract

Socioeducation is provided for in the *Statute of Children and Adolescents* and regulated by the National Socioeducational Assistance System in Brazil to promote, protect, and defend the human and fundamental rights of adolescents and young people responsible for criminal acts, including gender diversity and sexual orientation. In the Socioeducational Centers (CENSEs), socioeducational service units with deprivation of liberty, gender diversity and sexual orientation are erased, an erasure that attempts to nullify differences and impose homogenization. In this very nebulous place are the families of those adolescents and young people who are not welcomed in their doubts and fears, which makes them centers of exclusion. With this in mind, a focus group with four adolescents was formed to address issues related to gender diversity, sexual orientation, and family in a CENSE in Paraná, Brazil. During the development of the focus group activities, significant changes were observed in CENSE, adolescents, and families; that is, gender diversity and sexual orientation became topics in various socioeducational sectors.

Keywords: adolescence, family, youth, sexualities, socioeducation.

Sommario

La Socioeducazione è prevista dallo *Statuto dei Minori* e regolata dal Sistema Nazionale di Assistenza Socioeducativa in Brasile con l'obiettivo di promuovere, proteggere e difendere i diritti umani e fondamentali degli adolescenti e dei giovani responsabili di atti illeciti, inclusi la diversità di genere e l'orientamento sessuale. Nei Centri di Socioeducazione (CENSE), unità di servizio socioeducativo con privazione della libertà, la diversità di genere e l'orientamento sessuale vengono negati, una cancellazione che cerca di annullare le differenze e imporre l'omogeneizzazione. In questo ambiente molto nebuloso si trovano le famiglie di quegli adolescenti e giovani che non vengono accolti nei loro dubbi e paure, rendendoli centri di esclusione. A partire da queste riflessioni, in un CENSE in Paraná (Brasile), un gruppo di discussione con quattro adolescenti è stato creato per affrontare questioni relative alla diversità di genere, all'orientamento sessuale e alla famiglia. Durante lo sviluppo delle attività del gruppo di discussione, sono state osservate modifiche significative nel CENSE, negli adolescenti e nelle famiglie: la diversità di genere e l'orientamento sessuale sono diventati argomenti presenti in vari settori socioeducativi.

Parole chiave: adolescenza, famiglia, gioventù, sessualità, socioeducazione.

Introduction

Socioeducation is provided for in the Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente (ECA) [Child and Adolescent Statute] and regulated by the Sistema Nacional de Atendimento Socioeducativo (SINASE) [National Socioeducational Assistance System] in Brazil, intended to promote, protect, and defend the human and fundamental rights of adolescents and young people responsible for committing an infraction. The ECA was sanctioned by Law n. 8.069 of July 13, 1990, is affiliated with the International Human Rights System (IHRS), and «it is a legislation absolutely linked to the principles and guidelines of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the dictates of the Federal Constitution of 1988, the so-called Citizen Constitution» (Brasil, 2024, p. 10). Articles 1 and 2 of the ECA deliberate and provide for the comprehensive protection of children, people up to 12 years of age, and adolescents, between 12 and 18 years of age.

The rights set out in this law apply to all children and adolescents without discrimination based on birth, family situation, age, sex, race, ethnicity or color, religion or belief, disability, personal development and learning condition, economic condition, social environment, region and place of residence or other condition that differentiates people, families or the community in which they live (Included by Law n. 13.257, of 2016) (Brasil, 2024, p. 14).

Section I, Chapter IV, art. 112 *Da Prática de Ato Infracional* [On the Practice of an Infracional Act] in ECA presents the socioeducational measures: «I – warning; II – obligation to repair the damage; III – provision of services to the community; IV – supervised freedom; V – insertion in a semi-freedom regime; VI – custody in an educational establishment; and VII – any of those provided for in art. 101, I to VI.» (Brasil, 2024, p. 60). SINASE, established in 2006 through Resolution n. 119, focused on what should «be done to address situations of violence involving adolescents as perpetrators of criminal acts or victims of rights violations while serving socioeducational measures» (Brasil, 2006, p. 13). Regarding the issue, SINASE also represents the «construction of a broad social pact» (Brasil, 2006, p. 13) involving government, family, society, and the State.

