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**SEXUAL INITIATION AND RELIGION IN BRAZIL**

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# **SEXUAL INITIATION AND RELIGION IN BRAZIL**

by

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## **Dissertation**

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This dissertation is dedicated to Cláudio and Daniel

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## **SEXUAL INITIATION AND RELIGION IN BRAZIL**

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With the growth of Pentecostalism over the last few decades, conservative values and punitive sanctions related to the sexual behavior of adolescents and unmarried youth began to play an important and systematic role in Pentecostal and renewed Protestant churches as well as in charismatic Catholic communities. Simultaneously, religion has become an important and highly present factor in the lives of many adolescents and youth in Brazil. In terms of attempting to attract this age group, these churches and communities, stand out, as they have used their resources to create a space for this segment of the population to participate in a religious environment. Youth groups, dating groups, trade courses, lectures, aid work in poor communities, confirmation and other activities such as retreats and religious trips, have been frequently observed in these churches and charismatic communities.

In this dissertation, I examine the associations between religious involvement and sexual initiation in Brazil. More specifically, I investigate (1) whether religious denomination and religiosity are associated with age at premarital first sexual intercourse, (2) whether these associations have changed over the last three decades, (3) how different churches and religious leaders address sexual behavior issues, and (4) the mechanisms through which religion can influence adolescents' sexual behavior in Brazil. These research questions are assessed by employing multiple data sources and methodologies including three Demographic and Health Surveys carried out in Brazil in 1986, 1996, and 2006 and event history analysis, as well as in-depth interview data and participant observation among different religious groups and affiliations by attending several Catholic masses, Protestant religious services, youth groups, Sunday schools, and religious talks/lectures.

Quantitative and qualitative findings of this dissertation show that adolescents and youth from Pentecostal churches and communities seem more likely to delay or abstain from premarital sexual initiation when compared to traditional Catholics. I conclude by suggesting that the dissemination of conservative norms and sanctions as well as the availability of greater space for youth to maintain close relationships with these churches have helped create mechanisms through which religion can directly and indirectly influence the lives and sexual behavior of young people in Brazil.



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## Chapter One – Introduction

The adolescent age-specific fertility rate decreased in the majority of less developed countries between the 1970s and the 1990s. For example, significant declines took place in Asian, sub-Saharan, and North African countries (Westoff, 2003; Singh, 1998; Bongaarts and Cohen, 1998). However, in Latin American and Caribbean countries like the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, and Peru, adolescent fertility has fallen at a much slower rate (Ali and Cleland, 2004). Unexpectedly, in other countries, such as Brazil, adolescent fertility rose during these two decades (Berquó and Cavenaghi, 2005a; Gupta and Leite, 1999).

The 2006 PNDS<sup>1</sup> (*Pesquisa Nacional de Demografia e Saúde- Demographic and Health National Survey*) revealed a near stagnation of adolescent fertility in Brazil since 1996. The reasons teenage fertility increased and then stagnated in Brazil remain largely speculative, or at least, not easy to explain, because it has occurred simultaneously with historical facts that usually indicate the opposite outcome, such as increasing urbanization and education level, the almost universal knowledge of family planning methods and widespread availability of contraception (Cesare and Vignoli, 2006; Rios-Neto, 2005; Riani, 2005; Gupta, 2000). One of the most proximate determinants of fertility—age at first sexual intercourse—probably plays an important role in this phenomenon, since the percentage of Brazilian adolescent women who report never having had sex decreased dramatically in 20 years: from 80 to 45 percent (between 1986 and 2006). Such a decline

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<sup>1</sup> Although this survey was not part of the DHS program and has a quite different questionnaire when compared to the 1986 and 1996 Brazil DHS, it will be called here the 2006 Brazil DHS.

may indicate changes in attitudes about sex, marriage, and childbearing in Brazil, which are traditionally “taught” through religious norms (Pierucci, 1978).

Declining age at first sexual intercourse has been accompanied by a transformation in Brazil’s religious landscape, which has been marked by three associated phenomena: the end of Catholic dominance in the religious market, the significant growth of Pentecostalism (led by Protestant churches), and the growth of those who identify themselves as having no religion.

The recent growth of Pentecostalism in Brazil (and all Latin America) has brought attention to potential social, demographic, economic, and cultural consequences of religious conversion. For example, affiliation with some Protestant churches has been popularly associated with positive attitudinal and behavioral transformations that, among other things, may increase cultural and social capital, provide support networks of trust and reciprocity, modify gender relations, and enhance the economic viability of the household (Verona et al. 2010; Potter, Amaral and Woodbery, 2009; McKinnon, Potter, and Garrard-Burnett, 2008; Smilde, 2007; Wood, Williams, and Chijiwa, 2007; Chesnut, 1997; Mariz, 1994). The nature of these social changes suggests that they may improve the self-esteem, health and welfare of women.

Among the many factors that may affect adolescent sexual and reproductive behavior in Brazil, religion deserves further consideration, not simply because this country has experienced tremendous change in its religious landscape during the last four decades, but also both because religion is a primary socialization agent of adolescents,

and because sexual activity is a sphere of human behavior considered high in religious applicability (Regnerus, 2007). Even so, the association between religion and adolescent sexual and reproductive behavior in Brazil has not received extended attention.

The little research that has been conducted has pointed to Pentecostal Protestant churches as those that may be most effective at helping adolescent and young women avoid or postpone premarital sexual intercourse and childbearing (Verona and Regnerus, 2009; McKinnon, Potter and Garrard-Burnett, 2008). This is an intriguing conclusion, since Pentecostal Protestantism has enjoyed overwhelming success in appealing to the poorest sub-populations where adolescent and premarital fertility are concentrated in Brazil.

### **1.1 - Research questions**

The general aim of this dissertation is to examine the associations between religion and sexual initiation in Brazil. I used three Demography and Health Surveys carried out in Brazil in 1986, 1996, and 2006 and in-depth interview data to address the following specific questions:

- (1) Are religious denomination and religiosity (measured as attendance at religious service) associated with age at premarital first sexual intercourse in Brazil?
- (2) Have these associations changed over the last decades?

(3) How do religious leaders and their churches address sexual and reproductive issues among adolescents and young women in Brazil?

(4) What are the mechanisms or pathways through which religion can affect adolescents and young women's sexual behavior in Brazil?

## **1.2 – Outline of dissertation**

The remaining seven chapters of this dissertation are divided as follows. In Chapter 2, I present a brief review of recent changes in adolescent fertility and sexual initiation in the developing world, with a focus on Brazil.

In Chapter 3, I present the historical background of the major religions in Brazil, Catholicism and Protestantism, and provide details on the Pentecostal Protestant movement. I also introduce in this chapter two important Catholic renewal movements that took place in Brazil in recent decades: the Christian Base Communities (CEBs) and the Movement of Catholic charismatic Renewal (CCR).

In Chapter 4, I bring a conceptual framework concerning religious influence, both direct and indirect, on adolescents' lives, as well as some alternative explanations for these effects. Then, in Chapter 5, I establish the data and methods I used in this research. I point out that I used two sources of data, combining sets of quantitative and qualitative information. First, I employed data from three DHS carried out during the period of 1986 to 2006 in Brazil, and second, I used data from semi-structured in-depth interviews.

In Chapters 6 and 7, maintaining a close connection with my conceptual framework, I present my quantitative and qualitative results, respectively. That is, in Chapter 6, I show my main findings regarding the descriptive and statistical analyses, and in Chapter 7, I present the results obtained during my fieldwork in Brazil.

Finally, in Chapter 8, I present my final conclusions, answering the research questions established in this introductory chapter. Lastly, I make suggestions for future areas of research.



## **Chapter Two – Adolescent Sexual Behavior in Brazil**

Adolescence is one of the most important periods in an individual's life. Many social, economic, demographic, and biological events that occur at this time set the stage for adult life. Bongaarts and Cohen (1998) pointed out that the quality of an adolescent's future relies largely on the extent to which he or she can take advantage of opportunities for personal development. In general, successful pathways are possible through the good progress of health and social aspects.

It is well documented that earlier sexual activity can lead to negative reproductive health outcomes for adolescents and young women. In many countries, concern regarding unprotected sexual behavior, for instance, is evident both because of the increase in premarital and unintended pregnancy, unwanted childbearing and unsafe abortion, as well as the high risks of acquiring HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (Hindin and Fatusi, 2009; Heilborn, Aquino and Knauth, 2006; Ali and Cleland, 2004). Other problematic consequences of earlier sexual initiation are frequently related to dropout from school and lack of social support from family and partners (Gupta, 2000; Bongaarts and Cohen, 1998).

On the other hand, earlier sexual experience and adolescent childbearing have been recognized in some studies as a social response to socioeconomic disadvantage, which could expose young women to environmental factors that elevate the risk of poorer health and social outcomes as compared to somewhat older mothers (Geronimus, 1987). Teenage motherhood in Brazil, for instance, is increasingly concentrated among

socioeconomically disadvantaged populations, especially among the least-educated women, those with lower income, and residents of urban areas (Berquó and Cavenaghi, 2005a).

## **2. 1 – Adolescent sexual behavior in developing countries**

Available evidence concerning sexual and reproductive behavior among adolescents in the developing world reveals substantial variation across countries and regions (Hindin and Fatusi, 2009; Wellings et al. 2006; Westoff, 2003; Blanc and Way, 1998; Bongaarts and Cohen, 1998; Singh, 1998). Nevertheless, some overall patterns have emerged. In general, current levels of adolescent childbearing, for example, are moderate to high in most areas of the developing world. In a study using data from 43 developing countries, Singh (1998) argues that the sub-Saharan Africa countries have the highest levels of adolescent childbearing in the world, with rates varying between about 120 to about 160 per 1,000 adolescents in most countries of this region (Gupta and Mahy, 2002). The second-highest levels are observed in countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region, with rates ranging from 80 to close to 100 births per 1,000 adolescents. Asian countries, on the other hand, presented a very diverse pattern, in which rates vary from low-to-moderate to high levels.

Although the rates of adolescent fertility observed in many of the developing countries are in general high or moderate, they declined in several regions between the 1970's and the 1990's. For instance, significant declines were found in five of seven sub-Saharan African countries (Gupta and Mahy, 2002) as well as in eight of ten North

African and Asian countries analyzed (Singh, 1998). On the other hand, results for Latin American and Caribbean countries were mixed. While the adolescent fertility rate decreased in the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Peru, some countries experienced no decline (Singh, 1998). Moreover, Brazil and Colombia, from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, even presented increases in their adolescent fertility rates (Cesare and Vignoli, 2006; Berquó and Cavenaghi, 2005a; Ali and Cleland, 2004; Westoff, 2003; Heaton, Forste and Otterstrom, 2002; Singh, 1998; Buvinic, 1998).

As pointed out by Westoff (2003) in his study on trends in marriage and early childbearing in developing countries, the reasons why teenage fertility has increased in Brazil and Colombia remain unclear, or at least, are not easy to explain since this change has been simultaneous with historical facts that point in the opposite direction (such as the increasing urbanization and education level, and the almost universal knowledge of family planning methods or availability of contraception) (Cesare and Vignoli, 2006; Rios-Neto, 2005; Riani, 2005; Caetano, 2004, Gupta, 2000).

As suggested by the Westoff, a possible explanation for higher and increasing rates of adolescent fertility in Brazil and Colombia during that period is that sexual initiation is occurring at younger ages. Westoff (2003) highlighted the sharp decline in the proportion of teenagers who have never had sex in Brazil and Colombia, from the mid-1980s to the late-1990s, which was not evident in the other countries for which trend data were available. In most of the other countries, there was little change and even an

increase in the proportion of teenagers who have never had sex, especially in the sub-Saharan African region.

Evidence with respect to sexual initiation, using data from DHS, show that the percentage of Brazilian and Colombian teenagers who reported never having had sex decreased from 80 percent to 67 percent (between 1986 and 1996) and from 80 percent to 60 percent (between 1986 and 2000), respectively. Ali and Cleland (2004), in a comparative analysis among eight Latin American countries, also noted that virginity has fallen over time in part of this region, especially in Brazil and Colombia. Simultaneously, the use of contraceptives, particularly of condoms, has increased in these settings but not sufficiently to offset the decline of virginity.

Furthermore, using a cohort perspective, Heaton, Forste, and Otterstrom (2002) explored the timing and sequencing of transitions of women to first intercourse, marriage, and birth using data of the DHS selected from 13 Latin American and Caribbean countries. They estimated the median age for each of these demographic events for birth cohorts from the 1940s to the 1970s and found that Brazil was the only country that presented a noticeable decline in the median age at first intercourse. It dropped from 20.2 to 18.7 years across those birth cohorts. Likewise, Brazil and Colombia were the only places among all 13 countries that showed a steady increase in the proportion experiencing premarital sex.

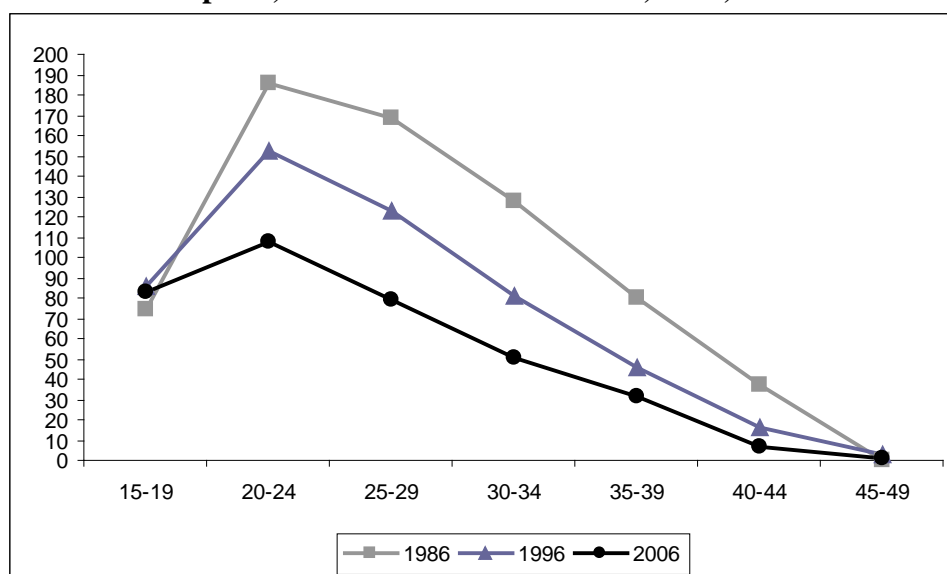
## **2.2- The case of Brazil**

Brazil experienced large and rapid fertility declines over the period from 1960 and 2006, when the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) dropped from 6.3 to 1.8 children. During this process, age-specific fertility rates (ASFR) diminished substantially for all age groups in the reproductive span. However, the older age groups presented steeper declines, causing a concentration of fertility at younger ages (Cesare and Vignoli, 2006; Berquó and Cavenaghi, 2005a and 2005b; Gupta, 2000; Gupta and Leite, 1999).

