Pedro's circuits in the City of São Paulo: religiosity and homelessness[1]

Pedro e seus circuitos na cidade de São Paulo: religiosidade e situação de rua

Pedro y sus circuitos por la Ciudad de São Paulo: religiosidad y situación de calle

Debora Galvani[Ii]; Denise Dias Barros[II]

[I]Occupational therapist and researcher; Researcher at the Metuia Project and occupational therapist of the Occupational Therapy Course – the Department of Physiotherapy**,** Phonoaudiology and Occupational Therapy – School of Medicine – (University of São Paulo, USP). Taking a PhD Course at the Psychology Institute at USP. Address: Rua Cipotânea, 51- Cidade Universitária, São Paulo-SP. 05360-000 <degalvani@gmail.com>
[II]Professor and researcher, Occupational Therapy Course - Department of Physiotherapy**,** Phonoaudiology and Occupational Therapy – FMUSP.

RESUMO
Trata-se de estudo de caso, com base na reconstituição da história de vida de um adulto em situação de rua na cidade de São Paulo. A pesquisa etnográfica e a história de vida compuseram as estratégias para coleta de dados, realizada durante doze meses. Na análise, buscou-se desvendar singularidades no processo de construção de identidades capazes de redimensionar e conferir historicidade à experiência da situação de rua. Na discussão da trajetória de Pedro, a análise da religiosidade é fundamental para releitura da sua história de rua. Aliada a outras redes, mostrou possibilidades distintas de construção de redes de interdependência, caracterizando movimentos de ressignificação e de reconstrução de sentidos, afastando-se dos processos de desfiliação. A identidade socialmente negativa vinculada à situação de rua pode ser descentrada, adquirindo contornos e dinâmicas mais elucidativos. No entanto, ocorrem a necessidade e o desafio de construção de alternativas coletivas à precariedade da experiência de rua.
Palavras-chave: história de vida, desfiliação, redes sociais, adultos em situação de rua.

ABSTRACT
This is a case study based on the reconstitution of the life history of a homeless adult person in São Paulo City. Ethnographic research and life history were the strategies in a 12-month long data

---

collecting. Analysis tried to reveal, in the process of identity construction, singularities able to re-signify and confer historicity to homeless experience. To discuss Pedro's path, religiosity analysis is a crucial element for re-assessing his homelessness history. Allied to other nets, religiosity showed different possibilities of constructing interdependence nets, thus characterizing re-signifying and sense reconstructing movements, and eluding disaffiliation processes so frequent in the case of people that experience rupture conducting to homelessness. In those processes, the socially negative identity linked to homelessness can be dislodged and widened, acquiring more elucidative delineations and dynamics. Nonetheless, there is always the need and the challenge of constructing collective alternatives to precarious homelessness experience.

Keywords: life history; disaffiliation; social nets; homeless adult people

RESUMEN

En este estudio de caso de una persona adulta en situación de calle en la Ciudad de São Paulo, la pesquisa etnográfica y la historia de vida compusieran las estrategias para coleta de datos, llevada por doce meses. En el análisis, se buscó revelar singularidades en el proceso de construcción de identidades aptas a re-significar y conferir historicidad a la experiencia de situación de calle. El análisis de la religiosidad es fundamental para la relectura de la historia de calle de Pedro, la cual, en alianza con otras redes, mostró distintas posibilidades de construcción de redes de interdependencia, caracterizando movimientos de resignificación y de reconstrucción de sentidos, alejándose de los procesos de desafiliación. La identidad socialmente negativa vinculada a la situación de calle puede ser descentrada y ampliada, ganando contornos y dinámicas esclarecedores, empero ocurre la necesidad y el desafío de construir alternativas colectivas a la situación de calle.

Palabras clave: historia de vida; desafiliación; redes sociales; personas adultas en situación de calle

INTRODUCTION

Based on a life history reconstitution, this is a case study about the life of an adult man who lives on the streets in the City of São Paulo, Brazil. The central focus of this study is on the unique strategies to create and expand his social, religious, cultural, economic and/or affective support networks based on the situation in which the streets are the organizer of social relationships, housing and work. This work analyzes the formation of belonging groups and collective identities, as well as the alternatives created to build support and establish new possibilities of life.

It is understood that the homeless population, as a social group (Oliven, 1995), moves between areas of vulnerability and disaffiliation as defined by Castel (1994, 1998), because it is often subject to the lack of jobs or to temporary jobs and life courses marked by breaks. We emphasize, however, that

> [...] living on the street does not necessarily mean living without money, but above all, it means to acquire the essentials for survival without going through the market. It does not mean the elimination of work, but the abandonment of the constant and daily commitment to jobs, which is replaced by other ways of working. It also does not mean living alone, but to establish new links with different peers. Thus, living on the street is also transiting through the possibility of raising income as a strategy to add value to one's own life. (Ghirardi et al., 2005, p. 603).

