



Masculinity and football: tensions between homophobia and violence against women

Masculinidade e futebol: tensões entre homofobia e violência contra as mulheres

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RESUMO

Este artigo analisa os modos como os adolescentes matriculados em uma escola situada em uma região de alto índice de violência contra as mulheres manifestam-se frente ao contexto de homofobia no futebol. Metodologicamente foram utilizadas as técnicas de grupo focal e entrevista semiestruturada com sete alunos do sexo masculino dos anos finais de uma escola no Município localizada em uma região de alta incidência de denúncias de violência vivida por mulheres. Ao pautar as anedotas homofóbicas do futebol brasileiro como disparadores da discussão do grupo focal, foi possível perceber que através do silêncio e dos semblantes de deboche se constituíam indicativos de homofobia nas dinâmicas de masculinidade daquele grupo. Por intermédio do diálogo sobre as manifestações dos torcedores dos clubes de futebol Grêmio e do Internacional, ficam visíveis atitudes preconceituosas dos jovens que estavam presentes,



principalmente quando a homossexualidade era colocada em pauta. Além disso, foi possível perceber, a partir das declarações desses adolescentes, que manifestações homofóbicas estão também relacionadas às práticas esportivas na escola. Segundo os colaboradores da pesquisa, o ódio e o repúdio foram direcionados aos indivíduos cuja expressão de gênero se distancia das masculinidades heterocentradas, evidenciando que a homofobia está presente no dia a dia daquela escola. Para proteger a própria honra dentro do espectro da heteronormatividade, aqueles adolescentes acionam o deboche, a zombaria e a violência como recursos. Por meio de recursos como o deboche, a zombaria e a violência, aqueles adolescentes se inscrevem numa dinâmica de masculinidade que tende a regular as condutas de outros rapazes, bem como proteger a própria honra masculina nos espectros da heteronormatividade.

Palavras-chave: masculinidade, homofobia, violência de gênero, violência contra mulheres.

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the ways in which adolescents enrolled in a school located in a region with a high rate of violence against women manifest themselves in the context of homophobia in soccer. Methodologically, the techniques used were focus groups and semi-structured interviews with seven male students in the final years of a school in the municipality located in a region with a high incidence of reports of violence experienced by women. By using homophobic anecdotes from Brazilian soccer as triggers for the focus group discussion, it was possible to see that silence and looks of debauchery were indicative of homophobia in the dynamics of masculinity in that group. Through the dialog about the manifestations of the fans of the Gremio and Internacional soccer clubs, the prejudiced attitudes of the young people who were present became visible, especially when homosexuality was put on the agenda. In addition, it was possible to see from the statements made by these teenagers that homophobic manifestations are also related to sports practices at school. According to the research collaborators, hatred and repudiation were directed at individuals whose gender expression distanced themselves from heterocentric masculinities, showing that homophobia is present in the school's daily life. In order to protect their own honor within the spectrum of heteronormativity, these adolescents use debauchery, mockery and violence as resources. Through resources such as debauchery, mockery and violence, these adolescents inscribe themselves in a dynamic of masculinity that tends to regulate the conduct of other boys, as well as protecting their own masculine honor within the spectrum of heteronormativity.

Keywords: masculinity, homophobia, gender violence, violence against women.

1 INTRODUCTION

At 4pm on 19 April 2017, a 15-year-old boy was found unconscious in front of a school. Next to the teenager's body, which showed signs of aggression, was a sign that read: "I'm gay". Coincidence or not, the attack, which puts homophobia on the agenda, took place in one of the areas with the highest number of complaints/crimes experienced by women in the city. The same school where the student was found unconscious later became our partner in a study that maps



and analyses gender relations in areas with a high incidence of reports of "domestic and family" violence¹. What happened on 19 April 2017, however, continued to strike us as a "clue" suggesting that, in addition to the violence experienced by women, homophobic violence could be a hallmark of the gender relations established in that community.