Having as a basic premise the need to build more objective parameters and fairer procedures that avoid or limit discretion, SINASE reaffirms the statute's guideline on the pedagogical nature of the socioeducational measure. To this end, this system is inspired by international agreements on human rights, to which Brazil is a signatory, especially regarding children's and adolescents' rights. Furthermore, priority is given to measures in an open environment (community service and supervised freedom) over freedom-restricting ones (semi-freedom and confinement in an educational establishment, given that these should only be applied in exceptional and brief circumstances) (Brasil, 2006, pp. 13-14).

In 2012, SINASE ceased to be a Resolution and became a Federal Law (LF N. 12.594/2012), which «regulates the implementation of socioeducational measures aimed at adolescents who commit an offense» (Brasil, 2024, p. 137). Art. 1, § 1 of this law defines SINASE as «the ordered set of principles, rules, and criteria that involve the execution of socioeducational measures, including, by adhesion, the state, district and municipal systems, as well as all specific plans, policies, and programs for assisting adolescents in conflict with the law.» (Brasil, 2024, p. 137).

Anchored in the ECA, in Resolution 119/2006 of the Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Criança e do Adolescente (CONANDA) (National Council for the Rights of Children and Adolescents] and in FL n. 12.594/2012, in 2013, the Plano Nacional de Atendimento Socioeducativo (PNAS) (National Socioeducational Assistance Plan) was established as

the operational expression of the legal frameworks of the socioeducational system, translated through a matrix of responsibilities and its axes of action. With this configuration, it will guide the planning, construction, execution, monitoring, and evaluation of the SINASE ten-year state, district, and municipal plans (Brasil, 2013, p. 6).

The PNAS is made up of three principles and nineteen guidelines, among which we highlight the following:

- b) Focus on socioeducation by designing new *projects agreed upon with adolescents and families*, as established in individual care plans;
- c) Encourage teenagers' leadership, participation, and autonomy in compliance with the socioeducational measure *and their families*;
- [...] h) Ensure family and conjugal visits, with an emphasis on the coexistence with partners, children, and parents, besides the *participation of the family in the socioeducational policy*;
- i) Ensure the right to sexuality and reproductive health, respecting gender identity and sexual orientation (Brasil, 2013, p. 10, our emphasis).

As highlighted in the guidelines above, family participation is extremely important in offenders' compliance with the socioeducational measure, and the gender identity and sexual orientation of adolescents must be respected. The protection of the rights of adolescents serving socioeducational measures must be fully guaranteed (Brasil, 2013), as established in the Declaration of Human Rights, namely, «freedom, solidarity, social justice, honesty, peace, responsibility, and respect for cultural, religious, ethnic-racial, gender, and sexual orientation diversity» (Brasil, 2006, p. 25). Ethnic-racial, gender, and sexual orientation diversity is a specific axis in the composition of the theoretical-methodological foundations of the pedagogical project of socioeducational assistance programs.

In the Centros de Socioeducação (CENSE) (Socioeducational Centers), – socioeducational care units for deprivation of liberty – gender diversity and sexual guidance, although present in this space, seem obliterated. Therefore, the right to care that respects each adolescent's uniqueness with the development of comprehensive, autonomous, and social emancipation care through the awakening of critical and political citizenship was insufficient. This movement that tries to eliminate differences and imposes homogenization interferes with the possibility of adolescents and young people redefining their stories and narratives from a solid and real place, which has a physiognomy, name, identity, and marks. These teenagers and young people's families are in this same foggy place. These families are not welcomed in their doubts and fears, which makes them groups of exclusion. With this in mind, we formed a focus group with four teenagers – one lesbian girl and three trans boys – to discuss issues related to gender diversity, sexual orientation, and family in a CENSE in Paraná, Brazil: this will be the object of analysis in this article. The objective is to analyze the information produced by the focus group from an intersectional perspective. To this end, this article will be

organized into four parts: introduction, theoretical framework, methodological and analytical path, and final considerations.