What seems more fruitful in Castel's studies (1994, 1998) for this reflection is what is deduced from the close protection concept. Built in the sphere of emotional and familiar ties, in the relationship networks and in culture, the close protection creates fields of support and interpersonal sharing even in the adversity of deterioration of work. For this author, the close protection is constituted by the weaving of sociability and solidarity networks which find in the family and in the culture dimension

two essential records. It is, thus, the nutritious humus to the most miserable population segment, where goods and services, as well as a trade system that keeps or creates social ties and the meaning are shared. Disaffiliation emerges when proximity relationships (interdependence system founded in family, lineage or community), which insert a person in his/her territory in the complicity produced by the feeling of belonging, become unable to guarantee life existence and to ensure protection.

There is great heterogeneity of experiences among people living on the streets (Rosa, 2005; Galvani et al, 2006). During the work developed since 2001 in the context of the Metuia Project (Barros Lopes and Galheigo, 2002) with homeless adults living on the street and research linked to the master's degree dissertation[2], groups and individuals have been identified that seemed to provide reference for the discussion of endogenous / internal (and self-organization) forms of overcoming, even if partial or fleeting, of the negative experience of social disqualification and subsequent social tie breaks. Among the life stories approached during the research, it is highlighted in this article the analysis of the place of religiosity and of the relations and friendship networks in the reconstruction of social ties and the feeling of belonging.

Pedro is 43 years old, his parents are from the State of Bahia (BA) and he was born in the State of São Paulo (SP). He is used to wearing a bus driver's uniform and telling stories about his life, expecting that his interlocutors learn from his 'mistakes', as he says, and with the religious teachings he transmits when he has the opportunity. He introduces himself as an ex-homeless person and ex-beggar that could, through his religiosity together with the support of the social services network and other exchange and interpersonal relation networks, return to his family and work, abstaining from drinking alcohol and using drugs.

In the discussion of Pedro's history, the analysis of religiosity is fundamental to reread his life experience on the streets of the City of Sao Paulo. The participation in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church (SDA), the insertion into work as a heavy vehicles driver, the return his family, the participation in the dynamics of Praça da Sé[3], the use of the social care services (as shelters, "bocas de rango"[4], and service and coexistence centers) composed a set of interpersonal relationships to rebuild a sense of belonging, reframe the negative experience and reverse the disruption process of networks and the drift of senses.

We have made use of Magnani's work (1996, 2002, 2003) about the cities and the belonging networks of urban social groups. By articulating a reflection on the city and ethnography, the researcher proposes, as opposed to what he called a "look from outside and from far away", the "look from near and from within," which implies to start from the social actors,

> […] not as isolated elements, dispersed and subjected to an inevitable massification, but which, through the vernacular use of the city (of the space, equipment, institutions) in the spheres of work, religiosity, leisure, culture, and survival strategies, are the responsible for its daily dynamics (Magnani, 2002, p. 18).

Thus, in order to understand the dynamics inherent to urban societies, this researcher has created the concept of "piece" to explain a particular type of social relations in a space that becomes a reference for certain groups belonging to a network of relationships, regardless of territorial boundaries. In this study, it was possible to recognize the "pieces" of belonging in Pedro's social networks, and from these, the paths (flows through the city) and circuits (space and equipment networks related to a particular practice or service offering).

It is worth noting that this study is located at the interface between individual and society. In seeking to overcome a historically constructed division between individual and society, Elias (1994)

---

[2] See Galvani (2008). The Metuia Project is an interinstitutional center of studies, formation and actions for the citizenship of children, youngsters and adults in the process of disruption of social support networks; it is linked to the Occupational Therapy Course at USP.

[3] Praça da Sé (Sé Square) is the ground zero of the City of São Paulo, where the Catholic Cathedral of São Paulo is located.

[4] Term used, especially by adults on the streets, to name services and spaces which offer free meals.

coined the concept of interdependence among individuals. The author showed that the ideas of individual and society are closely articulated by a broad interactive process; there would be a relationship of interdependence among individuals, as in the image of a fabrics network, which can only be understood in terms of how the threads are connected and of their mutual relationship.

The interdependence can be expressed, thus, in the different forms of belonging, as religious and artistic circuits, social movements and family rearrangements, among other examples. The notion of identity construction proposed by Castells (2002, p. 18) – which is based on "the construction of meaning from cultural attributes or yet a set of interrelated attributes, which prevails on other sources of meaning" – contributes to the analysis of what may be the practical expression of the notion of interdependence.

The homeless people are understood as a social group composed by people who use public spaces as housing spaces and in order to perform daily activities (such as sleeping, eating and working), they spend the night in shelters because they do not have independent housing and they make use of the services of social care network, as temporary housing projects and service centers (Balcony, 2003). Since 1991, the Fundação Instituto de Pesquisas Econômicas – Fipe (Economic Research Institute Foundation) and the Department of Social Welfare have carried out researches in the City of São Paulo, aiming to characterize this social group. The most recent data (São Paulo, 2003) point to a population of 10,394 homeless people, 6184 living in shelters and 4208 living on the streets. In total, 84% are male, and most of them are from the state of São Paulo.