If we take the argument that identities are produced in the relationship with difference (Hall, 2006), we can assume that desirable masculinities are constructed in the relationship with the other, with the different, in other words: women and homosexuals among other gender and sexual identities that deviate from the centre². In this sense, it is possible to think that regions with a high rate of violence against women can also be territories marked by manifestations of LGBTphobia. It should be emphasised, however, that this understanding is not taken as an assumption, but as an indication that appeared on the horizon of the investigation, as an exploratory movement of the possibility of taking regions with a high rate of violence against women as a locus for investigating homophobic manifestations³.

As such, this study set out to listen to male adolescents enrolled in a school located in a region with a high rate of "domestic and family violence against women"⁴, seeking to understand how different masculinities establish meanings and relate to homophobia.

As a methodological strategy, we took a set of homophobic scenes to mobilise the production of data, a strategy that is based on the understanding that football is not only a sport, but also a curriculum that forges masculinities (Bandeira & Seffner, 2013), a sport that is produced and is produced in the midst of gender crossings that privilege certain ways of being a man to the detriment of many others (Silva, Dúlius & Sanfelice, 2020). It should also be noted

¹ This text is linked to the research project: Gender violence and school education, funded by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development and produced in partnership between the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul and Feevale University. This research project was approved and validated by the ethics committees of the executing universities, under number 88110518.2.0000.5348. A version of this text was published under the title "Homofobia e masculinidades na escola: um estudo em uma região de alto índice de denúncias de crimes de "violência doméstica e familiar contra a mulher" (Silva, Kunzler and Pacheco, 2022).

² Throughout this text we will operate with the notions of centre / eccentric proposed by Louro (2013).

³ The concept of homophobia is used in this study in close proximity to the category of heterosexism, understood as a norm that cuts across different instances of social organisation. According to Rios (2007, p. 33) "heterosexism manifests itself in cultural institutions and bureaucratic organisations, such as language and the legal system", producing a system of privileges and prejudices. Homophobia as an effect of the departure from the heterosexist norm is marked by the "restriction, if not the complete and arbitrary suppression of rights and opportunities, whether for legal-formal reasons, by the pure and simple exercise of brute physical force or by virtue of the symbolic effects of social representations". (Rios, 2007, p. 33).

⁴ This terminology is adopted in Law 11.340 of 2006, known as the Maria da Penha Law, which was the initial reference for the construction of the Research Project and the mapping of complaints at the municipality's Specialised Women's Police Station.



that the normative masculinities associated with football find support in different sectors of society that naturalise the occurrence of homophobia (Bandeira & Seffner, 2013), which functions as a type of gender pedagogy that, when manifested, produces the other/dissident as a subject that must be corrected and/or punished.

2 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

Methodologically, this study is based on the production of a set of Kernel Maps⁵, developed to highlight the regions with a high incidence of reports of "domestic and family violence against women" in a given municipality. Using these maps, it was also possible to identify municipal public schools that are located in the vicinity of those regions⁶, a process that indicated to us as the locus of investigation the same school where the assaulted teenager was found unconscious.

Data on students' attitudes towards scenes of homophobia was produced using two strategies: focus groups and semi-structured interviews. The focus group debate was triggered by a sequence of slides prepared in advance by the mediators, the content of which concerned manifestations of homophobia in relation to the Grêmio Foot-Ball Porto Alegrense and Sport Club Internacional teams⁷. The group was made up of seven male students enrolled between the 7th and 9th year of primary school⁸. All of them were involved in the school's athletics team, whose training sessions took place during the school day. The interest in talking to this group of boys was fuelled by two methodological issues: 1) we understood that a conversation based on homophobic scenes could generate some discomfort in the group of students; 2) the presence of two male teachers who were strangers to the boys could cause some kind of inhibition in the data production process. Thus, approaching a group of teenagers who know each other and meet regularly for sports could be a strategy to minimise possible barriers to data production.

⁵ This is a regular grid where each cell has a density value. This value is obtained through a previously determined radius generated around each point on the map, in which the results of the Kernel function are added up to produce the density value for each point. The result is the plotting of a map represented by a colour scale, which reflects the intensity of events in adjacent areas (Beato & Assunção, 2008).

⁶ For more details on the methodology used to produce Kernel Maps, we recommend the article Gender, Women, Crime and Violence (Silva, Meyer & Riegel, 2021).