1. Theoretical framework

Family in the plural

When we discuss the right to care for adolescents deprived of freedom, considering the development of comprehensive, autonomous, and social emancipation care through the awakening of critical and political citizenship, it is necessary to include families in this process. According to Jacira da Silva Barbosa and Sonia Maria Rocha Sampaio (2017), a family «is a human group that enjoys a unique position in the organization of individuals' emotional lives and in which a web of relationships, emotions, and feelings is identified, whatever the form of organization and the social class to which it belongs» (p. 110). By drawing attention to any form of organization, the authors recognize other possibilities of family organization, different from the nuclear-patriarchal model formed by father, mother, and daughters/sons which, according to Teresinha Regina Buseti Pardo¹ (1993), which naturalizes gender binarism and heterosexual cisgenderism as the norm. Nigerian researcher Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí (2004) states that this family model emerged from Western culture in the 19th century, along with the categories of woman and man, feminine and masculine, also deciding each person's social role. The family, explains Regina Célia Tamasso Miotto (2010), should not be understood as a private construction but a public one, playing an important role in structuring society in its social, political, and economic aspects. Sampaio and Barbosa (2017) say that as a social institution, the family is not immune to contradictions and has been undergoing important structural transformations. Moreover, «in the contemporary world, the traditional nuclear-conjugal model [...] is in sharp decline and, as a result, several other family configurations have emerged» (Barbosa and Sampaio, 2017, p. 110).

Although we agree with Barbosa and Sampaio's (2017) statements, we must consider that other family configurations have always existed, including in colonized countries such as Brazil. Still, they were systematically ignored by the public authorities, which prevented them from accessing numerous rights. We also highlight that the rules related to marriage² in Brazil, therefore to the family, were, according to Megg Rayara Gomes de Oliveira (2020): «instituted by the Ordinances of the Kingdom of Portugal which, in addition to marriage at the church door, recognized presumed marriage, which was prolonged cohabitation, without the blessing of the church» (Oliveira, 2020, p. 7). The author also reports that such rules continued in force even after Brazil's independence³. However, consensual unions formed without the approval of the Catholic Church were considered by it, and by a large part of society, as clandestine and sinful, as were bigamy and polygamy. The same interpretation was applied to couples formed by two people of the same sex and/or the same gender and couples formed by a cisgender person and a transgender person (Oliveira, 2020). Single-parent families, especially matrifocal families, in which the absence of the father figure strengthens the emotional bonds between mother and child (Pardo, 1993), whether due to widowhood, abandonment, sexual violence, or even on the woman's initiative (Jonabio Barbosa dos Santos e Morgana Sales da Costa Santos, 2009), are observed in Brazil during the colonial period, among both black and white women. According to Eni de Mesquita Samara (1989), in the province of São Paulo, 61.90% of white women had children out of wedlock in 1804 and 58.94% in 1836.

Another issue that could influence those women's decision to raise their daughters and sons alone would be related to the fact that they are lesbians. Although homotransaffective relationships were prohibited in Brazil between 1533 and 1830, official documents produced by the church and the Portuguese crown confirm that they continued to exist and challenge the model of social organization imposed by the European invaders. According to João Sivério Trevisan, in the book *Devassos no Paraíso: a homossexualidade no Brasil, da colônia à atualidade* (Perverts in paradise: homosexuality in Brazil, from the Colonial period to the present day) (2018), the Portuguese Holy Inquisition prosecuted more than 40 thousand people, burned more than 1,800 at the stake, and condemned approximately 30 thousand people for crimes of sodomy and tribadism⁴. For Jocélio Teles dos Santos (1997), among the people reported for sodomy were transvestites and/or trans women, called man-woman at the time, such as Xica Manicongo, reported in 1591 in Salvador (BA).

From the second half of the 19th century onwards, in addition to the Church and the State, the press began to play an essential role in monitoring the population that escaped heterosexual cisgenderism and in recording, albeit in a derogatory manner, how they organized themselves socially, including as families. In 1870, for example, the newspaper *O Alabama* reported a relationship of *intimate camaraderie* between two women on Rua do Colégio in Salvador (BA) (Santos, 1997). In a patriarchal society, the questioning of institutionalized sexual – and gender – codes by male and female homosexuality, as well as transvestism and transsexuality, revealed a concrete threat to the dominant ethos (Santos, 1997), even justifying the constant surveillance to which they were subject.