Method
The ethnographic research focusing on life histories composed the strategies to constitute the basis for the discussion presented herein (Queiroz, 1988; Víctora, Knauth and Hassen, 2000). It is about thinking ethnography in the urban environment, and thus, as suggested by Magnani (1996, 2002, 2003) and Oliven (1995), accepting the challenge posed to the researcher to interpret his/her own culture. According to Magnani (1996), in this kind of work it is necessary to seek to overcome the feeling of proximity, creating some distance to turn the familiar into necessary estrangement.

In ethnographic work, the researcher is faced with the need to produce interpretations of social groups or personal histories. But such groups and people also produce interpretations about who they are and what they need. There is, therefore, a plurality of interpretations that must be considered both during data collection and analysis process. One must be remembered that the clash of interpretations is hindered by the distances between the researcher and the subject: differences of social class, gender, age, culture and values, among others. As emphasized by Clifford (1998), the ethnographic texts are orchestrations of polyphonic exchanges in politically charged situations. Subjectivities produced in these exchanges, often unequal, are part of a field of truth construction. Thus, the term "ethno-graphy" can be translated as "the writing of culture", as suggested by Atkinson (1992).

We start from the understanding of the recognition of the research subject as an interlocutor, because, according to Oliveira (2000), the ethnographic work involves meeting with the "other". This "other" is understood as an interlocutor with whom a cooperative relationship is established, creating, this way, the possibility of a dialogic relationship. For these reasons, in this study, we adopt the term "collaborator" as Meihy (2005), to emphasize the need to build a collaborative relationship between interviewer and interviewee. .

The field research, which was carried out for twelve months in 2006, was developed through interviews (with audio recording), field observation, visits to relevant places suggested by the collaborators, and archival and bibliographical research. It should be emphasized, however, that the first contacts with the adult homeless population occurred due to the university extension activities performed by the Metuia Project in a partnership with the Associação Minha Rua Minha Casa - AMRMC (My Street My Home Association), which started in 2001. It was in this weekly convivial context that the studies with a focus on life histories emerged. The research proposal - approved by the Ethics Committee of the Medical School at USP (protocol 1209/05) - was discussed with the users of that association and some people were invited to collaborate with the study. The invitation

to the collaborators was made to users who could fulfill at least two of the following requirements: to take part of housing program; to participate in political organization (specific social movements), to be part of relationship networks of religious nature, to be part of circuits linked to art and culture; to use social care network services as a complementary resource for organizing their daily lives, to have ways of raising income. In addition to these dimensions, which suggest different forms of social participation, one of the selection criteria was that the collaborator should be living or have lived on the streets for more than two years.

The study was carried out with five collaborators, but here the discussion is on the relationship between religiosity and the networks of close relationships in the reconstruction of meaning and social participation as evidenced by Pedro's history.

As we began the field work, Pedro had relationship networks of religious nature, besides having ways of raising income and using the social care network services as a complementary resource for organizing his daily life. All these were signaling dimensions of the potential for creating social bonds and interpersonal support.

It is worth noting that as part of the method, we favored the collaborator's choices in determining the location of the interviews. Such choices involved interviews at Praça da Sé, for example, and there was a need to deal with the difficulties that were imposed in some situations, as interruptions and noise that damaged the audio recording quality. We have noticed, on the other hand, that certain places were very significant and they seemed to be able to stimulate narratives about experiences lived there, because, at that moment, it was already possible to notice that they represented "his pieces."

There were also visits within his circuits in the city, taking into account the collaborator's suggestions and invitations. This part of the study provided information regarding daily life management and approaches to several collectives, as in the Praça da Sé and in the church. His family home and the AMRMC have equally been included as spaces of observation and interaction with Pedro and his network of relationships.

The interviews were recorded, transcribed and, after transcription, textualized (Meihy, 2005). In the process of translating the oral report into written text it was sought to maintain maximum fidelity to the collaborator's style. The ways of speaking reveal group belonging to one region, one age group, among other things; so, the grammar "mistakes" were kept in some cases.

The analysis was carried out with basis on the reconstruction of the collaborator's life history, in order to show its interdependence networks and to discuss its uniqueness in the process of identity construction capable of redefining senses, feelings of belonging and to provide historicity to the experience on the streets.

From Capão Redondo to Praça da Sé

Pedro hangs out in the center of the City of Sao Paulo, but he has strong ties with the region of Capão Redondo. He lived with his family in this low income neighborhood in the City of São Paulo until he was 30 years old. He left school at 14, after a number of failures, but finished the fourth grade of elementary school, when he started to work as a street market assistant in his neighborhood because he had to contribute to his family income. At the age of 18, he started working as a truck driver, traveling around the city and to other regions in Brazil. His constant journeys resulted in his distance from his family, and frequent fights between his parents eventually made them opt to get separated. Pedro realized that the consumption of alcoholic drinks, which was part of his life since he was a teenager, was becoming excessive and started to hurt his performance at work, and jeopardize his family and friends relationships.