Besides unequal fertility decline across the reproductive age groups, the 1990s added a new factor that contributed to the concentration of fertility at younger ages: the rise of fertility rates among adolescent women, defined as the population aged 15-19. Estimates from the Brazil DHS show that the ASFR for adolescents increased from 74 births per 1,000 women in 1986 to 86 in 1996. It is worth noting that the teenage group was the only one that presented an increase in fertility during this ten-year period.

The 2006 Brazil DHS revealed a slight decrease (to 83 births per 1,000 women) of adolescent fertility in Brazil since 1996. Nevertheless, the period between 1996 and 2006 also witnessed a greater fertility decline among the other age groups (from 20-24 to 45-49 years of age) when compared to that presented by adolescent mothers. Figure 2.1 shows the ASFR per 1,000 women in Brazil in 1986, 1996, and 2006; it clearly shows that the fertility rates for all age groups – except among adolescents – have sharply declined during the last two decades.

**Figure 2.1**  
**ASFR per 1,000 women in Brazil: 1986, 1996, and 2006**



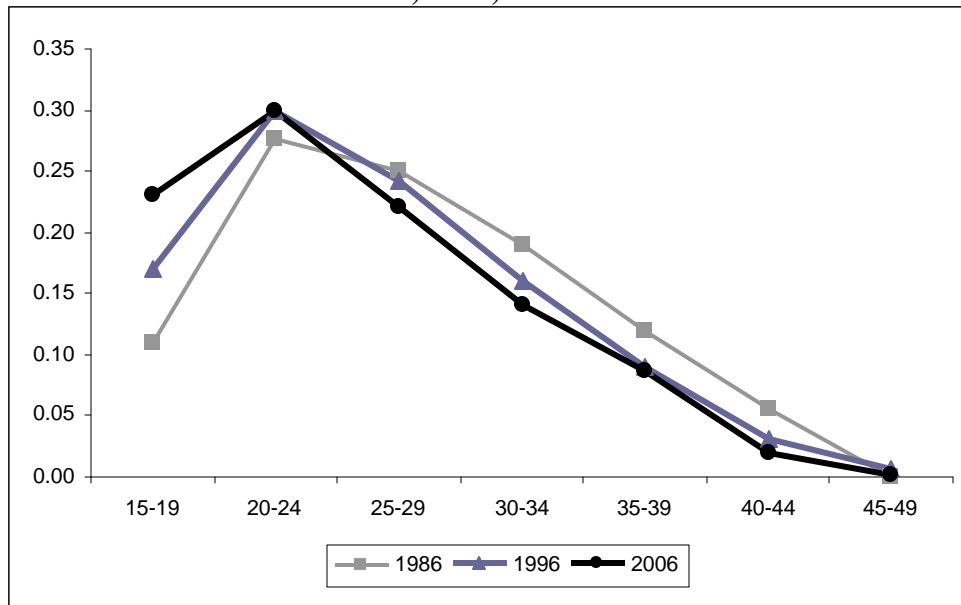
Source: The 1986, 1996, and 2006 DHS

Consequently, the proportional contribution of adolescent fertility to the overall fertility rate continued to increase during the last decade in Brazil. Results from the three Brazil DHS, as documented in Figure 2.2, show that the relative weight of births among adolescents increased from 11 percent to 17 percent between 1986 and 1996, and then to 23 percent in 2006. Thus, almost one out of every four births in 2006 was to a teenage mother in Brazil. Meanwhile, the fertility rate among women aged 25 to 39 dropped from 56 percent to 49 percent between 1986 and 1996, and then to 45 percent in 2006.

As mentioned earlier, sexual initiation is occurring at younger ages in Brazil. Results from the 2006 DHS show that the proportion of teenagers who report never having had sex is 45 percent. This represents a substantial decline, since this proportion

was 80 percent and 67 percent in 1986 and 1996, respectively. Certainly, one of the proximate determinants of fertility—age at first sexual intercourse—very likely plays an important role in the increasing and recent stable rate of adolescent fertility in Brazil.

**Figure 2.2**  
**Proportional contributions of the age groups to overall fertility in Brazil:**  
**1986, 1996, and 2006**



Source: The 1986, 1996, and 2006 DHS

## 2.3 – Main determinants of adolescent sexual behavior in Brazil

### 2.3.1 – Social, economic, and demographic factors

Previous studies have suggested several determinants associated with adolescent sexual activity in Brazil (see, for example, Borges, Latorre and Schor, 2007; Cesare and Vignoli, 2006; Aquino et al. 2003; Gupta, 2000; Gupta and Leite, 1999). The risk of

exposure to sexual intercourse tends to be highly associated with age. Such an association is expected to increase progressively from the onset of menarche through marriage.

Besides age, there exist a large number of social, economic, demographic, and contextual factors that potentially explain, to a certain degree, variations in outcomes in behavior related to sexuality and reproduction. Some of these are frequently incorporated in modeling adolescent fertility.

Education is considered one of the most important of these factors. A strong and consistent correlation between young women's education and sexual and reproductive variables in Brazil and all Latin American countries has been consistently noted by the specialized literature (Heaton, Forste, and Otterstrom, 2002; Martin and Juarez, 1995). The article by Martin and Juarez (1995) pointed out that education may influence the sexual and reproductive behavior of women in several ways, including the following: (1) as a source of knowledge, including the achievement of skills and information about their bodies in relation to sex, health, and reproduction; (2) as a vehicle of socio-economic advancement since education may enhance women's opportunities to pursue wage-earning activities and promote upward social mobility; and (3) as a transformer of attitudes because education may lead to essential changes in women's aspirations, traditional beliefs, and authority structures.

Researchers have frequently emphasized the association between education and adolescent sexual and reproductive outcomes in Brazil. In general, lower education is associated with lower age at first intercourse, lower age at first birth, and higher



adolescent fertility rates in Brazil<sup>2</sup> (Leite, Rodrigues and Fonseca, 2004; Aquino et al. 2003; Heaton, Forste, and Otterstrom, 2002; Gupta, 2000; Gupta and Leite, 1999). Gupta and Leite (1999), for instance, studied adolescents in Northeastern Brazil and found that education was the variable most strongly associated with delayed childbearing between 1986 and 1996 in this region. Moreover, the work of Leite, Rodrigues, and Fonseca (2004), using data from young women between 15 and 24 years of age from the Southeast and Northeast regions of Brazil, focused on three dimensions of reproductive behavior: sexual initiation, use of contraceptives in the first sexual relationship, and fertility. These authors found that the level of education was the most important risk factor in the three dimensions analyzed, even when other key covariates are held constant.

Heaton, Forste, and Otterstrom (2002) also examined differentials in women's sexual and reproductive behavior by education level, urban/rural areas, and over time estimating the median age at first intercourse, first union, and first birth for birth cohorts from the 1940s to the 1970s. They found that education is positively correlated with age at transition, and that the average age at transition is higher in urban as opposed to rural areas in most countries. The average age at first sexual intercourse and first birth in Brazil, for instance, increase substantially with higher educational attainment. While the former rises from 17.5 years among those who have no education to 21.8 for those with

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<sup>2</sup> The direction of the causality, however, is not clear. Teenagers, especially, may want to delay sexual activity in order to finish their formal education. On the other hand, sexually experienced girls may be forced to leave school if they have a child.

nine years of education or more, the median age at first birth increases from 20.0 to 26.0 years for the same two groups of education. Likewise, the authors observed that the proportion experiencing premarital sex and premarital birth in Brazil is substantially lower among those who have completed more schooling.

Another variable that frequently emerges in the literature as an important source of influence is place of residence, which may present mixed associations with sexual outcomes. Adolescent fertility levels, for instance, are very often expected to be lower in urban areas than rural areas in Brazil (Berquó and Cavenaghi, 2005a; Gupta and Leite, 1999; Gupta, 2000). Urbanization is often associated with greater exposure to the mass media, which spread information and knowledge that contribute to define attitudes related to sexuality and reproduction. Rural places may still be affected by traditional values regarding sexual activity that may, for instance, inhibit the use of contraception. Lastly, due to material differences, urban areas may have a greater accessibility and availability of family planning services and methods than rural places (Gupta, 2000).<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, other authors have emphasized that urban women, unlike rural women, may be less connected to forms of familial social control that would supervise their sexual behavior (Singh, 1998).

Heaton, Forste, and Otterstrom (2002), in their analysis across birth cohorts from the 1940s to the 1970s, found that rural residents in Brazil tend to start having sexual

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to highlight that Brazil, as a whole, is becoming increasingly urbanized, including its young female population. The number of adolescent women living in urban areas, for example, rose from 6.3 million in 1991 to 7 million in 2000 whereas the number of those living in rural places decreased from 2 million in 1991 to 1.6 million in 2000 (Berquó and Cavenaghi, 2005a).

intercourse and children at a younger age than those living in urban areas. The rural-urban difference, however, is more substantial (more than one year) for the median age at first birth than for the median age at first sexual intercourse.

As suggested above, access to media has been found to be another important predictor of sexual and reproductive behavior in Brazil. This has been explained by the media's role in promoting ideological and cultural change and diffusing new patterns of value orientation and behavioral norms (Faria and Potter, 1999). Recent studies have emphasized the influence of television, particularly Brazilian soap operas (*telenovelas*), on reproductive behavior (Basten, 2009; Ferrara, Chong, and Duryea, 2008; Faria, 1989). This mass media institution has diffused ideas in Brazil that lead to widespread change in family size preferences, and fertility regulation (Faria and Potter, 1999).

Some of these studies suggest that media effects can be even stronger among adolescents. In their empirical research, Gupta and Leite (1999) found that adolescents who watched television regularly had lower fertility than their counterparts; however, they showed that these differentials have attenuated over time. Moreover, Gupta (2000) showed that viewing television regularly was inversely associated with the risk of sexual initiation and positively related to the use of contraception at first sexual intercourse.

Skin color is another variable frequently considered to be a determinant of sexual and reproductive behavior in Brazil. Previous studies have shown that belonging to specific race groups, more specifically black and brown categories when compared to white, may have a significant and positive effect on the probability of being a teenage

mother in Brazil (McKinnon, Potter, and Garrard-Burnett, 2008; Cesare and Vignoli, 2006). On the other hand, other researchers found no relationship between race and sexual initiation in the country (Verona and Regnerus, 2009).

Finally, religion is another individual variable that may promote or limit sexual, marital, and reproductive attitudes (McQuillan, 2004, Wilcox et al. 2001). As pointed out by Wellings et al. (2006), “possibly the most powerful influence on human sexuality are the social norms that govern its expression. Morals, taboos, laws, and religious beliefs used by societies worldwide circumscribe and radically determine the sexual behavior of their citizens (pp. 11-12)”.

Surprisingly, little is known about the implications of religious involvement for adolescent sexual and reproductive behavior in Brazil. When religion is considered in studies on this topic, it is typically used as simply a control variable (e.g., Catholics versus non-Catholics), or measured so broadly that the significance of the results is quite limited (as suggested by McKinnon, Potter, and Garrard-Burnett, 2008). Moreover, the majority of these studies take into account just one dimension of religious involvement in their analyses – religious affiliation.

The work of Gupta and Leite (1999) and Gupta (2000), for instance, included two religious categories in their analyses: Catholics and non-Catholics/people with no religion (i.e., everyone else). Gupta and Leite (1999) compared three DHS conducted in Northeastern Brazil in 1986, 1991, and 1996 and found that the difference in the risk of having the first child at ages 15 to 19 among Catholics and everyone else was significant

in 1986, but not in 1991 and 1996. In 1986, adolescent Catholics were less likely to have given a birth than everyone else. Moreover, Gupta (2000) found that religious affiliation has no association with adolescents' first sexual intercourse in Northeastern Brazil. She also included a religious-attendance variable and concluded that those adolescents who attended religious services at least monthly presented lower odds ratios of having premarital intercourse before age 20. Religiosity was also significantly related to increased likelihood of contraceptive use at sexual initiation.

Based on retrospective data collected from women aged 18 to 24 living in the metropolitan areas of Porto Alegre, Rio de Janeiro, and Salvador, Aquino et al. (2003) noted that Catholic women had a lower percentage of pregnancy before age 20 than their counterparts who belonged to Pentecostal churches, or to other churches, or that identified themselves as having no religion. Another example is the study of Martins et al. (2006), which used information on 1,594 adolescents from 13 public and five private schools in the city of São Paulo. They found that those who belonged to Protestant churches were less knowledgeable than Catholics about contraceptive methods.

Unlike the studies mentioned above, the article by McKinnon, Potter, and Garrard-Burnett (2008) employs more detailed religious categories and more closely examines associations between religion and adolescent sexual behavior in Brazil. More specifically, the authors explore the relationships between Protestantism and fertility and family formation among adolescents aged 15 to 17 living in the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro. They note that the odds of ever having had a live birth for adolescent

women belonging to Baptist, other Mainline Protestant, Assembly of God, and other Pentecostal churches is reduced by about one-third when compared to Catholics. They also emphasize that adolescent mothers who belong to the Assembly of God, other Pentecostal Protestant, or other mainline Protestant churches are much more likely to be married than Catholics.

Furthermore, Heilborn et al. (2005) edited a book called *Sexuality, Family, and Religious Ethos*, which is a major contribution to the topic. In one of its articles, Rohden et al. (2005) investigated different connections between religion and sexual initiation among poor young people living in the metropolitan areas of Porto Alegre, Rio de Janeiro, and Salvador. One of their main results suggests that Pentecostal young men, especially those affiliated with the Assembly of God, reported very specific sexual behavior. For instance, they were the least sexually active and seemed to keep and be proud of their virginity pledge, that is, their commitment to refrain from sexual intercourse until marriage.