Homotransaffective families

Legislation and research discussing family in Brazil until the first half of the 20th century reiterated the nuclear-patriarchal model, which also operated to naturalize that both motherhood and fatherhood were exclusive to heterosexual cisgender people. The debate regarding other models of family organization, but specifically homotransaffective, only gained visibility at the end of the 20th century, even though the homosexual movement in Brazil was organized, mainly in large cities such as São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Salvador since 1979 and repeatedly denounced the omission of the State regarding the rights of the LGBT population. Marcello Espinosa (2014) says that as a result of this movement, the Federal Constitution promulgated on October 5, 1988, determined that the population's civil rights were guaranteed by law and that discrimination based on people's sexuality is contrary to such rights. However, contradictorily, the Constitution also proved to be discriminatory against the LGBT population in Article 226, which recognizes stable unions as families.

Art. 226. The family, the foundation of society, has special protection of the State.

[...] Paragraph 3. For the purposes of State protection, the stable union between a man and a woman is recognized as a family entity, and the law must facilitate its conversion into marriage (Brasil, 1988, n.p.).

This recognition actually represented an advance in terms of the formation of the family, which no longer depended exclusively on marriage to be recognized as such but continued to reiterate the same nuclear-patriarchal family model. As an attempt to expand the family model in 1995, the then Federal Deputy for the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores – PT) Marta Suplicy, presented Bill 1.151, proposing the creation of

Registered Civil Partnerships between homosexual people. However, the bill was not passed (Brasil, 1995).

According to André da Silva Monteiro and Vivian Corvalan Ribeiro de Sousa (2023), only in 2011 did the Federal Supreme Court (Supremo Tribunal Federal – STF) begin to recognize the stable union between same-sex couples as a family entity. This achievement, the result of the struggles of organized social movements, supported by the United Nations Human Rights Council, is of great importance for all Brazilian society. However, it has problems in its wording and reinforces the idea of sex as synonymous with gender, ignoring the fact that a person of the male sex, for example, can socially construct themselves as of the female gender. So, a relationship between two people of the same sex does not necessarily mean that they form a homosexual couple. Currently, then, stable unions in Brazil are «marked by a progressive appreciation of affective relationships based on lasting cohabitation and the intention of forming a family, regardless of Civil Marriage or the sexual orientation of those involved» (Monteiro and Sousa, 2023, p. 4).

2. Methodological path

The group's proposal was awakened by the realization that the right to care that covered the uniqueness of each adolescent, one of the structuring points of the Individual Care Plan (Plano Individual de Atendimento – PIA), had been ignored regarding sexuality and gender identification. Professionals, adolescents, or family members did not question the logic of cisheteronormativity. Thus, the institutional dynamics, professionals' attitudes, and adolescents' strategies to resist a system that makes sexuality invisible began to be observed more closely. In this context, the group (Re)Conhecendo a Diversidade Sexual, ((Re)Acknowledging Sexual Diversity) was created, initially composed of four teenagers to address issues related to gender diversity, sexual orientation, and family in a CENSE in Paraná, Brazil, which is the object of analysis of this article. The group mediators were an occupational therapy professional working at CENSE and a postgraduate student in education. During individual consultations, the invited adolescents expressed concerns related to the use of their social name, haircut, and possible issues in family relationships with the manifestation of gender identification or sexual orientation. The methodology chosen to carry out the work with the adolescents was the focus group, where participants were selected according to some criteria related to the problem to be studied. By definition, according to Bernardete Angelina Gatti (2005), the focus group consists of a group of people gathered to discuss a pre-determined and focused topic precisely because it involves a collective activity on a specific subject. According to Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge (2020), the information obtained from the focus group will be analyzed from an intersectional perspective, that is, considering the overlap and unification of identity categories in the power relations in force in the adolescents' social context. The fictitious names of the participants are inspired by Brazilian rap artists. Gustavo is a reference to Gustavo Pereira, better known as Djonga; Tássia concerns Tássia Reis; Luanna refers to MC Luanna; Fabrício refers to Fabrício Soares Teixeira, better known as FBC; Julia refers to Julia Costa, better known as Ajuliacosta; and Kléber refers to Kléber Cavalcante Gomes, better known as Criolo. All names respect the anonymity of the people who participated in the focus group.