> - I'm 43 years old and I have lived on the streets for about 10 years. Before that, I had always lived with my family. I lived with my family until the day my mother left my father, and then I started to live with my father, and he kicked me out of my house. I was already older, I was about 30 or 33 years old when he kicked me out, because I used to drink too much. [...] Then, I

moved to my sister's. Well, it didn't last ten days, and she kicked me out too. Then I moved to a friend's house, who has already died, and my friend kicked me out too. Then I got to know this place, Praça da Sé. I found what a shelter is, I lived and slept on these square benches, I slept under the bridges. I have been to all shelters!

Without money and with difficulties in family relations, he started to sleep in low cost hotels. He could not get new job opportunities and when his money ended he began to sleep on the streets: there was no one to turn for help; all his relationships were strained. For years, he was away from his family conviviality .

Pedro considered the changes in his relationships with his job as one of the factors that motivated his condition of living on the streets. He evaluated that, about 15 years ago, it was easier to find a job in his area and that he could keep a job, even if he had to change jobs frequently, since he was not able to stay at the same place for a long time due to abuse of alcohol consumption. This life course shows the convergence of a twofold dynamic of vulnerability of social integration: the destruction of bonds and the degradation or absence of jobs, factors that feed the disaffiliation process.

However, it is worth to note that for Pedro the factor that triggered his process to end up living on the streets was giving up his religious practice.

I was born in a Christian home. Then, in my teens, I swerved from Jesus, I left the church, I began to work on Saturdays, I started working at the street market to help in the "pastel"[5] tent. It was there where I started, where I learned to drink alcoholic drinks. I started with some wine, then, when I opened my eyes, I was already drinking "pinga"[6]. And, when I was 18, I already drank a lot of "pinga". Then I became a truck driver. At the age of 18, I got my commercial driver's license, CDL category; at the time everyone was granted the regular driver's license. Then I started to drink, and drink, but I became a professional driver. At 20, I left the street market and started working as a commercial truck driver. That was my story, I used to get a job on a day and lose it on the following one. But those were easy times, weren't they? You would lose a job today and would already be employed on the next day!

His destiny was the center of the City of Sao Paulo, more specifically, Praça da Sé, the destiny of many people who "end up" on the streets. As Magnani (2003) analyzed leisure activities in the center of Sao Paulo, he faced different uses of the urban space, whose meanings are built and rebuilt by social practices. We went there in order to understand some of these practices as well as Pedro's relationship with them, which is restricted to a certain space, visible in the geography the city.

Pedro got to know this space, and the way he made use of it changed over time. The dynamics of the square is complex; it will be described from the perspective of the relations established by Pedro. It was at that square that he met Maciel, a circus artist who performed exhibitions and sold health products. He worked as his security assistant, selling products and collecting donations, and received a financial aid to do that, which would vary according to the amount of money raised. After a few years without work, his knowledge about the square, its dynamics and its characters, including the police officers who work there, provided him with opportunities to raise some income. Besides the imposing cathedral, symbol of the Catholic Church, the square concentrates several preachers from different religious that live together there (not always peacefully) and dispute the passers-by's attention to spread their knowledge and sell their products. The preachers also compete

---

[5] "Pastel" is a typical Brazilian dish that consists of a thin fried pastry envelope stuffed with cheese, ground beef, chicken, shrimp or any other filling. It is usually sold at street markets.

[6] Brazilian run made of sugar cane.

with street artists. Large groups of people around an event, which by themselves attract the curiosity of other people, also call the attention of the passers-by and of the people who live at the square. The square is also a workplace for shoeshine boys, hair dressers and sellers who take part of "feira do rolo" (a negotiation fair)[7], and take advantage of the busy place to sell services or products. We could understand that those people are part of the square and that some people, as Pedro, find comfort, entertainment, services, friends when they experience this dynamic.

Therefore, there are people who go to the square more often, they are at home. Pedro has been interacting more intensively with this group.

Pedro narrates in details one of the of religious proselytism actions that take place at the square. Below is an extract from his narrative: adorn

> - It's that thing ... My life, I was more and more walking like a crab, backwards. Lies and more lies, alcohol and more alcohol, crack and more crack[8], and so on… Then on a beautiful Saturday [...] I was sleeping, when suddenly a person, with a sweet and gentle voice, approached my ear and said, "Jesus loves you!" Then, she left a folder in my hand. [...] I opened the folder and it was written: I saw a new Heaven and a new Earth, I saw the holy city coming down from God, adorned with her fiancé, embellished for his fiancée. And evil shall not exist and God shall wipe all your tears. And death shall no longer exist. I read these beautiful sentences and on the back of the paper it was written: Jesus loves you and He has a plan for your life! Dear brothers from the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. I took that folder and I put it in my pocket, the stamp of the church was on it, here, on Rua Taguá (Taguá Street), in Liberdade[9], near the Liberdade subway station. Then I said, let's see if these protestant's churches are really good.