### **2.3.2 – Contextual Factors**

Finally, there is increasing evidence that community characteristics influence individuals and adolescents' sexual and reproductive behavior (Hindin and Fatusi, 2009; Wellings et al. 2006; Gupta and Mahy, 2002). For example, a strong reproductive health care environment in the community could improve knowledge among adolescents and young women of the risks associated with earlier and unprotected sexual activity. Another important contextual variable would be a measure of community development context,

which could help presume, to some extent, the aggregated level of education or income as well as the access to socioeconomic factors and household assets among young women residing in certain settings. A proxy for such a measure (though imperfect) would be, for instance, the proportion of adult individuals with high levels of education living in the same community.

Undoubtedly, this dissertation would benefit from community measures of religiosity and adherence to a given religion. Such variables may allow one to observe whether adolescents and young women who live in communities with distinct levels of religiosity and religious affiliation preferences are exposed, for example, to differing risks of engaging in a premarital first sexual relationship.

## Chapter Three – Religion in Brazil

The last few decades have witnessed a rapid and widespread transformation of Brazil's religious landscape, which now includes a tremendous variety of beliefs and practices, and has seen an uptake of new religious patterns (Mariano, 2004, 2005; Pierucci and Prandi, 2000; Decol, 1999; Chesnut, 1997; Prandi, 1996; Burdick, 1993; Bruneau, 1982). Three substantial developments in particular have attracted attention in this process of religious transformation.

The first is the end of Catholic domination of Brazilian market share in religion. According to data from the Brazilian censuses, the percentage of Catholics in Brazil dropped from 95.4 percent in 1940 to 73.7 percent in 2000. The second development is the concomitant growth of Protestantism (led by Pentecostalism): its affiliation rate grew from less than three percent in 1940 to 15.4 percent in 2000 (Mariano, 2004). Protestants are classified into two large groups: traditional Protestants and Pentecostals. The principal denominations among traditional Protestants are Lutheran, Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Episcopal, and Congregational, which have themselves generated many other subdivisions. In addition, some of the main Pentecostal churches are the Christian Congregation in Brazil and the Assembly of God. Recently, churches now called Neo-Pentecostal have emerged (Mariano, 2004, 2005). Some examples of these religious denominations are the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, Reborn in Christ, and God is Love.



The third shift in Brazil’s religious landscape is the considerable growth of those who identified themselves as having no religion. They represented less than one percent of the entire Brazilian population in 1940, but by 2000 had increased to seven percent, indicating rising (though still modest) secularization.

Two other religious affiliations—Spiritism<sup>4</sup> and Afro-Brazilian<sup>5</sup> religions—represented two percent of the Brazilian population in 2000. Additionally, a wide variety of religions comprise less than one percent of the population, such as Judaism, Buddhism, and Jehovah’s Witnesses (Pierucci and Prandi, 2000). Table 3.1 shows how the relative distribution of the Brazilian population by major religious affiliations changed between 1940 and 2000.

**Table 3.1**  
**Relative Distribution of the Brazilian Population by Major Religious Affiliations, 1940-2000 (%)**

| Religion      | 1940 | 1950 | 1960 | 1970 | 1980 | 1991 | 2000 |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Catholicism   | 95.4 | 93.7 | 93.1 | 91.8 | 89.2 | 83.3 | 73.7 |
| Protestantism | 2.6  | 3.4  | 4.0  | 5.8  | 6.6  | 9.0  | 15.4 |
| No-religion   | 0.2  | 0.5  | 0.5  | 0.8  | 1.6  | 4.8  | 7.4  |
| Others        | 1.9  | 2.4  | 2.4  | 2.3  | 2.5  | 2.9  | 3.4  |
| Total         | 100  | 100  | 100  | 100  | 100  | 100  | 100  |

Source: IBGE - Demographic Censuses 1940 - 2000

<sup>4</sup> Spiritism, or French spiritualism, is based on books written by French educator Allan Kardec, in which he reported attempts to communicate with spirits.

<sup>5</sup> In Brazil, Umbanda and Candomblé, are the two principal afro-Brazilian religions. Their main elements are: spirit possession, animal sacrifice, and syncretism with Catholicism.

Moreover, Table 3.2 shows that the growth of Protestantism in Brazil was largely due to the Pentecostal denominations, whose relative participation in the entire group of Protestants rose from 50.6 percent in 1980 to 68.7 percent in 2000.

**Table 3.2**  
**Relative Distribution of Protestants by Type of Denomination,**  
**1980-2000 (%)\***

| Protestants  | 1980       | 1991       | 2000       |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Traditional  | 50.6       | 33.3       | 26.3       |
| Pentecostal  | 49.4       | 62.1       | 68.7       |
| Others       | 0.0        | 4.6        | 5.0        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b> |

Source: IBGE - Demographic Censuses 1940 – 2000

\* Before 1980 there was only one, generic, either "Protestant" or "Evangelic" category.

As suggested above, even though Brazil's religious landscape is very diverse, the majority of religions can be placed into two broad Christian groups: Catholicism and Protestantism (including traditional Protestant, Pentecostal, and Neo-Pentecostal churches). My dissertation will concentrate its analysis on these two broad religious organizations. Next, I will very briefly review the historical background of each of them in Brazil. This review is essential for a better understanding of the recent religious changes in this country.

### **3.1 - Catholicism in Brazil**

Although the percentage of Catholics has declined substantially in the last several decades, results from the 2000 demographic Brazilian Census reveal that it remains the dominant religion. The figure, however, overestimates the real strength of Catholicism in

Brazil. In fact, membership of this religion, as declared in census interviews, does not represent the hegemony of the Roman Catholic Church, but that of an old form of Iberian Catholicism (Mariz, 1994).

Catholicism was introduced in Brazil by the Portuguese crown upon its arrival in 1500. The Catholic Church and the Portuguese crown were seen as two mutually supporting forces, which supported and legitimized one another during the discovery and settlement of colonial Brazil (Bruneau, 1982 and 1974). This alliance allowed the Catholic Church to remain the only legal religion of Brazil for the first three hundred years of its colonial period (1500 – 1822). It is noteworthy that, at this time, adherence to Catholicism was obligatory; everyone had to belong to the church—not only European immigrants, but also Indians and African slaves. Catholicism maintained official religious hegemony until the early nineteenth century when religious pluralization started to emerge in Brazil due to the settlement and growth of Protestantism in this country.

Even being an obligatory religion during the colonial period, Catholicism in Brazil has long been blamed of permitting flexibility and variety regarding its religious practices<sup>6</sup>. It became an “easy religion” in Brazil, a “church very often regarded as a social necessity – a comfortable presence rather than a compelling force” (Bruneau; 1982: 21). Azevedo (2002) also stated that Catholicism has been transmitted from one generation to the next in Brazil, but that it does not really live in the conscience of the people. As noted by Pierucci and Prandi (2000), traditional Catholics still comprise the

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<sup>6</sup> Chesnut (2003) emphasized, for instance, that nominal Catholics have far outnumbered active practitioners in Latin America. Historically, not more than 15 percent of the population has been active practitioners of the faith, attending mass and other ecclesiastical activities on a regular basis.

majority of Catholics in Brazil today. This group includes those who attend church sporadically and are not involved in renewal movements, such as the Catholics of the Christian Base Communities and the Movement of Charismatic Catholic Review. Similar to Bruneau (1982), who described Catholicism as social necessity in Brazil, Pierucci and Prandi (2000:630) affirmed that traditional Catholics, in general, “maintain religion as a social identity, going to church only for rites of passage”.

Bruneau (1982) argued that the varied and noticeable patterns of religiosity currently existing in Brazil are partly due to the particular *type* of religion (named popular Catholicism) originally imported from Portugal, and to the context in which it evolved. The settlement and development of Catholicism in Brazil did not closely follow the Tridentine reforms<sup>7</sup>, which clearly emphasized dogmas, specifying Catholic doctrines on salvation, the sacraments, the Biblical canon, and the orthodoxy of beliefs and practices. These reforms would have standardized mass throughout different churches, by abolishing local variations. Indeed, an earlier model of Catholicism was implemented in Brazil, characterized by the popular use of liturgy (beyond the rubrics) or the popular liturgy (of the saints, etc) (Perez, 2000; Bruneau, 1982). The nature of popular Catholicism is exemplified in practices such as the devotions of saints, promises, miracles, and pilgrimages to sanctuaries (Pierucci and Prandi, 2000; Perez, 2000). This

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<sup>7</sup> They were discussed during the Council of Trent, which is the Nineteenth Ecumenical Council of the Roman Catholic Church. It convened three times between December 13, 1545 and December 4, 1563 in the city of Trent (modern Trento, Italy) as a response to the theological and ecclesiological challenges of the Protestant Reformation.

form of Catholicism mixed with indigenous, African, and Oriental contributions and did not assume the aggressive form that it had in Europe.

The context in which Catholicism was implemented in Brazil can be very briefly described by two aspects (although there are many others). As already mentioned, the context was marked by a close relationship between the Church and the Portuguese crown. In fact, the Church was under the control of the crown, which prevented religious organizations from making religion more orthodox or more in line with the sacraments. The repression of the state over the church probably reached its highest level in 1759, when the Portuguese crown forced the Jesuits out of Brazil. It was a significant loss, since the Jesuits held the most organized and independent order in Brazil, and perhaps the only one able to implement the reforms called for by the Council of Trent (Bruneau, 1982 and 1974).

The second aspect considered here is the extremely decentralized nature of Brazilian society to which Catholicism was introduced. As pointed out by Bruneau (1974), colonization in Brazil was rural in character, much more so than in Spanish America. There were no grand centers in Brazil such as Puebla and Lima (Bruneau, 1982). Consequently, Catholicism developed principally in small localities, separated from each other, with almost no influence of the bishop, or any kind of central organization. This lack of a centralized system, which would have standardized religious actions, also contributed to an increase in the variety of religious beliefs and practices within Brazilian popular Catholicism.

The official Roman Catholic Church began to express concern about its control and influence over the church in Brazil only in 1850, when the process called *Romanization* was introduced there. At this point, the Vatican attempted to impose its hierarchical and clerical model of ecclesial organization on the various national churches with the objective of promoting the uniformity of religious dogmas, beliefs, and moral behavior (Vásquez, 1998). In this process, mind and reason took priority over myth, emotion, and the body (Mariz, 1994).

Romanization was incomplete and had a quite limited impact on Brazil. Only the urban middle-class, through Catholic schools and religious movements, was affected by this effort to reorganize the Catholic religious field. This process did not reach residents in rural areas, the poor, or those with low education—that is to say, the majority of the Brazilian population at that time. The lack of consideration of the poor by the Catholic Church became a concern, which generated, during the 1960s, the emergence of the progressive Catholic Church movement in Brazil, represented by the Christian Base Communities (Mariz, 1994).

### **3.2 –The growth of Protestantism**

The nineteenth century was marked by the settlement and modest growth of traditional Protestantism in Brazil, represented by the reformed churches of European and North American origin. International migration, especially from European countries, and the later arrival of North American missionaries to Brazil were the initial factors contributing to the increase (Alves and Novellino, 2006). The first Protestant church was

organized in Brazil in 1837 by German Lutherans, who first settled in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Rio Grande do Sul in 1823 (Read and Ineson, 1973). Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and Episcopalians followed. These denominations, referred to as traditional or mainline Protestants, were small minorities and provoked few converts to Protestantism until the second half of the twentieth century, before the Pentecostal renewal (Decol, 1999; Mariz, 1994). Even so, traditional or mainline Protestants had an important influence on religious structure, since they acted as protagonists in remaking the Brazilian and Latin American religious landscape (Chesnut, 2003).

While traditional Protestantism started gaining a presence in Brazil during the nineteenth century, Pentecostalism is a twentieth century phenomenon. The latter is a renewal Protestant movement that places special emphasis on direct personal experience with God through baptism in the Holy Spirit, which was initially evidenced by spiritual gifts, especially speaking in tongues and prophecies. Speaking in tongues refers to “the gift of speaking in unknown languages when the Holy Spirit manifests itself to the faithful in collective trances, reproducing the biblical episode of the coming of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles in Pentecost” (Pierucci and Prandi, 2000: 631). Prophecies are the pronouncement of a message from God, not necessarily involving knowledge of the future.

Pentecostalism had its origin in U.S. Protestant revivalism. Its widespread movement in the United States is generally considered to have begun with Seymour's

Azusa Street Revival, in a Baptist Church in Los Angeles. During the second week of April, 1906, this street became a scenario for a series of events, including manifestations of healings and instances of speaking in tongue that convinced a large number of people to join the revival (Cleary, 2007; Cox, 2001). The name of William Seymour has received special attention, since he was the leader of those that gathered for prayer (initially a small group) and waited for a Pentecost (the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the followers of Jesus). Basically, Seymour had assured them that if they prayed with sufficient earnestness, God was ready to send a new Pentecost (Cox, 2001).

Pentecostalism has spread rapidly throughout the world since the beginning of the twentieth century. It arrived in Brazil in three different waves (Alves and Novellino, 2006; Mariano, 2005; Decol, 1999). The first wave, termed classic Pentecostalism, introduced churches such as *Assembleia de Deus* (the Assembly of God, in 1911) in Brazil. The second wave, in the 1950s and 1960s, brought *Igreja do Evangelho Quadrangular* (Foursquare Gospel Church, 1951), *Brasil para Cristo* (Brazil for Christ, 1955), and *Deus é Amor* (God is love, 1962). More recently, the third wave, called neo-Pentecostalism, emerged in the 1970s and 1980s in Brazil, and was led by *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* (Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, 1977) (Mariano, 2004).