⁷ The images, texts and comments of the fans have been removed from the social networks. The authorship of the material has been concealed.

⁸ The students' participation in the data production process was authorised by their parents/guardians by means of a Free and Informed Consent Form. In addition, the research process was previously explained to the students, who signed the Consent Form.



The semi-structured interview emerged as a possibility after the focus group. During the course of the research, one of the collaborators repeatedly showed signs of disagreement with what his colleagues were saying, and also seemed to be able to recount many other scenes of homophobia at school. In order to avoid possible conflicts between the participants and to respect this student's restrained manner in the focus group, we felt that the conversation should take place without the other boys present.

The debate from the focus group, as well as the semi-structured interview, were recorded and later transcribed and analysed based on the assumptions of the thematic analysis proposed by Minayo (2001).

3 SILENCE AND DEBAUCHERY WHEN HOMOSEXUALITY IS ON THE AGENDA

During the process of producing the data, the students who took part in the focus group generally signalled that they were unaware of many of the homophobic jokes that circulate in the context of football in Rio Grande do Sul. While for the teenagers, mentions of "armchair 36"⁹; "coligay"¹⁰; "'So-and-so' and the tennis instructor"¹¹ were new, there was a certain understanding of how these anecdotes were related to homosexuality as an offence.

In this sense, when we introduced "coligay", Grêmio's organised supporters' club, which began in the 1970s, student Cezar commented: "is that the name of a supporters' club?" Similarly, when we asked about "armchair 36", Cezar replied with a questioning tone: "something that happened in armchair 36, like a gay man in armchair 36?".

We also talked about "Fulano", a former Internacional player, colourado idol and presenter for an important media group. Although the students recognised who he was, they couldn't say anything about the homophobic outbursts directed at him. At another point, these teenagers mentioned that football is a sport of strength, and that the possible link between "So-and-so" and homosexuality would be related to tennis, as it is a practice that doesn't require so much "physical vigour".

⁹ The "armchair 36" case allegedly took place in 2004 and was led by two former athletes who were caught engaging in affective-sexual behaviour on the then Grêmio delegation bus, in armchair 36.

¹⁰ Considered to be Brazil's first organised gay fan club, its emergence dates back to the 1970s. For a history of Coligay, we recommend the PhD thesis entitled "From "they're queers, but they're ours" to "diversity of joy" by Luiza Aguiar dos Anjos (2018). Available at: <https://lume.ufrgs.br/handle/10183/184514> Accessed on 27/03/2021.

¹¹ The episode in question revolves around the alleged affective/sexual involvement of a former Internacional athlete with his tennis instructor. The affair, which gained national repercussions in 1996, was allegedly "discovered" by the player's ex-wife.



In general, the boys showed a certain discomfort throughout the focus group. The sequence of slides that put 'eccentric' sexualities on the agenda seemed to unsettle those students who intertwined their fingers, rubbed their hands together and repeatedly fiddled with the strap of their rucksacks. The restrained laughter was also present, in many cases serving as an "escape valve" for the evident restlessness. Answers with short sentences, nods or monosyllabic "ahem", "yes" and "no" were common, terms used repeatedly throughout the conversation. As a result, 50 minutes of focus groups with seven participants resulted in only six pages of transcripts.

At first, the 'insufficient' responses caused us concern, since we saw dialogue as a privileged strategy for understanding, albeit partially and provisionally, the meanings attributed to male homosexuality in that context. But this concern gradually gave way to an understanding of the dangers that this conversation represented for these adolescents. The 'unspoken', the discomfort, the hunched posture, the restrained laughter, the embarrassed glances exchanged between the group's participants showed that the boys were trying to distance themselves from what was on the agenda. We also realised that our presence accentuated the discomfort. Two white men who presented themselves as researchers coming from the university seemed to require an 'appropriate' type of behaviour, even though they raised the issue of homosexuality.

If, on the one hand, the volume and content of the testimonies indicated that they were insufficient for more extensive analyses, the boys' behaviour became a privileged element of our research, a change in perspective that was only possible thanks to an understanding of the processes of constructing sexuality and its supposed stability.