It was that way that Pedro described his return to the SDA, with some ups and downs, and he considers this contact at Praça da Sé as the moment that marked the beginning of a process called "transformation." In this history, different networks and supports, besides the ones established at Praça da Sé and at the SDA have been established. We intend to briefly reconstruct his life course from this point on.

Spaces and networks in Pedro´s experience: assistance care, work and family
Pedro highlighted in our meetings that he tried to show his "transformation from a beggar into a worker" and the influence of religion in this passage:

> In 2001, I accepted Jesus as my savior, and then a miracle happened in my life. It was when I stopped drinking alcohol and quit using drugs - crack cocaine.

Based on the idea of "transformation" motivated by "accepting Jesus," Pedro highlighted the importance of reconciliation bonds and the different networks that he considered part of this process.

> I started here at the Seventh_Day Adventist Church on Rua Taguá. [in the center of the city], then I went to the Church at Capão Redondo [in the south zone] and it was there where I got to know the Assossiation Minha Rua Minha Casa (My Street, My Home Association). I went to this association, and I started going to the "bocas de rango", then I started sleeping in

---

[7] Informal space for exchanging and selling pre-owned products.
[8] Crack cocaine
[9] A neighborhood in the center of the city of São Paulo.

shelters, because I was not drinking anymore, and I was also not using drugs, then the shelters welcomed me, I was straight there. And, as days passed by, I got integrated with the people in the association, so they got my documents, Rosana [the AMRMC – My Street, My Home Association - coordinator] helped me to get my documents, and I started doing "temporary jobs", I started to be part of the work front and then I started doing "temporary jobs" here at Praça da Sé, I started selling things, I started working with a street artist, Maciel and [...] then I joined a public transportation cooperative. I worked for year there. But I could not save any money there, because it was an awful cooperative, some guys used to steal there. So now, by the end of this year, I joined a good cooperative. [...] Today I am inserted in society. I came back home, I'm living with my mother.

The social services constituted an important support network. Pedro´s relationship with the social services network was marked by his presence in shelters. While reflecting upon his own history, Pedro associated his frequency in such services to the possibility of abstaining himself from using alcohol and other drugs. Several times, when talked about his stays in the shelters, he used the expression " they kicked me out," which showed the difficulties he had to remain in these institutions. Two points that called his attention about this service were the rotation of people and the fact that the shelters did not embrace him because he did not adapt to their rules.

During field work it was possible to realize that Pedro had a deep knowledge of the social services network and moved inside this circuit according to his needs and to the opportunities provided. An example of that was his knowledge about the called "bocas de rango" (free meals), the quality of the meals and the necessary rules in order to be offered the services. Some of these services were part of equipment and service contracts with the The São Paulo City Hall, through the Municipal Department of Development and Social Assistance (SMADS, in Brasil), but some areas of food distribution were known by some people, as the spiritual center in Mooca, which distributed food on Sundays. There are, in the city, a number of situations like this one and only those who are part of this circuit can know about it. It was within the relations of this circuit of assistance that Pedro got to know the work of AMRMC. At that space he kept his belongings, he washed his clothes, he took a shower, he ate meals and participated in social educational activities and activities that could generate some income. The intensity of his participation in the service and the type of activity performed were connected to the insertion or not to work, to relationships established with his relatives and to the possibility of adaptation to the institutional rules and interaction with team and users, as well as to the flexibility of the institutional embracement.

Pedro did not mention the AMRMC very much in his reflections, and, when he did, besides acknowledging the support to get his documents and to generate income, while taking part of the government working team, he stated that he used the service "because it was better than staying at home", especially at the time he was unemployed. He also informed that he liked to go to the AMRMC "to support the others", because he participated in activities to maintain the institution. Even when he was working and living with his family, Pedro sporadically took part of the AMRMC activities.

It is interesting to note that, in order not to depend on his family, Pedro chose to stay at the shelters and go to the AMRMC while he was unemployed. He pointed out, however, that the control over alcohol and drugs consumption was a decisive element for him to go back to his family.

Then, my family realized that I was not drinking anymore. Then my brother invited me to live with him, my older brother. Then I started to live with him and I got a job at the cooperative [bus transportation company]. Then I started to live there, I used to work at the cooperative, and, after a while, my sister in law started to charge me the favor, then I left. Not because of him,

> because of her! I went back to the shelter. Then I started to get some bucks and rented a room near the cooperative. Then I was unemployed, the cooperative lost its power, they deceived me. Then I was unemployed and I went back to the shelter.

The presence in AMRMC, together with the participation at the SDA, was essential for him to reorganize his life. It was through the SDA that he got the job as a bus driver in a company whose owner was also an Adventist.

It is important to point out that the fact that he was working, going to church and could show his family that he was "recovered" were crucial elements to strengthen and maintain his relationship with his relatives.