In his book about the Pentecostal boom in Brazil, Andrew Chesnut (1997) emphasized that the great majority of Pentecostal Protestant converts in Brazil has been (very) poor people, and problem-solving could be a central motivation for them to join



Pentecostalism in Brazil. He described the universal condition of illness, addiction, and various ways of suffering as “pathogens of poverty” and said that conversion to this religion would be a way to overcome such hardship situations. Chesnut observed that the majority of his study’s informants in Belém (state of Pará) adhered to the faith in an attempt to solve different kinds of hardships or afflictions. The 1996 ISER (Institute of Religious Studies – Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) study, the largest survey conducted among Protestants in Latin America, revealed similar results: 55 percent of Protestants in the city of Rio de Janeiro reported converting to the faith while experiencing a time of serious hardship (Fernandes et al. 1998). Sickness, together with alcohol abuse, family conflict, and economic hardships, accounted for more than one-half of these problems. Assuring to solve them, Pentecostalism offers the power remedy of faith healing, which is considered the most powerful gift of the Holy Spirit in the Latin American Pentecostalism (Mariano, 2005; Chesnut, 2003, 1997; Mariz 1994; Burdick, 1993).

Chesnut (1997) suggested the existence of three main steps in the conversion process: *Crises*, *Cure* (faith healing), and *Affiliation* with the Pentecostal community. The first step sets the stage for adherence to Pentecostalism. According to the author, many economically less privileged people may find themselves afflicted or debilitated by, at least, three poverty-related illnesses classified as: physical, social, and supernatural diseases. Essentially, sufferers, who are in a moment of crisis and unable to resolve their own afflictions using worldly solutions, may start trusting in the supernatural as the only source of cure.

The second step, the cure or faith healing, is characterized by “the curing of a physical malady through direct or indirect intervention of one of the three persons of the Trinity (God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit)” (Chesnut, 1997: 80). Through the gift of healing, Jesus and the Holy Spirit use believers and clergy in Pentecostal churches as human tools to re-establish the health of the infirm. Affiliation, the third and last step considered by Chesnut, is a public confirmation that the new convert is now committed to serve Jesus.

David Smilde affirmed that the powerful influence of a network location is the best explanation for religious conversion. As such, he significantly contributed to the analysis of conversion to Latin American Protestantism. According to Smilde and other sociologists of religion, this view is generally based on the theory of social psychological conformity. It assumes that all humans have an essential need for social relationships, and that they value and preserve those relationships. Within this perspective, individuals convert to new religions not because of any inherent characteristics of those religions, but because they reduce dissonance in important relationships (Smilde, 2007 and 2005). Therefore, according to this author, this view suggests that when an individual converts, he is not following an ideology, but rather changing his behavior into alignment with that of his friends and family members.

Unlike Chesnut, Smilde does not see material deprivation as a necessary condition for conversion to new religions. According to him, persons with problems and suffering who need a solution may either find other means to address their problems, continue

suffering, or simply explain them away. More importantly, the author argues that others with similar needs but without influence of a network do not choose a religious solution. Smilde (2007), however, clarifies that individual-level problem-solving explanations can also be important to religious conversions. In fact, they are compatible with and can improve and extend network understandings of conversion since the network location determines who addresses those needs and hardship situations through religious participation.

The recent growth of Pentecostalism in Brazil (and all Latin America) has brought attention to potential social, demographic, economic, and cultural consequences of religious conversion (Mariz, 1992). For example, affiliation with these churches has been popularly associated with positive attitudinal and behavioral transformations that, among other things, may increase cultural and social capital, provide support networks of trust and reciprocity, modify gender relations, and enhance the economic viability of the household (Potter, Amaral and Woodbery, 2009; McKinnon, Potter, and Garrard-Burnett, 2008; Smilde, 2007; Wood, Williams, and Chijiwa 2007; Chesnut, 1997; Mariz, 1994). In order to understand such consequences, Chesnut (1997) also explained that Pentecostal Protestantism enjoyed overwhelming success in appealing to the poor based on the idea of a positive transformation for this group. Believers, for instance, cannot claim to be fully converted until they have completely abandoned several *mundane* pleasures. Some Pentecostal churches, for instance, strongly disapprove of alcohol consumption, drug use, smoking, premarital and non-marital sex, as well as modern hairstyles or dress and the use of cosmetics (Mariano, 2004; Burdick, 1993).

Whereas classic Pentecostalism offers a generic form of faith healing, neo-Pentecostal churches, best represented in Brazil by the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, have tended to specialize in the exorcism of demons, a specific type of faith healing (Chesnut, 2003). This can be interpreted as a result of the combination of classic and modern Pentecostalism with elements of Umbanda<sup>8</sup>.

Neo-Pentecostal churches also differ from traditional Pentecostals through what is known as prosperity theology (Mariano, 2005), which teaches that material and spiritual blessings are connected. Following this theology, neo-Pentecostal churches provide services that focus on financial prosperity and social mobility. Consequently, neo-Pentecostalism is more tolerant than traditional Pentecostalism in terms of lifestyle and moral regulation (Mariz, 1994); it does not impose restrictions on modern hairstyles or dress, nor on the use of cosmetics. Neo-Pentecostal converts are also allowed to frequent beaches, practice sports, and enjoy movies and television programs (Mariano, 2004; Chesnut, 1997).

Finally, it is important to clarify that some mainline Protestant churches in Brazil have expressed a renewed interest in Pentecostal religious goods and services; they have, for instance, embraced spirit-filled worship and become similar to Pentecostal churches in several ways. Using a micro-economic approach, Chesnut (2003) explained that mainline Protestantism, unlike Pentecostalism, is stagnating because its proponents lack competitive products of mass appeal and are not skilled marketers in the pluralistic

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<sup>8</sup> Umbanda is an Afro-Brazilian religion that blends African religions with Catholicism and Spiritism.

Brazilian religious landscape. Thus, by adhering to Pentecostal products and services, traditional Protestants have tried to contain the loss of their believers and, at same time, compete more efficiently in the religious market. They generally maintain their denominations titles (e.g., Baptist and Presbyterian) but differentiate themselves from their non-charismatic brethren by including the word renewed (*renovada*) in their names (Chesnut, 2003).

### **3.3 – Two Catholic renewal movements: Christian Base Communities (CEB) and Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR)**

In addition to the emergence of Pentecostal Protestantism briefly explained above, two important Catholic renewal movements took place in Brazil in recent decades: the Christian Base Communities (CEBs)<sup>9</sup> and the Movement of Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR). CEBs emerged in Latin America in the 1960s, and became widely recognized by the 1970s. They are represented by Catholic congregations engaged, through meditation and prayer, in efforts to raise political and social awareness and promote the struggle for social justice (Burdick, 1993; Mariz, 1994). Many priests and lay CEB members were influenced by liberation theology, with its view of the church as being of service to society (Cleary, 2007) and that the world's Catholics must militantly encourage its material transformation.

The number of CEBs in Brazil fell dramatically in the 1980s, both because some people left to join new movements or parties, and due the fact that the Catholic Church

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<sup>9</sup> The acronym for *Comunidade Eclesial de Base*.

had become less supportive of the progressive sector. Moreover, as pointed out by Mariz (1994), CEBs have a weaker appeal among the population than Pentecostalism in part because they do not offer immediate solutions to problems associated with poverty. Although currently declining or stagnating, CEBs still have a following of approximately 2 million people that are mainly comprised of individuals from the poorer social classes in Brazil (Chesnut, 2003; Pierucci and Prandi, 2000).

The CCR is a “North American product” that began at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh in 1967. Students and professors said they experienced the baptism in Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues during the weekend of February 17, making it the first event in which a group of Catholics experienced such spiritual gifts. The CCR was introduced in Brazil in the early 1970s, and as opposed to the CEBs, its popularity has sharply increased, making it the largest and most active Catholic lay movement there (and in most other Latin American countries too) (Cleary, 2007; Valle, 2004; Chesnut, 2003; Pierucci and Prandi, 2000). It was estimated that more than seventy-three million charismatic Catholics were present in Latin America in 2000, comprising approximately 16 percent of Catholics in the region and more than half of the charismatic Catholics in the world. It was also estimated that nearly 107,000 prayer groups existed in Latin America during the same year, representing more than 70 percent of these charismatic Catholics groups in the world<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Statistics posted by International Center for Catholic Charismatic Renewal at [www.iccrs.org/ccr%20worldwide.htm](http://www.iccrs.org/ccr%20worldwide.htm) (accessed in 06/30/2009)

The followers of the CCR are primarily members of the middle class. Unlike the CEBs, the CCR is uninterested in issues of a collective nature; rather, it places special emphasis on the sphere of intimacy and counter-cultural lifestyles, especially in regard to family, habits, and sexuality (Pierucci and Prandi, 2000). For instance, charismatic Catholics strongly disapprove promiscuous sexual behavior and offer support for youth who desire to remain celibate until marriage (Cleary, 2007). Charismatic Catholics are also recognized for their devotion to the Virgin Mary (the Mother of God), their attachment to the Eucharist, and their loyalty to the Pope.

Pierucci and Prandi (2000) argue that the CCR has been a revitalization movement in Brazil that resulted from a double motivation: first, it offered an alternative to CEBs and second, it came to compete with Pentecostal Protestantism. As noted earlier, Brazil has undergone a pluralization of its religious landscape, which has been particularly characterized by the growth of Pentecostalism, the major rival to Catholicism. The CCR arrived in Brazil at the time when the Catholic Church was in a state of crisis marked by a concern with that growth. Since then, some Latin American bishops identified the CCR “as a movement that could stanch the flow of Catholics into Pentecostal churches” (Chesnut, 2003: 70).

Many of the changes in discourse, lifestyle, local participation, and faith practices among Pentecostal Protestants are also prevalent within the charismatic Catholic movement in Brazil (Cleary, 2007). Similarly to Pentecostal Protestants, charismatic Catholics tend to participate intensely in their religious groups and demonstrate a strong

missionary attitude toward non-members and recruitment of friends, relatives, and associates (Cleary, 2007). Also, adherents and new participants are expected to join small prayer groups, called communities, which meet on a weekly basis and guide members toward greater spiritual growth. During the Renewal's first decade, prayer groups constituted the principal port of entry into the movement and introduced a dynamic way for Catholics to practice faith, which emphasizes the transformative power of the Holy Spirit (Chesnut, 2003).

Charismatic Catholics, like Pentecostal Protestants, highlight the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which occupy the center of their belief system. Such an emphasis on the third person of the Trinity, called pneumacentrism, refers to “the Pentecostal belief that Jesus and the Holy Spirit have the power to cure believers of their spiritual, somatic, and psychological ills” (Chesnut, 2003: 44). As already explained, Chesnut argued that popular religious consumers prefer pneumatic religions because they seek divine resolution of their everyday afflictions. Although this thesis is the same for both charismatic Catholics and Pentecostal Protestants, the author showed that the reasons calling middle-class Latin Americans to join CCR are more often associated with psychological traumas and painful memories than with material deprivation. In addition, as suggested earlier, two important gifts of the Holy Spirit commonly observed in both religions are the practice of speaking in tongues and prophecies.

Finally, as well documented, CCR in Brazil has received widespread media coverage, particularly through radio and television, as shown by its two television



enterprises, *Rede Brasil Cristão* (Christian Brazil Network) and *Rede Vida* (Life Network). Charismatic Catholics are also famous for incorporating new elements, such as singing, movement, and priest performers, into daily mass and gospel shows. Padre Marcelo Rossi, a very popular Brazilian charismatic priest, exemplifies the power of the CCR to congregate and mobilize believers. He has attracted large crowds to different kinds of religious ceremonies and events as well as regular television broadcasts. As argued by Chenust, these strategies or new elements are potent marketing tools for spreading the charismatic gospel.

## **Chapter Four – Explanations for religious influence: direct and indirect effects**

### **4.1 – Direct effects**

Research on religious influence usually notes two types of effects: direct and indirect. Studies on the direct effects of religious influence focus on the idea that sacred teachings, beliefs and values offered by religious groups and congregations may directly affect peoples' behavior. This straightforward influence is found when one or more aspects of religion have an independent effect on the outcome of interest net of other important independent influences (Regnerus, 2003). Not surprisingly, individuals with greater religious commitment are expected to be more apt to reproduce the implications of those sacred teachings in their actions.

Several analysts have argued that social institutions, primarily the family and religion, are a source of social control that governs sexual expression and behavior (DeLamater, 1981). This perspective postulates that people are naturally inclined toward deviance that can be restrained by bonds to conventional and social organizations (Durkheim, 1951; Hirschi, 1969). It logically implies that those sources of control display a positive association with measures of conventionality and conformity, and a negative association with measures of deviant behavior (Thornton and Camburn, 1989; DeLamater, 1981; Rohrbaugh and Jessor, 1975).

According to social control theories of adolescent behavior, religion functions to encourage adolescents to avoid actions that they might otherwise have taken (Regnerus, 2007 and 2003; Rostosky et al. 2004; Smith, 2003; Hardy and Raffaelli, 2003; Crockett et al. 1996; DeLamater, 1981; Rohrbaugh and Jessor, 1975). Such an influence of religion has been frequently seen as an inhibiting force, which may contribute to postponing, reducing or even restricting certain behaviors, such as adolescent sexual activity.

Theories of social control include social mechanisms that regulate individual and group behavior. In their research on religiosity in youth, Rohrbaugh and Jessor (1975) seek to provide evidence of the function of religiosity as a personal control against transgression and deviance among high school and college students. They argue that the linkage between religion and social control against social problem behavior may be mediated in different ways: (1) by making the individual sensitive and aware of norms, moral order issues, and standards of appropriate behavior; (2) by embedding the individual in “conventional activities and in an organized sanctioning network” (p. 137); (3) by offering an ideology that is based on the nature of the deity as a source of punishment and wrath; and (4) by producing devoutness or reverence, and then creating obedience orientation.

#### **4.1.1 - Moral order**

The church, a socialization agent traditionally held responsible for the prescription of values and standards of sexual behavior, likely plays an important role in shaping adolescents and youth’s sexual decision-making. The work of Christian Smith (2003),

who formulates an integrated account of religion's constructive influence in the lives of American adolescents, helps to elucidate this idea. This author suggests direct pathways, aggregated around the dimension of moral order<sup>11</sup>, through which religion may act. He considers three factors in such a dimension: (1) moral directives; (2) role models; and (3) spiritual experiences. According to Smith (2003), these factors promote particular normative ideas of what is good and bad, right and wrong, worthy and unworthy, and so on, thus guiding human consciousness, choice, and action. As pointed out by the author, these factors are believed to exist apart from and above human decisions, preferences, and desires.