The group's first meeting was held remotely in March 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the professional and the teenagers in the CENSE library while the postgraduate student at her residence. The first day aimed to create a bond between the participants. Thus, we asked some initial questions, such as: «What is your name?» and

«How would you like to be called?» In response to the first question, a teenager who already identified as a trans boy said his social name, Gustavo. In contrast, the other teenagers – who identified themselves until then as lesbian girls – said their female names, Tássia and Luanna. Regarding the second question, we had a surprise: while Gustavo and Luanna maintained their answers, saying they would like to be called by those same names, Tássia said she preferred to be called Fabrício. Consequently, we realized that the group was not composed of a trans boy and two lesbian girls but rather two trans boys and a lesbian girl. This statement highlights the lack of a safe space for speaking and listening, associated with the lack of support for structural demands, the lack of preparation of the team, the reproduction of the macho and sexist culture, and the erasure of the being. In parallel with the group of adolescents, moments of dialogue and exchange were held with the different sectors and professionals that made up the team. In these meetings, we sought to accommodate their demands and doubts, raise awareness of gender and sexual orientation issues, as well as formalize the group as a space that promotes citizenship and self-recognition, where adolescents who felt the desire to share that space could do so without feeling embarrassed, thus ensuring equality of service. In this first meeting, they were also asked about someone they admired. Luanna said she admired her father, Fabrício spoke about a cousin who graduated in engineering, and Gustavo said he admired his mother. In other words, boys and girls find admiration, a person to look up to within their own family.

In another group meeting, we asked the teenagers – only Gustavo and Fabrício participated on this day – to talk about what differentiated men and women for them. The two boys answered by giving stereotypical characteristics associated with each identity, i.e., while women were linked to makeup, vanity, submission, dresses, and nail polish, men were associated with muscles, suits, style, and the absence of expression of feelings. Throughout the meeting, we asked them whether it was not okay for men to be vain, wear makeup and nail polish and whether it was not okay for women to have muscles, wear suits, and be stylish. Such questions made teenagers question the fixity of genders, realizing that there is no absolute truth about what it means to be a man or a woman, nor even a model to be followed. At the end of the meeting, Fabrício said that his family imposed many of these stereotypes on him, which made it difficult for him to express himself as a trans boy in the family environment. Gustavo shared that his family was more liberal about it since he had expressed himself as a trans boy before entering the socioeducational measure.

Another meeting focused on the theme *Male possibilities of being* in which several trans men were shown – white, black, fat, with disabilities, who chose not to have a mastectomy, who use makeup, who are drag queens, who chose to get pregnant, among others – and several masculine lesbian women. The objective of this meeting was to present to teenagers the broad spectrum in which they can circulate, both within transsexuality and cisgenderism. From the day reported above, more and more doubts began to arise about the gender transition process, and we felt the need to invite someone transsexual to talk to the teenagers. The meeting was held – also remotely – with Luiz Miguel, a trans man who, at the time, was a master's student in a postgraduate program in education. On this day, the group was in charge of the three teenagers since it was not a pre-structured meeting: Fabrício, Luanna, and Gustavo were responsible for asking all their questions to Luiz Miguel, which resulted in the group lasting the longest on the day, such were the teenagers' doubts.

From the next meeting onwards, Julia – another teenager who identified as a lesbian girl – became part of the group. On that same day, Luanna said she needed to reintroduce herself, identifying herself as Kléber. The group, which was initially made up of two

lesbian girls and a trans boy, changed its configuration and is now made up of three trans boys and a lesbian girl. The new identifications of Kléber and Fabrício did not happen smoothly in the socioeducational unit, causing strangeness in the group of professionals, directly impacting the experience of the adolescents at CENSE. This episode was widely debated among the team. On several occasions, it was necessary to remember that adolescence is permeated by the search for oneself, identity, and group belonging.