Even if Pedro considers that the difficulties with the consumption of alcohol are to blame for him not to able to keep the activities that could generate income, as time passed by, he had been subjected to precarious working relationships, without stability and guarantees. This can be understood within a broader social process, which Castel (1998) analyzed as new social issue, when he reflected upon the dynamics of social affiliation dynamics based on work, emphasizing, however, the relevance of the degradation process of the wage society. Pedro experienced this transformation of the labor market himself.

Except when in religious events, Pedro dressed the bus driver uniform, even when he was unemployed or on his days off. It seems to be necessary for him to become self confident in this professional world, and that is how he wants to be identified.

Historically, not working, laziness and vagrancy have suffered relatively violent restrictions. According to Castel (1998, p. 424), in a specific historical moment, which was the basis for the establishment of the "wage society", there was a clear division between the ones who work and the ones who do not work, and these were the objectives of the regulations. In the constitution of the wage society, the "vagabond"

> becomes again, during one or two decades, the infamous counter model that represented in the pre-industrial society: the figure of associability that is necessary to be eradicated, because it does not fit in a society that straightens the work regulations again.

It seems that it is from this image that Pedro tried to be detached from. There is still, according to the author's reflections, the notion of identity construction through the condition of employee, understood beyond salary remuneration, as "the condition from which individuals are placed in the social space" (Castel, 1998 , p. 478). We agree with this author when he says that, in our society, the work provides identity to people.

Religiosity: SDA and new networks

Being a SDA member and following a set of values and practices enables Pedro to belong to a specific group and to share several codes, including family relations codes. During the field work, the intense narratives about the SDA motivated the seek of religious information and a visit to the church he attends.

The church of a district of the City of São Paulo, where he lives, is his family reference and some of his family members occupy important positions in that religious structure. The region concentrates a significant number of Adventist institutions. In addition to some churches, there is located the Adventist University Center of São Paulo, where there are several religious events. This way, Pedro remains in a circuit connected to SDA's practices. Besides attending worship services and Sabbath School, he follows the university events and other church events.

Pedro proposed a visit to his church on a Saturday - an unquestionably important day for the Adventist practices and, therefore, in his everyday life organization. It involved visits to the Sabbath School and attendance to worship services. Following Pedro's suggestion, at the end of that visit we

interviewed the parish priest, who was introduced to us as someone who had met him at the time of Praça da Sé and who had seen his transformation. The parish priest, in turn, explained some of the fundamental postulates of the SDA as well as how he believed Pedro had reorganized himself.

> — [...] He was an alcoholic, he used to live on the streets, he was a person who had neither a standard to follow nor a life principle. Once he knew the Bible principles he just accepted them and started to follow those principles he learned. However, we believe that besides the fact of teaching and in addition to receiving Bible instructions there is the factor, we believe, which is a supernatural factor where God enters, through the Holy Spirit, touching that person's life, working in his own consciousness so that he can be awakened to the need of a change.

On the one hand, the parish priest deemed the factor "supernatural" - which, at other times, Pedro described as "miracle" - and, on the other hand, he deemed the "ethical and moral" principles that were taught. It is worth trying to understand some of these principles, which can support having a better picture of Pedro's situation, as well as having a brief historical background of the SDA religion.

As Capellari (2001, p.45) evidenced, the SDA is considered a parallel religion to the Reformation, creating inside the Protestantism a specific group of religious denominations, which, "born in the 19th century in the U.S., postulate that their doctrines were revealed in a special way by the divine action, being the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Mormon Church and the Jehovah's Witnesses Church the main ones."

When Oliveira Filho (2004) discussed the SDA historical formation, he recovered the construction of its symbolic universe. Born in the messianic movements context in the 19th century, and originated in the U.S., the Adventist communities used to believe in a foreseen date when Messiah's would return to Earth. That episode was known as "the big disappointment". A small group continued searching for explanations of the event and they kept the Advent reference. Based on Ellen White's prophetic visions, the adepts joined themselves and then the formation of the Adventist symbolic universe was guided.

According to the official SDA's email address in Brazil[10], Adventist is a reference to "belief" in Advent, that is, to the belief of a second coming of Jesus to Earth. The parish priest's narrative contributes to this understanding:

> We accept Jesus Christ as our savior and we are concerned with observing all the Ten Commandments, and among these commandments of God's law, which we believe is an alliance, is the Sabbath commandment as the Lord's day. Hence our name, "Adventist Church" – because we wait for Jesus' advent, Jesus' return – and "Seventh Day", because we keep the Sabbath day as the Lord's day, as it is registered in Exodus, 20:8-11.

As it was said, Saturday, under those conditions, is a very special day for that church. It is when the Sabbath School takes place, involving all the baptized and the school members, the ones who are interested in it and future baptism supporters (Oliveira Filho, 2004). In the Sabbath school, the church benches are divided into classrooms and each classroom has a teacher responsible for leading the study of the day. Pedro guided us towards the church benches which represented his reference classroom and he introduced us as visitors, which is a distinct category from church members and from the ones who are baptized, easily recognizable by the organization form. The experience let evident the proselytism and the welcome form of the religion. After a while spent in the church, we received several notes with welcome words and invitations to study the Bible.