The first factor suggested by Smith is defined as cultural moral directives of self-control and personal virtue that are internalized by youth, who use them to orient their life choices and promote appropriate conduct. Most religious groups articulate proscriptive values such as honoring one's parents and elders, avoiding certain lifestyle choices and attitudes (e.g., sexual promiscuity, substance use/abuse), acting in honesty and fairness, and so on, that may affect adolescents and youth's decisions and behavior.

The second factor, role models, provides adolescents with examples of life practices shaped by religious moral orders. Some of these examples are constructive and may positively affect the youth's attitudes and relationships. Most religions in Brazil have caught young people's attention recently, and, consequently, a significant number of

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<sup>11</sup> Two other dimensions suggested by Smith (2003), learned competences and social and organizational ties, will be treated in the section on indirect effects of religion.

young religious leaders have been in demand to work (generally on a volunteer basis) within the church. Young religious leaders are, for instance, very popular in the organization of youth meetings and services. It is expected that they teach values and attitudes, as well as provide other adolescents with examples of religious life practices to emulate. Moreover, during conversion to charismatic religions in Brazil, they generally assume a responsibility to nurture the newly converted members. They do this, among other things, through strong emotional support and by setting examples inside the church (Cleary, 2007).

The last factor regarding the moral directive dimension, spiritual experiences, may help to reinforce youth moral commitments throughout the provision of organizational contexts and cultural substance provided by religion. Some examples of these experiences are a conversion experience, an answer to a prayer, and the witnessing of a miracle (Smith, 2003).

Previous studies have frequently emphasized the idea that moral directives and role models are mechanisms through which the institution of religion becomes a source of social control and is effective in affecting individuals' sexual behavior. Studer and Thornton (1987), for example, note that the church proscribes a set of assumptions and norms that guides adherents, serving as a basis for self-control. Moreover, they argued that individuals who occupy institutional roles in the church may interact with other members and act as role models, serving as a basis of informal control.

As noted earlier, one of the major concerns of some churches in Brazil, such as Pentecostals and charismatic Catholics, is the demonstration of Christian values in secular society (Cleary, 2007). They place special emphasis on the sphere of intimacy, especially with regard to family, habits, and sexuality. It is noteworthy that most studies about Pentecostalism, for instance, emphasize its pietism and conservative values. Pentecostal practical theology, for example, disapproves of a variety of types of mundane pleasures, such as modern hairstyle or dress and the use of cosmetics and jewels, and as expected, places a ban on premarital sex (Mariano, 2004; Chesnut, 2003; Mariz, 1994; Burdick, 1993).

One example is the high value given to marriage. Because it is so esteemed for some religious denominations in Brazil, both Catholicism (especially those churches influenced by the charismatic wave) and Pentecostal Protestantism establish doctrines against premarital and extramarital sex and try to teach mechanisms for resisting these temptations. Pentecostal Protestant churches have been very effective in spreading restrictions on extramarital sex, which has very often helped adherents prevent problems, such as family conflict and disruption (Chesnut, 2003; Burdick, 1993). The study of Hill, Cleland and Ali (2004), for example, examined the association between religious affiliation and extramarital sex among men in Brazil. The authors found that non-evangelical men were significantly more likely to report having had an extramarital partner as well as unprotected extramarital sex when compared with members of evangelical religions.

Finally, the presence of spiritual experiences can also be widely observed in Brazil, through the process of conversion to some Pentecostal and, more recently, neo-Pentecostal churches as well as charismatic Catholic communities. Conversion to these churches and communities very often holds the spiritual power to transform individuals' behavior and lifestyle (Cleary, 2007; Chesnut 2003; Mariz 1994; Burdick, 1993). In a book about religious conversion in Latin America, Cleary (2007) argued that conversion for charismatic Catholics in Brazil means a new way of life, a commitment with new elements, very often associated with the faith healing (a gift from the Holy Spirit). According to the author, conversion in the Catholic charismatic movement "is believed to bring about the reordering of social and religious attitudes in line with God's wishes" (Cleary, 2007: 156).

#### **4.1.2 - Sanctions**

Most research on religion and adolescents' sexual decisions suggests that religion largely forbids certain actions. Religion is almost always associated with sexual conservatism, repression, abstinence, and general condemnation (Regnerus, 2007). Individuals in religious communities, therefore, may conform to religious norms because they fear potential social sanctions (Ellison and Levin, 1998). Consequently, religious norms are very often enforced via the possibility of negative sanctions for their disobedience (Wimberley, 1989; Studer and Thornton, 1987).

Pentecostal and renewed Protestant churches, as well as Catholic charismatic communities, may have a direct influence on adolescent sexual behavior in Brazil

because they strongly disapprove certain kinds of behaviors, such as premarital sex, and impose sanctions on those members who disobey this doctrine. Different authors emphasize that this religious regimen of forbiddance in Brazil is sustained by formal (e.g., rebukes from clergy) and informal (e.g., gossip and isolation by fellow followers) sanctions within closed communities (Mariz, 1994; Burdick, 1993).

Because the Pentecostal doctrine and the Catholic charismatic movement in Brazil strongly prohibit different types of mundane pleasures (Chesnut, 2003), it is very likely that those adolescents who engage in premarital sexual relationships face severe sanctions from their church, especially if pregnancy ensues. In an excellent ethnographic study conducted in Brazil, John Burdick (1993) studies those prohibitions and how they may influence the lives and behaviors of Brazilian youth. He argued, for example, that courting is closely regulated in Pentecostal churches, such as the Assemblies of God, where premarital sex is considered a very serious sin. According to the author, “those who surrender to temptation [premarital sex] may be severely disciplined, even excluded from communion for a time, and may suffer the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit” (Burdick, 1993, p. 131). Therefore, Pentecostal girls may consider their religious faith and/or the sanctions imposed by their church when making choices about sex and reproduction.

#### **4.1.3 - Consequences of deviance**

The violation of religious norms may generate psychological consequences of deviance, for instance, evoking feelings such as guilt, public embarrassment, or the expectation of divine punishment (Ellison and Levin, 1998). According to many



investigators, any given behavior or consequence will vary based on the degree of religious salience, which is measured “at least partially in terms of respondents' subjective assessments of the importance of religion to themselves” (Wimberley, 1989:127).

In other words, whether and to what extent the hierarchy of salience influences the choice of behavior will depend on the degree of religious salience. For persons with a high degree of salience, the transgression of religious norms will likely have consequences associated with psychological distress, which can be a type of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1962). This is a mental state characterized by an uncomfortable feeling generated when a contradiction between what an individual believes and how she or he behaves.

Therefore, adolescents and young adults who belong to religious congregations that discourage or ban premarital sexual relationships may experience some or all of the consequences mentioned above if they decide to violate these (and other) religious sexual norms. Moreover, it is important to highlight that the strength of these different kinds of mental distress will vary according to the level of the individual's religious salience.

On the other hand, anticipation and fear of consequences of deviance may generate motivation for conformity to religious values. Simultaneously, they may benefit religious individuals in terms of enhanced prestige and other desired social goods for meeting their religious obligations (Handy and Raffaelli, 2003; Wimberley, 1989).

## 4.2 – Indirect effects

The section above suggests that religion may directly affect decisions through religious norms, sanctions, and feelings, such as guilt. Nevertheless, the absence or lack of perception of direct religious effects does not mean that religion is not important (Regnerus, 2003). Indeed, the most common way that religion influences human actions is through indirect influences, which are “unintentional social byproducts when religious people doing things for religious reasons facilitate other distinctive outcomes” (Regnerus and Smith, 2005: 24). Research on indirect religious influences always call attention to mechanisms or pathways by which religion may help bring about a desired outcome.

The work of Christian Smith (2003) also suggests key factors or pathways through which religion may indirectly act. These are aggregated around two dimensions: learned competences and social and organizational ties. In fact, Smith (2003) employs these dimensions in order to introduce several mechanisms (or means) of religious influence on adolescents’ lives, which do not typically operate independently. Such mechanisms suggest that religion is largely indirect in its influence.

Recognizing the pathways through which religion functions is essential to better understand how it may shape individuals’ behavior. Importantly, although Smith’s theory focuses on religious effects among American adolescents, each of these pathways can also be used to explain potential indirect effects of religion on the lives of Brazilian adolescents. Finally, even though there is almost no empirical evidence as to how these

mechanisms work in Brazil, some churches there, as suggested below, may offer an appropriate environment for the emergence of some of the pathways suggested here.

#### **4.2.1 – Learned competences**

Smith argues that religion can strongly influence the lives of youth “by increasing their competence in skills and knowledge that contribute to enhancing their well-being and improving their life chances” (Smith, 2003: 20). He structured such learned competences into these three factors: (1) community and leadership skills; (2) cultural capital; and (3) coping skills.

Community and leadership skills are obtained in religions or churches that offer organizational contexts where youth can observe, learn, and practice them. Most churches are often in need of members to coordinate initiatives and serve on committees and programs. These practices may provide religiously engaged youth with the opportunity to develop abilities and obtain different types of experience. Importantly, such skills are very often translated into contexts beyond religious activities, such as neighborhood organizations, political activism, and professional activities, among others (Smith, 2003).

The next factor, cultural capital, is defined as forms of knowledge, skills, and advantages that a person has, which can give him or her a higher status in society. It may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications (Bourdieu, 1986). Cultural capital can be acquired and increased through religious support of engaging in certain activities and practices that are embodied as implicit knowledge and dispositions. Many

religions are viewed, in fact, as an alternative opportunity to obtain elements of cultural capital, which tend to work toward positive, constructive behavioral outcomes in children and adolescents' lives (Smith, 2003). For example, in religious congregations, children and adolescents very often have a chance to receive Biblical and musical education; they also may learn about history, geography, and major religious traditions.

It is well known that one of the primary functions of religion is to help people deal with adversity. The last factor, coping skills, is acquired via the religious promotion of beliefs and practices that can help adolescents cope with difficult moments and emotions, and overcome conflicts and tragedies, including financial hardship. Religion may offer youth resources and beliefs to address, negotiate, and copy different types of life problems. Some religious practices associated with coping skills include meditation, forgiveness, and confession. Other key dimensions of religious support that may affect coping through church-based social ties include emotional and spiritual support from church members and emotional support from the clergy (Krause et al. 2001).

Some of these religious pathways may be more closely associated with adolescent's sexual and reproductive behavior. The achievement of leadership skills, when helping to coordinate a religious workshop, assisting in a tutoring program, or learning to play a musical instrument, for instance, represents a useful capability that can positively affect adolescents' opportunities at school (Glanville, Sikkink, and Hernández, 2008; Muller and Ellison, 2001; Regnerus, 2000) and in the labor market, increasing their confidence and life chances. Consequently, higher expectations and better opportunities

may be a motivation (especially for adolescent girls) to avoid certain behaviors, including premarital sexual relations that could be associated with early dropout from school and unplanned pregnancy (Bongaarts and Cohen, 1998). Moreover, because religious leaders are expected to teach values and attitudes as well as provide other adolescents with examples of religious life practices to emulate, young and never-married religious leaders may feel more pressured to abstain from such sexual behaviors.

Mariz (1994) argued that because Pentecostal churches in Brazil very often consist of independent small groups, ordinary people may have ample opportunity to develop leadership skills that can increase their capacities and confidence and enhance their well-being. Furthermore, as pointed out by Mariz (1994) and Burdick (1993), unlike traditional Catholics, Pentecostals have long been recognized in Brazil for their religious knowledge. They highlight, for instance, the importance of reading the Bible and knowing its contents well. Pentecostal Protestant churches in Brazil also provide youth with substantial musical education through participation in choirs and choruses, and opportunities to play musical instruments for worship (Mariz, 1994). The stimulus for reading, speaking, forming opinions, and playing musical instruments may encourage Pentecostals to become literate and develop skills that can be useful in other aspects in their lives. They may, for instance, become talented adolescents and develop higher educational and professional aspirations. Consequently, they may want to avoid or postpone certain sexual or reproductive outcomes, such as premarital sex or childbearing, which could hold consequences that restrict better life opportunities.

We know little about the potential effect of religious involvement on coping skills in Brazil. One of the few studies exist to address this issue is an excellent ethnographic study conducted by Cecília Loreto Mariz that investigated whether religion has any influence on people overcoming poverty in this country. In her analysis of the cultural strategy to cope with poverty, Mariz (1994) notes that Pentecostalism, unlike other religious groups, motivates its adherents to take good care of their families. According to her, because Pentecostal congregations put special emphasis on family life and strict sexual morality, a motivational strategy for coping with poverty may be observed, since a single-parent family is usually associated with greater instability and economic problems than a household where a couple is present. Mariz (1994) argues that the moral doctrine of Pentecostalism may decrease the rate of single motherhood and broken marriages, indirectly avoiding the further lowering of the living standard among poor families. In order to illustrate how Pentecostal churches may deal with single motherhood, she mentions an interviewee, who was expelled from her Pentecostal church because she became a single mother.

Moreover, Pentecostal Protestant churches in Brazil are recognized for promoting self-help networks that are national in scope. They usually offer not only psychological and spiritual support, but also financial support, opening their homes to people in need, trying to help others to find jobs, or even offering childcare support (Chesnut, 2003; Mariz, 1994, Burdick, 1993). Lastly, followers very often claim to experience economic improvement after their conversion as a result of abstaining from alcohol and drug consumption. For this reason, they are able to save money to invest in cash crops, land,

housing, and consumer durables, which can help in overcoming poverty (Potter, Amaral and Woodberry, 2009; Brusco, 1995; Mariz, 1994).

#### **4.2.2 - Social and organizational ties**

The last three factors explained by Smith (2003) are: (4) social capital, (5) network closure and (6) extra community links. As mentioned above, this set of factors is aggregated into the social and organizational ties dimension. In this dimension Smith discusses structures of relations that affect the opportunities and limitations that young people may face.

Social capital refers to social relationships and institutional involvements that provide individuals with various kinds of resources that can facilitate action and be mobilized toward instrumental ends (Coleman, 1988). Whether consciously or unconsciously, it may enhance people's ability to achieve desired goals. Among other things, the acquisition of social capital is possible through religion because it is not a rigidly-age-stratified institution; in this way, adolescents may work, participate, and interact with other people extensively inside the church.