Understood in this text as a discourse that, by signifying and naming, produces practices and desires, sexuality is constructed in history and culture. It is therefore learnt in the various social instances and its meanings are not fixed, they change throughout life and are crossed by different contexts. In this way, sexuality is understood as an eminently social fact, which goes beyond understandings that try to locate this discourse only in the field of personal and private life. As a "point of connection between the power exercised over the bodies of individuals and the power exercised over the population", sexuality "becomes a strategic element in the processes of regulating the lives of individuals and populations in the societies in which we live" (Meyer & Silva, 2020, p.495). This process that regulates behaviour is marked by the discursive production of sexuality as stable and fixed, the effect of an action that acts to naturalise the sequence of sex, gender and sexuality. According to Meyer and Silva (2020, p.495), it is therefore



"[...] the performative and systematic production of the original relationship between the body and sex as products of nature, a basis on which (binary) gender and sexuality (and their derivatives) are situated and sustained".

From this process, heterosexuality emerges as the natural exercise of sexuality and, based on this normative and central behaviour, the other possibilities for manifesting desires and pleasures are classified and hierarchically positioned as eccentric (Louro, 2013). While eccentric sexualities are capable of destabilising the supposed unity, universality and fixity produced by the sex-gender-sexuality system, they become targets of abuse and exclusion. Thus, homosexuality is seen as a threat and heterosexuality as a rule of conduct, authorising heterosexuals to deny the differences in the society in which we live (Sales & Paraíso, 2013).

In effect, the scenes narrated in the cases of "Armchair 36", "the tennis instructor" and "Coligay" seemed to call into question the fixity and stability of heterosexuality as a sexual orientation defined as natural. For our research collaborators, talking at length about sexual "disobedience", expressing opinions and narrating understandings about the relationship between football and homosexuality would represent a certain danger, it could jeopardise their own sexuality.

The discomfort apparent in the gestures, the restrained laughter and the bashful answers worked as resources used to fulfil very particular conditions: to respond to the demands of two researchers well connected with the school and not to compromise themselves in front of their colleagues in the ongoing discussion.

Despite the boys' obvious discomfort, it was possible to see them reacting to the context that called for discussing homosexuality with a certain decorum. Despite the absence of words, the 'laughter', the semblance of debauchery and the silence seemed to denounce an understanding of homosexual relationships that they didn't want to discuss. Some of the participants' expressions of derision seemed to intensify when homophobic scenes taken from social networks were narrated amid mockery and derision.

Sandro and Marcos couldn't hold back their laughter when the phrase "#coligay, kneading the gazelles" was projected onto the whiteboard. Regarding another post on social media ["let's see the strawberry excuse"], student Sandro, apparently taken by the comment, replied: "it's a slang they use for international because of the colour". At that moment, Marcos, another student, discreetly pulled up his shirt to cover his mouth, trying to hide his laughter.



Following the focus group, we showed images of the organised supporters of Internacional. In the photograph, the fans were holding a banner mentioning "coligay". In response to this image, César replied: "Oh, that was for fun". In the dialogue, we asked, "but who?" Cezar said: "Grêmio and the Grêmio fans".

In another article selected for discussion, the homophobic insinuations were expressed like this: "the Grêmio fans were longing to win a gauchão". In this respect, a Gremio internet user commented: "those who win the Libertadores don't even remember winning the Gauchinho, leave it to the counterfeiters who don't win anything outside RS".

We then asked: "Why the counterfeit gifts?" Silence in the room. After a few seconds, Sandro replied: "It's a hint to Inter, because those who like gauchão are prendas". And then he laughed. Marcos also followed his colleague laughing. We asked them "if these demonstrations were also related here at school?" Again, silence.

Debauchery, irony, malicious laughter and silence emerged as possible manifestations of homophobia in that context. Laughter and mockery, even if in a measured way, were almost a code of masculinity shared by the students present. If it's possible to conceive that the whole conversation generated discomfort, laughter and mockery were almost a pact, functioning as a code that set them apart and kept them safe from being mistaken for the other, the different, the players whose sexuality was under suspicion. Clearly conceived as transgressive, inappropriate and vexatious, homosexuality was therefore subject to mockery, exposure and abuse.