---

[10] http://www.adventista.org.br. Website indicated by the interviewed parish priest as a reliable source of information.

The practice of "Gospel preaching" to other people is shared by Pedro, who, as the other members, plays an important role in the church. The importance of each member of the church, as well as the explanation about the transformation notion within the Adventist symbolic universe, is referred in the following extract of the parish priest's interview:

> Then, the church's role today is preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ that we believe in. It is is the only way the human beings have to meet eternal salvation. Logically, any other kind of group can help a person to recover; we believe that it can happen. However, we believe that Jesus Christ is enough. In Psalm 23 He says: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." So we understand that Jesus Christ, when He gets into a person's life, that person's life is transformed. And as the reason of all problems, even health problems, the starting point is in the mind, we believe that a mentally health person, transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit, understanting the ethics and the moral aspects which are presented in the Bible, that person can find not only a way, a cure for his own soul, for his mind, as well as that person can help other people as well. [...] We should use all the time we can afford for our family, for our well-being, but also for the progress of God's work here on Earth, for preaching the Gospel.

If in the care network circuit Pedro received help, if he got some support, within the SDA, he changed his status to those who have some knowledge to be conveyed to other people, of unique importance, because it means the "only way salvation" for him and for the group that shares the same codes. Religiousity gives sense to a number of practices and it also promotes new challenges, such as keeping yourself within the "ethical and moral" standards exposed by the parish priest. Being able to negotiate Saturdays as a non-working day, for example. In Pedro's case, conciliation is possible because he works at a company whose owner is Adventist. There is also the effort of not eating pork meat - a hard task, since Feijoada and pork steak are regular dishes served in restaurants he likes to eat in Praça da Sé region and where he shares many values with other customers. This way, there will always be the need for negotiation in several ways, since it is about meeting different cultural practices within the same society. As Bhabha (2001) suggests, it may be related to the construction of border spaces that allow dialogue and cultural negotiation.

The street life experience is not denied either by his family members or by the parish priests. On the contrary, it seemed to acquire new meanings as it became Pedro's testimony reinforced by the parish priests' public word, who found in his life history a way of renewing the symbolic efficacy (Lévi-Strauss, 1975) of their church, evoking a personal transformation of the devoted and reinforcing the practices and the values which that group shares.

Let us also recall that the relationship between religiosity and healing processes forms an interesting interface for the analysis of that life course. The issue is complex. Sanchez and Nappo (2007, p.79) have carried out a scientific literature review (of studies indexed in the databases of PubMed and Scielo between 1976 and 2006) on religiosity and spirituality as protection factors for drug use and they concluded that

> [...] the constant frequency to a church, the practice of concepts proposed by a religion and the importance given to religion and to religious education in childhood are possible protective factors against the use of drugs. A possible positive influence of religiousness for the rehabilitation of drugs addicts was also found.

According to the authors, there is an open field for new researches as the majority of researches found is quantitative and the theme exploration in the Brazilian context could bring new contributions to public health, considering the strong influence of religion in care processes.

Final remarks
As we reconstitute Pedro's life history, its circuits and "pieces" of belonging have become apparent and revealed several alternatives that he could create, even in vulnerability situations. Our collaborator, by sharing codes and symbols, becomes part of certain circuits that surpass care and seem to contribute to building and strengthening interconnected and interdependent networks and identities. The social participation varied forms we observed in Pedro's life course showed us a complex network and movements searching for exchanges in different sectors of society. The participation in the care network services, for example, did not configure itself as the only resource used and it did not mean dependency relationship, which is a situation often attributed to its users. The church, the relationships at Praça da Sé, the family and the work formed different exchange possibilities, helping to build close protection. In that trajectory, religiosity seemed to provide important bases to build collective identity and belonging.

The study of social networks formed by people in permanent presence or interaction with street situation can be enriched if the approach captures, besides the work and housing dimensions, those dimensions of religion, culture, leisure and political participation (in specific social movements). There is a need to understand, in depth, the complexity of the dynamics of social dissociation and of opposed movements to this in order to contribute to building practices that aim at equating the difficulties faced by the social group at issue. It remains the challenge and the need to produce, from dialogue relations, situations which avoid people being forced to live on the streets as well as building collective alternatives.

COLLABORATORS

The authors have worked together throughout the whole paper.

REFERENCES

ATKINSON, P. **Understanding ethnographic texts**. London: Sage Publications, 1992.

BARROS, D.D.; LOPES, R.E.; GALHEIGO, S.M. Projeto Metuia — Terapia ocupacional no campo social. **O Mundo da Saúde**, v. 26, n. 3, p. 365-69, 2002.

BHABHA, H. **O local da cultura**. Belo Horizonte: Ed. UFMG, 2001.