In fact, Smith argues that religious institutions emphasize personal interactions with fellow believers of all ages and life stages, providing youth with access to adult members and encouraging exchange relations within a context governed by norms of trust, care, and mutual obligation. These networks may be an important source of helpful information, resources, and opportunities of which youth can always take advantage

(Smith, 2003; Muller and Ellison, 2001; Krause et al. 2001). For example, the social integration and support available through interactions with members of a religious community may serve to reinforce acceptable and unacceptable sexual behaviors (Rostosky et al. 2004; Ellison and Levin, 1998).

The fifth factor, network closure, which can be seen as an aspect of social capital, refers to “relational networks that facilitate more informed and effective oversight and control of youth by adults who care about them” (Smith, 2003: 26). Encouraging social relationships between youth, parents, friends and other adults is a way to improve youth outcomes, mainly because it creates conditions of increased support for and supervision of youth. Many religious congregations sponsor family-support activities directly, thus providing opportunities for parents and children to spend time together (Muller and Ellison, 2001). These connections can also, for example, restrict adolescents’ and youth’s free time, which may positively and indirectly affect various behavioral risks faced by this age group (Regnerus, 2003).

Finally, the last factor mentioned by Smith, extra-community links, can be a positive source of religious influence on young people lives because religion is very often connected to national and transnational religious organizations. Such links can provide valuable access to events and experiences that can expand youth’s aspirations, encouraging their development and maturity, and exposing them to new knowledge (Smith, 2003).



A number of previous studies have analyzed religious participation as a source of social capital and intergenerational closure of networks. In one of them, Smith (2003b) tested whether religious involvement is associated with network closure in social networks involving American adolescents. His findings indicate that the interaction effect of both adult religious service participation and adolescent religious youth group involvement is significantly associated with increased network closure with friends, other parents, and teachers.

In Venezuela, Smilde (2007) observed that Pentecostals and charismatic Catholics undoubtedly have networks that extend beyond traditional church structures. Network activity may take place at services in churches but also in interactions on the streets. According to the author, gatherings occur in private and public spaces that allow for engaging in study circles or different forms of worship, exchanging information, and receiving counseling, among other things (Smilde, 2007).

Other studies have suggested that religious involvement fosters greater educational expectations, higher test scores, more time spent on homework, and a lower likelihood of dropping out of high school (Glanville, Sikkink, and Hernández, 2008; Muller and Ellison, 2001; Regnerus, 2000). Although little is known about the process through which religion influences these outcomes, some of these studies found that religious participation enhances academic outcomes through social capital mechanisms. In one of the most referenced articles on the topic, Muller and Ellison (2001) examined the role of religious involvement in creating and sustaining social capital for adolescents

and their parents, and in directly promoting educational success. Their main findings show that religious involvement is related to each of the positive adolescent educational outcomes considered in their analysis, and these relationships are explained largely by various measures of family and community social capital.

In another recent study, Glanville, Sikkink, and Hernández (2008) argued that religious involvement may influence the development of intergenerational friendship networks for adolescents because religious groups encourage adult commitment to the socialization of children. Their main results show that religious attendance promotes higher intergenerational closure, friendship networks with higher educational resources, and extracurricular participation. These intervening variables, however, account for a small part of the religious influence.

Little attention has been given to the possible impact of religious involvement on social and organizational ties in Brazil, which would indirectly affect different outcomes, such as adolescent's sexual behavior. Nevertheless, it is known that some churches may offer an appropriate environment for the emergence of some of these pathways. Members of Pentecostal Protestant and charismatic Catholic churches, for instance, usually experience close relationships with fellow believers. After their conversion, they usually join small prayer groups, which are called communities and resemble extended families. These communities teach, encourage, and challenge new adherents to seek greater spiritual growth and to construct stronger relationships (Cleary, 2007).

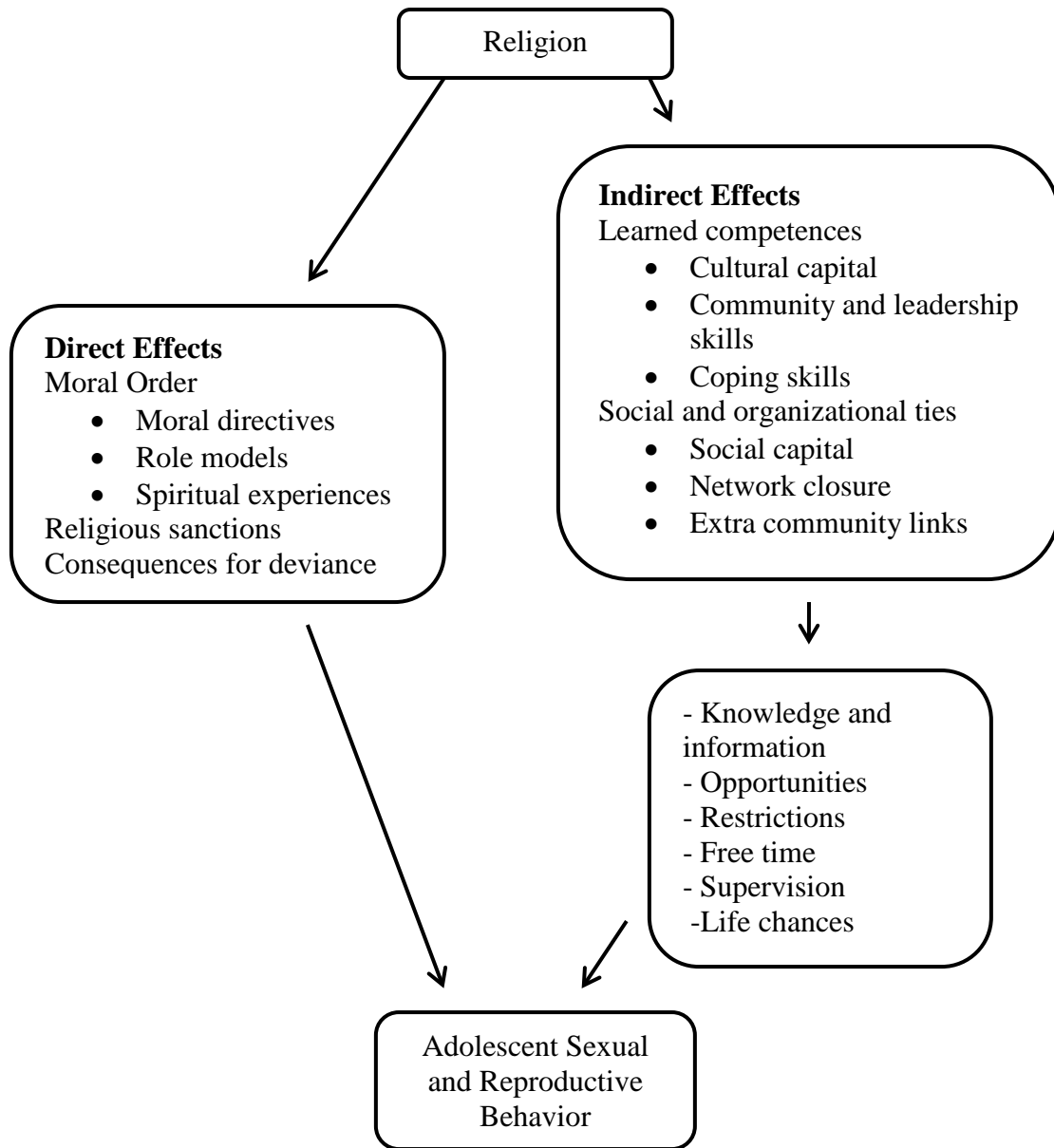
To some degree, these social ties may affect the use of time by young people, and encourage them to look for a (better) job or study harder at school. These connections, based on religious environment, can consequently expand youth's aspirations, encouraging their development and maturity, and restricting their free time, which may indirectly affect their sexual and reproductive behavior as well. In addition, these networks of relational ties may affect adolescents' attitudes by enabling parents and older religiously involved people to supervise and pay closer attention to them (Heilborn, Barros, and Duarte, 2007; Smith, 2003). Regarding this supervision, Burdick (1993) and Rohden et al. (2005) observed that Pentecostal parents, for instance, maintain strict authority over their daughters' relations with men in Brazil. They very often disapprove of extended courtships and marriage to non-*crentes*<sup>12</sup>.

Figure 4.1 summarizes the conceptual model of how religion may directly and indirectly affect adolescent behaviors. It is almost entirely based on Smith's (2003) theoretical framework on how religion would influence American adolescents. Because I am particularly interested in such influence on sexual behavior, I added two important ways religion may affect Brazilian adolescents and young people: religious sanctions and consequences for deviance.

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<sup>12</sup> *Crente* means believer, and it is a name popularly given to adepts of Protestant churches.

**Figure 1 – Conceptual model of how religion may, directly and indirectly, affect adolescent sexual and reproductive behavior**



### **4.3- Alternative explanations**

Although religious involvement may employ all the mechanisms suggested above to affect adolescent outcomes, it is important to highlight that the influence of religion is often under suspicion. Some social scientists are skeptical and do not believe the religious reasons that adolescents give for their actions. As pointed out by Regnerus (2007), this skeptical view suggests that the apparent religious influence would actually be caused by three different factors: (1) selection effects, (2) reverse causation, or (3) social desirability bias.

The first alternative explanation, selectivity, assumes that both the predictor (e.g., religion) and the outcome (e.g., adolescent sexual behavior) are, in fact, a consequence of some other unobservable or unknown factor(s) that causes both independently (Regnerus and Smith, 2005). A given unobserved factor would, therefore, overestimate the statistical results of the effects of religion, attributing more importance to these effects than they really deserve. In this case, religion would conduct, but not cause, sexual behavior (Regnerus, 2007). Among arguments favoring the selection hypothesis is the notion that being religious is an endogenous decision (and not a given feature), which relies on a variety of factors, including some that may have nothing to do with the content of the religion itself.

The religious-strategy explanation is a subset of general selection effects. According to this explanation, religion can be a strategy to successively achieve a desired result for those who are already predisposed toward certain outcomes (e.g., maintaining

virginity). This approach suggests, therefore, that observed outcomes are a result of life orientation and personal goals rather than a result of religious influence per se. Thus, in order to achieve their goals and desires, people may instrumentally choose to become religiously involved (Regnerus and Smith, 2005).

The second explanation, the reverse causation (or religious exit), recognizes that decisions on religion are a product of decisions on the outcome under consideration (e.g., sexual behavior) and not the other way around. This hypothesis centers in the fact of leaving religion, and assumes that people self-select out of religion. Some religiously involved persons develop certain attitudes that are at odds with their religious attitudes and beliefs, and decrease their religious involvement, creating an illusory association between, say, virginity and people who do not self-select out of religion (Regnerus and Smith, 2005). In other words, as pointed out by Regnerus and Smith (2005: 28), “religion itself does not influence individuals toward better outcomes, but rather is avoided by individuals with deviant outcomes”.

Finally, social desirability bias is the inclination to present oneself in a manner that will be viewed favorably by others. Respondents may find themselves embarrassed and may decide to lie rather than tell the truth (Regnerus and Uecker, 2007; Presser and Stinson, 1998), especially when asked about behavior associated, for instance, with religious participation or sexual activity. This inclination to lie can affect how respondents answer research questions, thus confounding the results.

This study, therefore, takes into consideration three alternative explanations suggested by skeptical researchers who do not believe that adolescents can articulate religious reasons for their actions, including those associated with sexual behavior.

## Chapter Five – Data and Methods

### 5.1 - Data

This dissertation uses two sources of data, combining sets of quantitative and qualitative information. First, this research employs data from three DHS carried out during the period of 1986 to 2006 in Brazil. All these samples are nationally representative surveys of women aged 15-44 years in 1986 and 15-49 years in 1996 and 2006, which contain detailed information on socio-demographic variables and reproductive and child health. For those women who reported having already had sexual intercourse, the DHS asked the age at first time. This information is essential, or at least very helpful, to better understand the association between sexual debut (and the risk of adolescent childbearing), and religious affiliation and attendance.

This chapter focuses on trends and associations between religion and adolescents' (aged 15-19) first sexual experience in Brazil. Since the histories of these women are incomplete, the experiences of young adults aged 20-24 (women who recently completed their teen years) are also considered. Moreover, because of the confounding effects of marriage and sexual activity, this analysis estimates the risk of the first sexual intercourse being premarital—that is, first intercourse occurring either at a younger age than the first union, whether formal or informal, or before the age of 20 among women never married. As pointed out by Gupta (2000), it is important to highlight that the DHS measures the age at first sexual intercourse and age at first union in completed years. This practice



likely leads to underestimated rates of premarital activity, because some sexual relations occurring within the few months preceding marriage are counted as marital events.

Of the total sample of 5,892, 12,612, and 15,575 women in 1986, 1996, and 2006, respectively, 2,477, 4,528, and 4,993 were aged between 15 and 24 years old, regardless of their marital status. For comparisons over time, I created an additional data set with pooled information from all three data sets, which is composed of 11,998 young women.

Because the DHS is based on a stratified two-stage cluster design, it is necessary to specify the sampling weights and primary sampling units (used in clustering). In *Stata*, one can use the “*svyset*” command, and then produce estimates of standard errors and statistical tests that are corrected for the complex design of the survey. All descriptive and statistical analyses shown here are corrected by this command.

Lastly, it is important to note a limitation of the data: the cross-sectional nature of the DHS makes it impossible to document causal effects. It cannot be clear, for instance, whether or not some women may have changed their religious attitudes and behaviors (e.g., going more or less often to church, or converting from one religious affiliation to another) after having premarital sexual intercourse. However, the DHS allows one to observe the potential association between these events. Also, at this point, there is no alternative data set for modeling the association between religion and adolescent premarital sexual initiation in Brazil.