Furthermore, the lack of a more inclusive system leads adolescents to fit into a pattern imposed upon their arrival at the socioeducational unit. A considerable number of professionals expressed difficulty in breaking with the heteronormative pattern experienced up until that point, understanding that the family should be consulted about the change in the pronoun of treatment and use of the social name, being used only with the consent of the family. Added to this, they began to wonder how much truth there was in the name change, whether this was not an irresponsible and/or opportunistic attitude, understanding that deprivation leads to emotional deprivation and the masculine name would awaken the female adolescents' interest. Other issues, such as going to beauty salons, using nail polish, and wearing different underwear, were also discussed during the focus group period.

Understanding the resistance of some professionals, the teenagers began to use the telephone contact space, which takes place weekly, to talk to their families and provide information regarding the process they were going through. For Gustavo's family, it was no surprise, as he had already been using his social name before being deprived of his liberty. Furthermore, they had already discussed the hormone therapy process and mastectomy, and his mother brought up the information that Gustavo had recognized himself as a boy since he was five years old. Fabrício's family understood and welcomed his gender identity but found it strange when he expressed an interest in using his social name. According to Fabrício and his mother, she was the one to choose his name, but she never imagined that he would use it. During the socio-educational measure, the family gradually became conscious of and respected the change, so much that his grandmother started calling him by his male name during a family visit. Kléber has a different experience with gender identification, as he has a transgender brother with whom he has a good emotional bond. Even so, the mother resists respecting this recognition and name change process. This attitude created several internal conflicts and in the relationship between Kléber and his mother. Julia, in turn, besides making her sexual orientation public to her family, also changed her look and adopted a short haircut. The approach with Julia's family was not easy, and there were countless issues until they gradually respected her and adapted to her new appearance.

During the meetings about relationships, family, and prejudice, the teenagers said that in this context they suffer less prejudice than at home or on the streets and they can express who they are. Institutionally, the focus group brought significant advances. These could be seen concretely when the socioeducational institution began to use the social name in a routine and natural way, including in official documents. During the welcome meeting, teenagers are asked how they want to be called. The use of different underwear has become part of the routine, and the use of the beauty parlor and self-care are no longer the subject of questions or inappropriate speech. Families are welcomed, guided, and, when necessary, referred to receive more qualified care.

3. Analysis

To analyze the information obtained from the focus group, we will use an intersectional bias based on the perspective of Patrícia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge

(2020), that is, the understanding that power relations in a given period of society that involve socially manifested identities «are not manifested as distinct and mutually exclusive entities» (p. 17). Therefore, racial, gender, class, and sexual orientation identities, among many others, influence each other in determining the power relations that permeate the people involved in them.

When adolescents arrive at CENSE, they are asked about their family composition, with whom and where they live, their educational background, work experiences, health-related issues, criminal acts, and involvement in illicit activities. In this sense, Gustavo identified himself as a trans, heterosexual, white man who had the support of his mother, a cis and lesbian woman. On many occasions, Gustavo was his brother and mother's financial and emotional support. As the first openly transgender teenager in the female socio-educational unit, in the first meetings of the focus group, Gustavo showed leadership, as if there was a rivalry with the other teenagers who, until then, understood themselves as masculine lesbian women. Fabrício and Kléber, at the end of the focus group, identified themselves as trans, heterosexual, and pardo men. It is worth noting that both were unaware that, according to the Brazilian population census carried out by the IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), the pardo and black populations are added together to constitute the black portion of the Brazilian population. In this way, both Fabrício and Kléber began to identify themselves as black. Kléber's personality, since the first meetings of the focus group, was expansive; the teenager used to be very participative and always brought up several questions, which remained latent for a long time. Kléber followed his brother's transition process, a trans man who went through all the changes with little family support.

To make matters worse, during his development, Kléber experienced several acts of physical and emotional violence, some of which were within his own family. Fabrício seemed to have Kléber as a reference, remaining quieter and limiting his participation to statements in agreement with Kléber's statements. Fabrício did not report family members' rejection or oppression. He was part of a family permeated by relationships of violence and vulnerability. The reference figure was concentrated on the matriarch who, even in the face of all social vulnerability, sought to welcome and care for the members of this family nucleus. Julia participated in a few moments of the focus group but identified as a white, masculine, lesbian cisgender woman. Similarly to what happened with Fabrício and Kléber, Julia also had Gustavo as a reference; therefore, she also had a more introverted posture that was limited to agreeing with Gustavo. The identification process for Julia was challenging: the first step was cutting her hair and then coming out to the family that raised her and who had strong prejudices regarding sexuality.