Thus, the boys in that focus group seemed to grant themselves the prerogatives of complicit masculinities, the condition of subjects who do not meet the predicates of hegemonic masculinities¹², but who, because they are appropriate and loyal to their senses and meanings, are invested with the right to convey and perform them (Camargo, 2014). Through this condition, that group of students is invested with the position of "mockers" who make fun of those who go against what is considered proper behaviour (Gastaldo, 2010). In this process, they made use of mockery and derision as linguistic resources intended to disqualify homosexuality through laughter.

The 'mockery' put into operation triggered more than the supposed innocent laughter, it highlighted the boundaries of what is appropriate and inappropriate for men. It thus reified and

¹² It should be emphasised that these adolescents were crossed by various markers of difference, such as class, race and generation.



repeated, through mockery, what would be convenient and 'essential' for respectable masculinities, directing sexual/affective desires and practices towards the opposite sex.

4 HOMOPHOBIA AND MASCULINITIES: MANIFESTATIONS IN THE SCHOOLYARD

Initially, the organisation of the focus group envisaged two moments: the first, as mentioned, made use of homophobic scenes widely known by the Gremio and Internacional football fans; then we would extend the debate to everyday school life. As an initial triggering question for this second moment, we asked if any of the boys played football and if they had ever seen or suffered any kind of prejudice during a match. Maicon replied: "We had that here at school... sometimes we'd concede a goal and the fans would start getting down on the goalkeeper". In an attempt to legitimise the offence, Marcos immediately comments: "football uses more physical strength". Then the same student says in mocking tones: "I've also seen someone called 'little woman' on the football pitch near my school because they were afraid to go for the ball".

To continue the dialogue, we asked Marcos if something similar had happened at school. Before he could organise himself to answer, Maicon, clearly uncomfortable with his colleagues' answers, jumped in and said: "Yes, it happened at school, yes. There were fans calling the players gay [...] it was in the inter-series, but it also happens in the playground. They called them 'bixinha' and other words".

Maicon's stance and his clear disagreement with the testimony of the other participants in the group gradually generated a climate of tension that exposed the other colleagues in the athletics team. The homophobic taunts in the school seemed to affect the student who, by denouncing them, could jeopardise himself in front of the others and become the target of retaliation. Even though a situation of disagreement and conflict could provide other elements for understanding the meanings produced about homophobia in that school, we decided to end the focus group.

Convinced that student Maicon would have more to say, we invited him to an individual interview the following week. Thus, in an atmosphere of complicity and far from the judgement of his classmates, this student who was considered undisciplined and sometimes violent by his



teachers, told us about a series of manifestations of prejudice and conflicts arising from homophobia in the school environment.

As a strategy, we began the interview with reports from the same newspaper article that opened this text. We talked about the student found unconscious who had been beaten up and identified as gay. In response, Maicon signalled: "Yes, they wrote it down, it was right here in front of the school". He went on to point out that mentions of homophobia were not limited to that case, nor were they just said, but marked in the school itself. According to him: "They write [things like] stag on the classroom table and sign it in the name of the class [...] as I've already mentioned, they write [homophobic insults] on the walls, and on the doors of the toilets".

Maicon then recounts a case that happened on the court during a game between teams organised by the students themselves.

[...] my team played, we were playing and the crowd was cheering, like if my team scored a goal or any other team scored a goal they were called 'bixinha', 'franguinho', these things, the people who were playing on the line who lost the ball or missed a goal were called 'bixinha' and other things [...] for me it's prejudice in football (STUDENT MAICON, 09.05.2018).

According to Maicon, his classmates would have been reprimanded by the teachers, but without any major effect on the homophobic outbursts that took place in the stands. As a result, Maicon concludes by saying that the students who were the targets of homophobia "retaliated by getting aggressive and [that] it was ugly" (MAICON, 09.05.2018).

According to the student's testimony, acts of violence also happened at other times: "at recess, in classrooms, at the entrance and exit of the school".