### 5.1.1 - Variables

The three Brazil DHS classify religious affiliation and religious attendance into different groups. Thus, in order to compare them as well as construct an additional data set with pooled information including the three data sets, it was fundamental to re-classify these variables (as well as each variable used in the descriptive and statistical analyses of this chapter), creating homogeneous categories. The 1986 and 1996 Brazil DHS classified religious affiliation into similar groups. While the 1986 DHS included seven groups<sup>13</sup>, which are (1) Roman Catholicism, (2) Protestantism, (3) Spiritism, (4) Afro-Brazilian religions, (5) Oriental religions, (6) Jewish, and (7) others, the 1996 DHS added a new category, called Evangelicals. The 2006 Brazil DHS, on the other hand, classified religious affiliation into six groups: (1) Roman Catholicism, (2) Traditional Protestantism, (3) Pentecostalism, (4) Spiritism, (5) Afro-Brazilian religions, and (6) others. In addition, all three data sets also contain a no-religion category. Again, to allow comparisons over time, I classified the religious affiliation variable into just four groups: (1) Roman Catholicism (the reference category), (2) Protestantism (including Protestants in 1986, Protestants and Evangelicals in 1996, and traditional Protestants and Pentecostals in 2006), (3) others<sup>14</sup> (everybody else), and (4) no religion.

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<sup>13</sup> One limitation here is the crude categorization of the measure of religious affiliation. Brazil's religious landscape is characterized by a large number of denominations, and one could argue that a broad categorization hides important sub-denominational differences that may impact sexual behavior. In future surveys, including the DHS, a more nuanced categorization of religious affiliation is needed.

<sup>14</sup> Taken together, less than five percent of the women reported belonging to the other religious affiliation groups (Spiritism, Afro-Brazilian religions, Oriental religions, Jewish, and others) in 1986, 1996, and 2006. Therefore, they were aggregated into one group called "others".

Unlike the Brazilian Censuses, the DHS collects information on attendance at religious services, allowing a measure of religiosity as well. Information on attendance at religious services was captured through the following question: “How often do you go to church, temple, or other religious services?” Women chose one of five options in each survey. The 1986 and 1996 DHS included the following options: (1) Once a week, (2) Twice a month, (3) Once a month, (4) Less than once a month, and (5) Never. The 2006 DHS classified religious service attendance into the following groups: (1) More than weekly; (2) Weekly; (3) Once to three times a month; (4) Less than monthly; (5) Don’t attend. A new religious service attendance was created and re-classified into four groups: (1) weekly or more; (2) less than weekly; (3) less than monthly; (4) don’t attend (the reference category).

Because adolescent sexual behavior as well as religious affiliation and religious service attendance differ significantly in a number of socioeconomic, demographic, and community characteristics in Brazil, it is important to adjust my results for these factors as effectively as possible. Therefore, other independent variables used in this analysis include:

- 1) A dichotomous variable based on the information for the following age groups: 15-19 years (the reference group) and 20-24.
- 2) Year of the survey (1996 is the reference).

- 3) Three groups of years of education: 0-4 years (reference), 5-8 years, and nine years and over. These cut points were based on the former Brazilian school system<sup>15</sup> and the sample distribution of the 1986 Brazil DHS.
- 4) A dichotomous variable based on the information for currently living in a urban or rural area (rural is the reference)
- 5) A dichotomous variable based on the information for residence at childhood (small city is the reference).
- 6) Five categories for region of residence: South, Southeast, North, Northeast (the reference), and Center-West. Northeast was chosen as the reference category because it is the poorest region of Brazil.
- 7) A dichotomous variable based on a report of if watching television weekly (No is the reference).
- 8) A dichotomous variable based on whether household has a toilet facility (No is the reference).

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<sup>15</sup> 0-4 and 5-8 years of education represents that the student completed the first and the second phase of the elementary school. When he/she reaches nine years of education in Brazil, it means that he/she starts the high school.

### **5.1.2 - Cluster-level aggregate variables**

I also created three cluster-level aggregate variables; one for the mean education of adult women living in the cluster, one for the percentage of Protestants within the cluster, and a third one for the percentage of women who do not attend religious services in the cluster. These variables may allow one to observe whether young women who live in communities with distinct levels of education and religiosity are exposed to different risks of engaging in premarital first sexual relationship. For each cluster-level aggregate variable, two levels (high and low) of the education mean, adherence to Protestantism and religiosity were grouped as explained below. These levels were chosen based on the mean of each variable in the total population.

- 9) Mean education of adult women living in the cluster (low level – less than 6 years – is the reference group).
- 10) Percentage of Protestants living in the cluster (less than 18 percent in the cluster is the reference group).
- 11) Percentage of non-attendance at religious services among women living in the cluster (less than 23 percent is the reference group).

### **5.1.3 - Interactions:**

Time-trends in the effects of religious affiliation and religious attendance were analyzed through interaction terms of the religious categories on the survey period.

- 12) Religious affiliation and survey.
- 13) Religious attendance and survey.
- 14) Cluster level aggregate: percentage of Protestants within the cluster and survey.
- 15) Cluster level aggregate: percentage of non-attendance at religious services with the cluster and survey.

## **5.2 – Method for quantitative data: Cox Proportional Hazards Model**

This dissertation uses an event history model to estimate the association between religious affiliation and religious attendance and the timing of first sexual intercourse, when controlling for key covariates. It is important to note that a substantial number of adolescents had not experienced the event of interest (premarital sexual initiation) at the time the survey was conducted. Therefore, this sample is right censored.

In order to account for right censoring in the estimation of exposure time, the Cox proportional hazards model was employed (Allison, 1984 and 2005), which may be written as:

$$h_i(t) = h_0(t) \exp(\beta X_i)$$

Where  $h_i(t)$  is the transition rate;  $h_0(t)$  is the baseline rate, which is the hazard function for an individual with the value zero on all covariates; and  $\beta$  is the vector of

parameters for the covariates ( $X_i$ ) in the model. The following sections of this chapter show the hazard ratio of a young women having premarital first sexual intercourse during adolescence, when controlling for two main independent variables – religious denomination and attendance at religious service – as well as the other selected covariates.

The hazard ratio is the probability of the event occurring in time  $t + 1$ , given survival to time  $t$ . It is calculated by exponentiating the parameters of the multivariate models. Results expressed in terms of hazard ratio are easy to interpret: a ratio greater (lower) than unity implies that a young women in a given category would be more (less) likely to experience premarital first sex before age 20 compared to a counterpart in the base category, all else being equal.

A major assumption of the Cox proportional hazards model is that the ratio of hazards for any two observations is the same across time periods. This hypothesis can be initially graphically verified, using for example, Kaplan-Meier estimates of survivor functions separately for each covariate. This is a descriptive procedure and assumes that when the lines (survival functions) for the covariate (e.g., attendance at religious services) are parallel and do not cross, the proportional hazards assumption is valid. In addition, statistical testes can be conducted in order to test the proportional-hazards assumption. This research uses both the Kaplan-Meier estimates and a statistical test based on the Schoenfeld residuals to test such an assumption (Allison, 2005). A finding of

nonsignificance, when running this test, accepts the null hypothesis and means the proportional hazards assumption is not violated.

Finally, it is also important to highlight that Cox models can incorporate and handle time-dependent explanatory variables, which is one of the main advantages of using this method. An explanatory variable is time-dependent if its value for any given individual can change over time. This dissertation employs several time-varying variables, such as years of education, religious affiliation and attendance. However, because none of these surveys provides over-time information, it is not possible to treat these variables in a way that reflects a process of changes –such as conversion to another religion– for the individuals under study.

### **5.3 – Method for qualitative data: In-depth interview.**

This dissertation also uses a second source of data, thus combining sets of quantitative and qualitative information. The qualitative information includes data from 22 semi-structured in-depth interviews, which I conducted in Belo Horizonte, state of Minas Gerais (Southeastern Brazil), between January and February of 2009. I interviewed 12 young women aged 18-24 years as well as 10 religious leaders<sup>16</sup>, including priests, pastors, and those who help and work for churches, either paid or unpaid. The recruitment of the interview participants was conducted through snowball sampling. That is, after

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<sup>16</sup> Religious leaders are those who act within church or in extracurricular church activities with the objective of contributing to the church's mission. I use this term broadly to include Sunday school teachers, pastors, priests, Pastoral organizers, ministry leaders and catechism teachers, among others.



approaching an initial group of potential participants, I asked them to suggest others who would fit my research requirements. The next step was to follow up with this new group.

Table 5.1 - Characteristics of the young women and religious leaders interviewed

| Young women       | Pseudonyms | Age                      | Religious affiliation                              | Attendance at religious services |
|-------------------|------------|--------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| 1                 | Melissa    | 22                       | CCR movement                                       | twice a week                     |
| 2                 | Nina       | 21                       | CCR movement                                       | twice a week                     |
| 3                 | Vanessa    | 21                       | Traditional Catholic                               | less than weekly                 |
| 4                 | Rosa       | 23                       | Renewed Baptist Church                             | twice a week                     |
| 5                 | Maria      | 23                       | Renewed Baptist Church                             | twice a week                     |
| 6                 | Nancy      | 22                       | Renewed Baptist Church                             | twice a week                     |
| 7                 | Sara       | 19                       | Assembly of God                                    | four times a week                |
| 8                 | Nicole     | 19                       | Assembly of God                                    | twice a week                     |
| 9                 | Beth       | 24                       | Assembly of God                                    | twice a week                     |
| 10                | Helena     | 24                       | Assembly of God                                    | six times a week                 |
| 11                | Darcy      | 18                       | Foursquare Gospel Church                           | three times a week               |
| 12                | Francis    | 24                       | Foursquare Gospel Church                           | twice a week                     |
| Religious leaders | Pseudonyms | Church                   | Position   |                                  |
| 1                 | Paulo      | Traditional Catholic     | Priest   |                                  |
| 2                 | Gaby       | Traditional Catholic     | Confirmation teacher                               |                                  |
| 3                 | Fausto     | CCR movement             | Coordinator  |                                  |
| 4                 | Marta      | Traditional Catholic     | <i>Pastoral da Criança</i> (Pastoral of the Child) |                                  |
| 5                 | Cristina   | Assembly of God          | Sunday school teacher                              |                                  |
| 6                 | Carla      | Assembly of God          | Sunday school teacher                              |                                  |
| 7                 | Julia      | Renewed Baptist Church   | Sunday school teacher                              |                                  |
| 8                 | Daniel     | Renewed Baptist Church   | Pastor   |                                  |
| 9                 | Ronald     | Renewed Baptist Church   | Pastor   |                                  |
| 10                | Marcos     | Foursquare Gospel Church | Pastor   |                                  |

Table 5.1 summarizes the characteristics of the participants interviewed. The recruitment of young women was based on their age and religious affiliation. I interviewed three young women belonging to the Catholic Church (two of them were also participating in the charismatic Catholic renewal movement), three belonging to renewed Protestant Churches, four belonging to the Assembly of God, and two young women belonging to Foursquare Gospel Churches. The recruitment of the religious leaders was based on their religious affiliation. I interviewed one Catholic priest and three religious leaders who help and work for Catholic churches (one of them is also participating in the Catholic renewal movement). I also interviewed two pastors and one religious leader from renewed Protestant Churches, and two religious leaders who help and work for an Assembly of God church and one pastor from a Foursquare Gospel Church.

Following my approved application submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Texas at Austin, I obtained active written consent from young women and religious leaders who participated in the study. I presented and went over the consent form before starting each interview. All the interviewees agreed to sign it. The consent form is presented in Appendix I.

Also, following my approved application submitted to IRB, I used a strategy to maintain the confidentiality of the research data. All interviews were digitally recorded, and I always asked permission of the interviewee before recoding their answers. A pseudonym and a number were assigned for all participants, and all digital recordings, transcriptions and data instruments connected with the respondents were labeled with

these pseudonyms. Personal identifiers linked to the pseudonyms were kept in a separate computer file that only I can access. Paper copies of the respondents' contact information were not linked to the pseudonyms and kept in a locked filing cabinet in my office and in a locking briefcase. All data sets were therefore separated from personal identifiers. The non-identifiable participant data sets were used for analysis, allowing me to manage analysis and derive study results while maintaining full participant confidentiality and preserving individual privacy.

I also conducted participant observation among different religious groups and affiliations by attending several Catholic masses, Protestant religious services, youth groups, Sunday schools, and religious talks/lectures. Some of these events became significant sources of information and opportunities to schedule interviews. Finally, I had several informal conversations with people who are, to some degree, religiously engaged. The majority of them are young women who attended churches and temples (especially during youth services and religious meetings). I asked them questions that could help me understand how their churches would address issues associated with youth sexuality and how youth spend their free time, in general. These informal conversations were short in duration (no more than 10 minutes) and were not recorded.

The young women's interview guide was structured in order to approach at least two aspects regarding the potential effect of religion on young women's lives: (1) the young woman's perception about what her religion considers and teaches (if so) norms related to sexuality, and (2) the level of engagement of the young woman at her church

and in religious activities. The religious leaders' interview guide emphasized at least two main aspects: (1) their church's teachings on the sexual behavior of adolescents and youth, and (2) the church's provision of different kinds of information, skills, and opportunities for adolescents and young adherents. Both interview guides are presented in Appendix I.

The importance of producing qualitative information for this research is based on at least two factors: (1) the complexity of the concept of religion and the existence of mechanisms through which religion can affect individuals' choices; and (2) the variety of aspects about sexual and reproductive behavior that are not covered in the existing quantitative data.

Although the questions on religious affiliation and attendance generate important information with regard to religious involvement, they may be quite superficial in terms of the potential power that religion may have on an individual's decisions. As suggested by Regnerus (2007), "religion is hardly a unidimensional concept" (p. 43). It can shape individuals' behavior in a variety of ways. Besides being a type of *involvement*, religion can also refer to *beliefs* and *commitments* to the tenets of a particular tradition or be about *subcultures* reflecting distinct norms and habits (Regnerus, 2007: 43). All this complexity, which was previously introduced here in Chapter 4, cannot be captured through the available quantitative data.

A second limiting factor is about the variety of aspects regarding adolescent sexual and reproductive behavior, which may not be completely captured in surveys.

Reports of in-depth interviews will help to comprehend, for instance, young women' decisions about premarital sex, extent of courtship before marriage, and their expectations about marriage, use of contraception, and number of children. More importantly, in-depth interviews can be very useful in illuminating how (if ever) they reconcile their religious faith with their choices about sex and reproduction.

## Chapter Six – Quantitative results

This chapter presents results using quantitative source of information – the three DHS carried out in Brazil in 1986, 1996, and 2006 – as explained in Chapter 5. In this chapter, I show findings regarding the descriptive and statistical analyses and seek to answer my two first research questions:

(1) Are religious denomination and religiosity (measured as attendance at religious service) associated with age at premarital first sexual intercourse in Brazil?