Initially, there was concern about the clear separation between the teenagers who made up the focus group, who were divided into two pairs: one formed by Fabrício and Kléber and the other by Gustavo and Julia. Kléber and Gustavo, as the dominant personalities, used to have friction between them, especially in their first meetings. However, as the discussions about masculinity advanced, we observed a change in the group's dynamics, and in the final moments, we noticed a relationship of partnership and empathy happening between the adolescents, who began to notice that their individual achievements related to their gender identity and sexual orientation within CENSE were also collective achievements.

Final considerations

During the development of the focus group activities, significant changes were observed in CENSE, the adolescents, and their families; gender diversity and sexual

orientation became part of the agenda of the various socioeducational sectors and the dialogues between adolescents and their families. The importance of a space of acceptance, speech, and listening that fosters knowledge and is a tool for inclusion, transformation, and a provider of citizenship became evident. Upon completing the group, we identified that the teenagers felt more self-confident and empowered by the knowledge and the opportunity offered by that space of visibility. Their families, in turn, became more receptive. The change in the relationship between these teenagers and their families was visible, with sexuality, support networks, and legal matters often being discussed during meetings. The construction of the possibility of expression and respect for the singularities of each adolescent were the most important markers of the focus group carried out at CENSE.

We could also interpret that Gustavo and Fabrício's family relationships, being more liberal, facilitated the two teenagers' perception of recognizing themselves, from the beginning, as transgender men. Although Kléber's older brother was a transgender, he seemed not to realize that this was also a possibility for him. His mother's refusal – a cis, heterosexual, and pardo woman – to initially respect him as a transgender man makes more explicit the delay the teenager took in understanding himself as such, as if Kléber knew he would not be respected. Julia also began to question her gender identity during the meetings, at times asking the others to call her Mauro. However, as her time in the group was short, upon leaving the socioeducational unit, the teenager chose to maintain her initial gender identity, that is, a cisgender lesbian woman. It is worth highlighting that since the focus group was held, the use of the social name has been respected. Furthermore, the legal process of gender rectification and alteration of Gustavo's documentation began while he was still serving the socioeducational measure, something unprecedented at a national level and which is in line with the provisions of the PNAS, encouraging adolescents' autonomy and protagonism as well as the right to the full exercise of their sexuality.

In conclusion, the focus group proved to be an essential space for promoting the acceptance and visibility of gender identities and sexual orientations of adolescents in socio-educational measures. The positive impact observed on family relationships and the self-esteem of the young participants reflects the importance of approaches that value dialogue, respect and inclusion. Gustavo's pioneering spirit in the recognition and respect for his social name and in the beginning of the process of gender rectification reinforces the relevance of practices that ensure the full exercise of rights and the construction of a more egalitarian future for these adolescents. Thus, the experience at CENSE shows how the integration of discussions on sexual and gender diversity can promote structural changes and citizenship.

Notes

¹ Because we defend a non-sexist education, besides using the feminine and masculine gender to refer to people in general, the first time an author is cited, we transcribe their full name to identify the gender and, consequently, to provide greater visibility to researchers and scholars.

² The marriage was too expensive and bureaucratic, and had to be preceded by a baptismal certificate and other parish records proving that the groom and bride were Catholic and had not been married before, in addition to paying the costs of the process, making it difficult for the poor white population (Oliveira, 2020).

³ By force of the Imperial Law of October 20, 1823, Portuguese legislation (Philippine Ordinances), which, based on canon law, only accepted as legitimate a marriage celebrated with all religious formalities. Only after the Proclamation of the Republic, through Decree n. 181, of January 24, 1890, was civil marriage regulated (Marcello Espinosa, 2014, p. 5).

⁴ Homosexual relationships between cisgender women.

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