"[...] at recess there's a schedule where every day one class plays football on the pitch, then they start making fun of each other and start fighting. In the classroom they make fun of me a lot, [calling me] 'softy', 'little faggot', both to me and to the others" (MAICON, 09.05.2018).

As Maicon sees it, while some students listen to homophobic taunts in silence, others respond with aggression. In his words, "there's not a day that goes by that I don't hear someone swearing like that."

With us, in the process of producing the data, Maicon proved to be a shrewd boy, who knew very well what we were asking and, as a subject who recognised himself as a target of homophobia, put himself in the place of denouncing it. As a research collaborator, Maicon



behaved in a measured and polite manner, although he was described by his teachers as a student with an explosive temper. Without laughing, without trivialising and without fear of having his sexuality put under suspicion, Maicon told us seriously what he saw and experienced about homophobia in that school.

Clearly taller than his peers of the same age, Maicon was apparently strong. As well as being involved in athletics, he was also adept at other sports, such as Futsal and Football. According to the PE teacher, the boy was strong and adopted an aggressive style of play, which required attention to avoid possible problems during lessons.

At the same time as being robust, tall, aggressive and adept at heterocentred sporting practices, Maicon displayed a set of characteristics that distanced him from normative models of masculinity, attributes that called his sexuality into question.

For us researchers, Maicon became a collaborator capable of helping us think about the complexities of gender relations and homophobia in that school. At the same time as he was called "soft" or "veadinho", he understood and dialogued with the codes of normative masculinities by generating fear in his classmates through his aggressiveness in football matches and his responses to the insults directed at them.

In this way, Maicon's statements gradually gave us indications that homophobia in that school was used for different reasons and to different effects. If, on the one hand, the adjectives "bixinha", "veadinho" and "amolecido" had the clear intention of highlighting suspicions about his sexual orientation, on the other hand, these terms also had the purpose of highlighting the lack of humanity in sports practice and in behaviour considered unbecoming of boys¹³.

It is worth noting, however, that homophobia serves to highlight the inadequacy of male behaviour to the norms designated, established and systematised by heteronormativity. Constituted and constitutive of the naturalisation of the sex-gender-sexuality sequence, heteronormativity designates the zones of normality in which behaviour should be positioned (Sales & Paraíso, 2013; Petry & Meyer, 2011). Homophobia, therefore, based on the principles of comparison, acts by highlighting differences and producing certain types of masculinity as adequate and others as laughable, disqualified and liable to be embarrassed and violated.

¹³ Examples of this include the practice of snitching on classmates and asking teachers/management to intervene to resolve conflicts.



While the homophobic slur is uttered in order to condemn and disapprove of the inappropriate behaviour of some boys at the school, the prerogatives of those who fulfil the expectations of a heterocentric masculinity are reaffirmed. Thus, the same process that aimed to disqualify the other is constituted as an action that reiterates the centrality and, therefore, the privileges of normative masculinities.

Taken as a relational practice, this game that exposes the inadequate and reiterates the norm reveals other mechanisms associated with it. For example, the way in which we react to homophobic offences seems to constitute another type of examination for masculinities that are under suspicion. So, if being called a "little woman" in that context was an undeniable offence for those boys, the way they dealt with that offence could be characterised as a procedure capable of distinguishing masculinities that deviate from those that are closer to the centre. The way they reacted to the offence, therefore, seems to be a type of demonstration capable of restoring the honour of 'legitimate' masculine conduct or reiterating the infamy of being associated with characteristics considered feminine and/or those of gay men.

It is at this point of connection between the honour tarnished by homophobic adjectives and the possibility of fighting back with honour and fearlessness that fights seem to become something expected, legitimised and capable of restoring male dignity. For those boys who, like Maicon, were targets of homophobia on a daily basis at school, their explosive temperament and predisposition to confrontation makes us wonder about the conditions of existence of some eccentric masculinities in that context. Perhaps, for these individuals, aggression is a resource against homophobic violence, a mechanism that helps them avoid being attacked and found unconscious in front of the school they attend. However, we only have a few indications of this and further studies need to be carried out with this community.