CAPELLARI, M.A. **Sob o olhar da razão:** as religiões não católicas e as ciências humanas no Brasil (1900-2000). 2001. Dissertação (Mestrado) — Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo.

CASTEL, R. Da indigência à exclusão, a desfiliação. Precariedade do trabalho e vulnerabilidade relacional. In: LANCETTI, A. (Org.) **Grupos e coletivos**. São Paulo: Hucitec, 1994. p. 21-48 (SaúdeLoucura 4).

CASTEL, R. **Metamorfoses da questão social:** uma crônica do salário. 5. ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1998.

CASTELLS, M. **O poder da identidade**. 3. ed. São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 2002 (A era da informação: economia, sociedade e cultura, v. II).

CLIFFORD, J. **A experiência etnográfica:** antropologia e literatura no século XX. Rio de Janeiro: Editora UFRJ, 1998.

ELIAS, N. **A sociedade dos indivíduos**. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor, 1994.

GALVANI, D. et al. Perfil dos freqüentadores da casa de convivência e centro de serviços Associação Minha Rua Minha Casa entre 2002 e 2003. **Rev. Ter. Ocup. USP**, v. 17, p. 48-56, 2006.

GALVANI, D. **Itinerários e estratégias na construção de redes sociais e identidades de pessoas em situação de rua na cidade de São Paulo.** 2008. Dissertação (Mestrado) — Faculdade de Medicina, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo.

GHIRARDI, M.I.G. et al. Vida na rua e cooperativismo: transitando pela produção de valores. **Interface — Comunic., Saúde, Educ.**, v. 9, n. 8, p. 601-610, 2005.

LÉVI-STRAUS, C. O feiticeiro e sua magia. In: LÉVI-STRAUS, C. **Antropologia estrutural I**. Rio de Janeiro: Tempo Brasileiro, 1975. p. 193-213.

MAGNANI, J.G.C. Quando o campo é a cidade: fazendo antropologia na metrópole. In: MAGNANI, J.G.C.; TORRES, L. (Org.) **Na metrópole:** textos de antropologia urbana**.** São Paulo: Edusp/Fapesp, 1996. p. 15-53.

MAGNANI, J.G.C. De perto e de dentro: notas para uma etnografia urbana. **Rev. Bras. Ci. Soc.**, v. 17, n. 49, p. 11-29, 2002. Disponível em: <http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0102-69092002000200002&lng=en&nrm=iso>. Acesso em: 07 jun. 2010.

MAGNANI, J.G.C. A Rua e a evolução da sociabilidade. **Os Urbanitas — Revista Digital de Antropologia Urbana**, v. 1, 2003. Disponível em: <http://www.osurbanitas.org/>. Acesso em: 07 jun. 2010.

MEIHY, J.C.S.B. **Manual de história oral**. 2. ed. São Paulo: Edições Loyola, 2005.

OLIVEIRA, R.C. O trabalho do antropólogo: olhar, ouvir, escrever. In: OLIVEIRA, R.C. **O trabalho do antropólogo**. 2. ed. São Paulo: Edunesp, 2000. p. 17-35.

OLIVEIRA FILHO, J.J. Formação histórica do movimento adventista. **Estud. av.**, v.18, n. 52, p.157-179, 2004. Disponível em: <http://www.scielo.br/pdf/ea/v18n52/a12v1852.pdf>. Acesso em: 07 jun. 2010.

OLIVEN, G.R. **A antropologia dos grupos urbanos**. 5. ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1995.

QUEIROZ, M.I.P. Relatos Orais: do "indizível" ao "dizível". In: VON SIMSON, O.M. (Org.). **Experimentos com histórias de vida** (Itália-Brasil). São Paulo: Vértice, 1988. p. 15-43.

ROSA, C.M.M. **Vidas de rua**. São Paulo: Hucitec/Associação Rede Rua, 2005.

SANCHEZ, Z.V.D.M.; NAPPO, S.A. A religiosidade, a espiritualidade e o consumo de drogas. **Rev. psiquiatr. clín.** v. 34, n. 1, p. 73-81, 2007. Disponível em: < http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0101-60832007000700010 >. Acesso em: 07 jun. 2010.

SÃO PAULO (Município). Secretaria de Assistência Social (SAS). Fundação Instituto de Pesquisas Econômicas (FIPE). **Relatório final — Estimativa do número de moradores de rua e estudo dos resultados obtidos com o SIS rua**. São Paulo, 2003.

VARANDA, W. **Do direito a vida à vida como direito.** 2003. Dissertação (Mestrado) — Faculdade de Saúde Pública, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo.

VÍCTORA, C.G.; KNAUTH, D.R.; HASSEN, M.N.A. **Pesquisa qualitativa em saúde:** uma introdução ao tema. Porto Alegre: Tomo Editorial, 2000.

---

[i] Address: Rua Cipotânea, 51- Cidade Universitária, São Paulo-SP. 05360-000.