Finally, in a context where homophobia is triggered by different motivations and produces different effects, we were intrigued by the use of physical confrontation and threats of fights as a means of restoring honour and insouciance against possible misconduct. Perhaps here we have a point of connection between the gender relations that produce the violence experienced by women and the homophobic insults/aggressions manifested in the vicinity of that school. This is yet another research question that calls for further investigations with that school and that community.



5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

By listening to male adolescents enrolled in a school located in a region with a high rate of "domestic and family violence against women", this study allowed us to think about some of the meanings attributed to homosexuality, as well as some of its effects on the relational dynamics between different masculinities in that school.

Mediated by homophobic scenes, the clear discomfort of the participants led to apprehension, silence, laughter and measured debauchery, mechanisms of homophobia itself that revealed the meanings shared by the boys. Mockery and offence, therefore, as well as disqualifying homosexuality, functioned as actions capable of reiterating what is normal, natural and central to men.

Amid the silence, monosyllables and short sentences, we heard a voice and a dissonant stance. By giving space to a student who clearly perceived homophobia in other ways, we were able to realise how these taunts and name-calling guided relations between different masculinities. Present at various times in the school, homophobia was described in jokes on the playground, in the classroom and at the beginning and end of lessons as a mechanism for regulating male behaviour. In this process, physical confrontations between boys, aggression and the display of strength and virility seemed to function as builders of honour and, at the same time, as a way of guaranteeing the survival of those who strayed from normative gender and sexual identities.

Physical confrontations and threats of fights mediated by homophobia seem to constitute a grammar, an action that communicates codes of masculinity, a practice read and understood by the boys at that school as a manifestation of hombrity and virility. This still initial interpretation suggests to us that male honour is the axis from which violence can/should be triggered, a reading that requires further investigative efforts.

As we move towards the end of this chapter, we feel it is important to refer once again to the interview with student Maicon. Almost at the end of his testimony, the young man uttered one of the phrases that would have the greatest impact on the data produced in the research. In his words: "For me, I think there is more prejudice at school than on the street." Once again, Maicon, in his ability to surprise and destabilise us, calls into question something that we initially weren't interested in thinking about. As he said, our research focus centred on the students and the meanings established by/among masculinities and their relationship with homophobia. The



school would only be the place where these relationships would manifest themselves. Maicon, however, in expressing his perception that there is more hostility in the school than in the street, leads us to infer a homophobic curriculum that is underpinned by the neglect, silencing and reinforcement of homophobia on the part of teachers, staff and the school community. To a large extent, this possible inference is also our responsibility - the authors of this text. By informing you that this school is located in one of the regions with the highest incidence of reported violence by women, by arguing that the debauchery, silences and homophobic jokes reify normative masculinities in that school, by not mentioning the efforts made by those teachers and other staff in the face of the challenges and adversities experienced in that community, we contribute to the understanding of a homophobic curriculum that is connected to the pedagogical organisation of that school.

However, far from wanting to delegitimise the perceptions of our research collaborator, as researchers we need to problematise their effects. More than that, we need to problematise the effects of such a statement in this particular text. Thus, it is worth emphasising that it would be problematic to say the least to suggest that the school has to some extent colluded with homophobic practices, especially since, as we have said, this was not our focus of investigation and we therefore have no empirical material that would lead us to this understanding. Another aspect worth pointing out concerns the effects of that school and the work of that group of teachers on the life of that community. Built in 2004 in the midst of a resettlement of families from risk areas and irregular occupations in various neighbourhoods of the city, the school was built close to the border between two municipalities, in the midst of a community that didn't recognise itself in that space and didn't want to be there. The people who were resettled had lived for years with precarious basic urban structures such as sewage and water systems, and were constantly portrayed by the media as an impoverished, violent and drug-addicted population. In that context, the school became a leisure centre, a refuge for many children who lived in extreme poverty. Other studies carried out by our group have shown us how this school has invested in welcoming and protecting its students and in pedagogical practices that emphasise citizenship and human rights. Finally, we would like to stress that Maicon's perception is a possible one, but that it should not, under any circumstances, reduce or disqualify years of work by a group of teachers, much less make invisible the effects of that school's pedagogical actions in that



community. From all this, it is worth reflecting with Silveira "the school can do a lot, but it can't do everything".



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