(2) Have these associations changed over the last decades?

### 6.1 - Exploratory descriptive analysis

Table 6.1 displays trends over time, showing the mean age at first intercourse for birth cohorts from the 1940s to 1980s in Brazil. I specifically examined such trends differentiated by religious affiliation and attendance at religious service. As suggested earlier, Table 6.1 clearly shows that Brazil has experienced a noticeable decline in the mean age at first intercourse, dropping from 21.4 years in the 1940s to 16.7 among women who were born in the 1980s.

Trends separated by religious affiliation display an interesting and unstable pattern. Among those women born in the 1940s, the mean age of first sexual intercourse is lower for Catholics than for Protestants. The difference between them (0.6 year),

however, dropped in the 1950s, and then disappeared in the 1960s. The next two birth cohorts experienced an inversion, when Protestant women started reporting an older mean age at first sexual intercourse than Catholic women. Differentials by religious service attendance, on the other hand, kept the same pattern over time. In general, women who attended church more frequently reported an older age at first intercourse. Moreover, this differential has become accentuated during the last few decades: women born after the 1960s that attended religious services less frequently reported experiencing first sexual intercourse about one year younger than those that attended weekly or more.

**Table 6.1 - Mean age at first intercourse by religious affiliation and religious attendance for incomplete birth cohorts in Brazil**

| <b>Religious affiliation and religious service attendance</b> | <b>1940</b>                          | <b>1950</b> | <b>1960</b> | <b>1970</b> | <b>1980</b> |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|   | <b>Mean age at first intercourse</b> |             |             |             |             |
|   | 21.4                                 | 20.3        | 19.0        | 17.7        | 16.7        |
| <b>Mean age at first intercourse by religious affiliation</b> |                                      |             |             |             |             |
| Catholicism   | 21.5                                 | 20.3        | 19.1        | 17.6        | 16.6        |
| Protestantism   | 20.9                                 | 19.9        | 19.1        | 18.1        | 17.2        |
| Other religions   | 21.9                                 | 20.9        | 19.3        | 18.2        | 17.2        |
| No religion   | 19.7                                 | 19.3        | 18.0        | 16.9        | 16.2        |
| <b>Mean age at first intercourse by religious attendance</b>  |                                      |             |             |             |             |
| Weekly or more  | 21.7                                 | 20.6        | 19.5        | 18.0        | 17.1        |
| Less than weekly  | 21.1                                 | 20.2        | 19.1        | 17.6        | 16.6        |
| Less than monthly   | 21.2                                 | 20.1        | 18.8        | 17.7        | 16.7        |
| Never   | 21.1                                 | 19.8        | 18.4        | 17.0        | 16.1        |
| Unweighted sample size  | 1,975                                | 5,875       | 10,131      | 9,289       | 5,806       |

Source: The 1986, 1996, and 2006 Brazil DHS.

Next, Table 6.2 displays the percentage of young women (15-24) by religious affiliation and religious service attendance in Brazil in 1986, 1996, and 2006. Table 6.2

shows that young women belonging to traditional Protestant (and Pentecostal in 2006) churches attend religious services far more frequently than the most in all surveys: more than 70 percent of them attend at least weekly, compared with a little more than 30 percent of Catholic young women. A religiosity divide clearly separates Protestants from other Brazilians.

**Table 6.2 - Weighted percentage of religious affiliation by religious attendance among young women (15-24). Brazil, 1986, 1996, and 2006**

| Survey | Religious Affiliation     | Religious Attendance |                  |                   |       |
|--------|---------------------------|----------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------|
|        |                           | Weekly or more       | Less than weekly | Less than monthly | Never |
| 1986   | Catholicism               | 33                   | 31               | 11                | 25    |
|        | Protestantism             | 70                   | 11               | 3                 | 16    |
|        | Other religions           | 56                   | 18               | 10                | 16    |
|        | No religions              | 0                    | 0                | 0                 | 100   |
| 1996   | Catholicism               | 33                   | 27               | 11                | 29    |
|        | Protestantism             | 76                   | 12               | 4                 | 8     |
|        | Other religions           | 63                   | 20               | 3                 | 14    |
|        | No religions              | 0                    | 0                | 0                 | 100   |
| 2006   | Catholicism               | 31                   | 21               | 30                | 18    |
|        | Traditional Protestantism | 72                   | 11               | 14                | 3     |
|        | Pentecostalism            | 78                   | 13               | 8                 | 1     |
|        | Other religions           | 40                   | 17               | 20                | 23    |
|        | No religions              | 5                    | 4                | 20                | 71    |

Source: The 1986, 1996, and 2006 Brazil DHS.

Table 6.3 presents the percentage distribution of young women (aged 15-24) in 1986, 1996, and 2006 by selected religious, demographic, socioeconomic, and community characteristics. The fourth column of this table presents the distribution for the pooled data set.



The first lines of Table 6.3 show that the majority of young women belong to the youngest age group (15-19) in 1986 and 1996. Table 6.3 also indicates that obvious progress has been made in the area of education in Brazil. For instance, the proportion of young women who had at least nine years of education rose from 30 percent in 1986 to 58 percent in 2006. In 2006, furthermore, the proportion of those with fewer than 5 years of education reached 8 percent, much lower than that observed in 1986.

As suggested earlier in this study, the percentage of Catholic young women has declined substantially in the last two decades: although it remains high, this percentage dropped from 81 to 60 percent from 1986 to 2006. The concomitant growth of young women belonging to Protestant (especially Pentecostal) churches is also displayed in Table 6.3. Information on religious service attendance reveals a heterogeneous pattern, especially in 2006, when almost 40 percent of young girls reported attending religious services at least weekly, while 20 percent never attended them. The distribution of attendance at religious services, on the other hand, did not change between 1986 and 1996, but it did between 1996 and 2006: the percentage of young girls who attended religious services less than monthly increased considerably (from 10 to 24 percent) over the last two decades, while the percentage of those who never go to church decreased.

**Table 6.3 - Weighted percentage of young women (15-24) by selected characteristics. Brazil, 1986, 1996, 2006.**

| <b>Variables</b>                                | <b>1986</b> | <b>1996</b> | <b>2006</b> | <b>1986-2006</b> |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|
|   | (N=2,477)   | (N=4,528)   | (N=4,993)   | (N=11,998)       |
| <b>Age</b>                                      |             |             |             |                  |
| 15-19   | 53          | 56          | 50          | 52               |
| 20-24   | 47          | 44          | 50          | 48               |
| <b>Years of Education</b>                       |             |             |             |                  |
| 0-4   | 36          | 26          | 8           | 21               |
| 5-8   | 34          | 44          | 34          | 38               |
| 9 or over                                       | 30          | 30          | 58          | 41               |
| <b>Religious Affiliation</b>                    |             |             |             |                  |
| Catholic  | 81          | 78          | 60          | 71               |
| Protestant                                      | 8           | 13          | 24*         | 17               |
| Other religions                                 | 2           | 2           | 4           | 3                |
| No religions                                    | 9           | 7           | 12          | 9                |
| <b>Religious Attendance</b>                     |             |             |             |                  |
| Never   | 31          | 30          | 20          | 26               |
| Less than monthly                               | 10          | 10          | 24          | 16               |
| Less than weekly                                | 26          | 23          | 17          | 21               |
| Weekly or more                                  | 33          | 37          | 39          | 37               |
| <b>Residence</b>                                |             |             |             |                  |
| Rural   | 25          | 19          | 18          | 20               |
| Urban   | 75          | 81          | 82          | 80               |
| <b>Residence in childhood</b>                   |             |             |             |                  |
| Small City                                      | 34          | 61          | 55          | 53               |
| Big City/Capital                                | 66          | 39          | 45          | 47               |
| <b>Regions</b>                                  |             |             |             |                  |
| Northeast                                       | 29          | 31          | 29          | 30               |
| North   | 6           | 6           | 9           | 7                |
| Southeast                                       | 31          | 40          | 42          | 39               |
| South   | 19          | 15          | 13          | 15               |
| Center-west                                     | 15          | 8           | 7           | 9                |
| <b>Watches TV weekly</b>                        |             |             |             |                  |
| No  | 22          | 10          | 5           | 10               |
| Yes   | 78          | 90          | 95          | 90               |
| <b>Household has toilet facility</b>            |             |             |             |                  |
| No  | 61          | 60          | 54          | 57               |
| Yes   | 39          | 40          | 46          | 43               |
| <b>Cluster-level aggregate: education mean</b>  |             |             |             |                  |
| Low   | 61          | 49          | 19          | 39               |
| High (more than 6 years of education)           | 39          | 51          | 81          | 61               |
| <b>Cluster-level aggregate:% of Protestants</b> |             |             |             |                  |
| Low   | 93          | 79          | 60          | 74               |
| High (more than 18% within the cluster)         | 7           | 22          | 40          | 26               |

*(Continued)*

(Table 6.3, Continued)

|   |    |    |    |     |
|---|----|----|----|-----|
| <b>Cluster-level aggregate:% of non- attendance</b> |    |    |    |     |
| Low   | 33 | 35 | 65 | 48  |
| High (more than 23% within the cluster)             | 67 | 65 | 35 | 53  |
| <b>Surveys</b>                                      | 21 | 36 | 43 | 100 |

Source: The 1986, 1996, and 2006 Brazil DHS.

\* 14 percent are Pentecostals and 10 percent are traditional Protestants.

As observed elsewhere, urbanization rates are increasing among young women in Brazil. In 2006, 82 percent of them lived in urban areas compared to 75 percent in 1986. However, this is not true when analyzing the childhood place of residence in Table 6.3. While 66 percent of young women in Brazil reported in 1986 that they had lived in big cities/capitals in their childhood, 44 percent reported the same in 2006. Moreover, the percentage of young women living in the Southeast has increased over time while the percentage of those living in the Center-west decreased from 15 to 7 percent over the years between 1986 and 2006.

Regular television viewing has become almost universal among young women in Brazil. In 2006, 95 percent answered that they watched television on a weekly basis while twenty years earlier, 78 percent of girls reported the same. As an indicator of household economic status, Table 6.3 shows that an increase can be noted in the proportion of girls having access to toilet facilities (sewage systems) in Brazil. However, this change has been modest.

Finally, Table 6.3 displays the distribution of girls by the three cluster-level variables used in this study. First, it shows that the proportion of young women living in clusters where the mean education of adults is higher than 6 years increased from 39 to

81 percent between 1986 and 2006. With regard to religious community characteristics, it is noted that the proportion of girls living in clusters with more than 18 percent of Protestants has risen from 7 percent to almost 40 percent, while the proportion of those living in clusters with more than 23 percent of women who never attend religious services has decreased from 67 to 35 percent over this twenty-year period.

Next, Table 6.4 displays the percentage distribution of young women (aged 15-24) who reported having had adolescent premarital first sexual intercourse in 1986, 1996, and 2006 by selected religious, demographic, socioeconomic, and community characteristics. The fourth and the last columns of Table 6.4 present a more detailed distribution of religious affiliation in 2006<sup>17</sup> and the distribution of the all three data sets together, respectively.

Table 6.4 confirms that the risk of exposure to premarital sexual activity tends to be highly associated with age. In 2006, for instance, 64 percent of girls between 20 and 24 years reported ever having had premarital sex before turning 20, while the proportion of those between 15 and 19 was 42 percent. Moreover, as can be seen on Table 6.4, the most educated young women (9 or more years of schooling) appear to be at a reduced risk of premarital sexual intercourse than those who are less educated (0-4 and 5-8 years of schooling) in 1986. In 2006, however, this relationship inverts, and those young women with less education seem to be at a lower risk. This finding is unexpected and is likely being confused by age effects.

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<sup>17</sup> The reason way these two religious groups were separated is because women affiliated to them may differently behave in terms of premarital sexuality. Unfortunately, data from the 1986 and 1996 DHS do not allow such desegregation.

**Table 6.4 – Weighted percentage of young women (15-24) who reported having premarital first intercourse before age 20 by selected variables. Brazil, 1986, 1996, 2006 and 1986-2006**

| <b>Variables</b>                     | <b>1986</b> | <b>1996</b> | <b>2006</b> | <b>2006 ^</b> | <b>1986-2006</b> |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|------------------|
|                                      | (N=2,477)   | (N=4,528)   | (N=4,993)   | (N=4,993)     | (N=11,998)       |
| <b>Age</b>                           | ***         | ***         | ***         |               | ***              |
| 15-19                                | 10          | 24          | 42          |               | 28               |
| 20-24                                | 26          | 47          | 64          |               | 51               |
| <b>Years of Education</b>            | ***         |             | ***         |               | ***              |
| 0-4                                  | 22          | 34          | 46          |               | 32               |
| 5-8                                  | 16          | 33          | 47          |               | 35               |
| 9 or over                            | 14          | 34          | 58          |               | 45               |
| <b>Religious Affiliation</b>         | **          | **          | **          | **            | ***              |
| Catholic                             | 17          | 34          | 53          | 53            | 37               |
| Pentecostal                          |             |             |             | 48            |                  |
| Protestant                           | 14          | 26          | 47          | 46            | 38               |
| Other religions                      | 26          | 42          | 62          | 63            | 49               |
| No religions                         | 26          | 40          | 62          | 62            | 49               |
| <b>Religious Attendance</b>          | ***         | ***         | ***         |               | ***              |
| Never                                | 26          | 43          | 64          |               | 46               |
| Less than monthly                    | 21          | 40          | 56          |               | 48               |
| Less than weekly                     | 16          | 30          | 48          |               | 33               |
| Weekly or more                       | 10          | 27          | 47          |               | 33               |
| <b>Residence</b>                     |             | ***         | ***         |               | ***              |
| Rural                                | 15          | 26          | 41          |               | 29               |
| Urban                                | 19          | 36          | 55          |               | 41               |
| <b>Residence at childhood</b>        | *           | **          | ***         |               | **               |
| Small City                           | 15          | 31          | 48          |               | 37               |
| Big City/Capital                     | 19          | 37          | 59          |               | 41               |
| <b>Regions</b>                       |             | ***         | ***         |               | ***              |
| Northeast                            | 16          | 25          | 40          |               | 30               |
| North                                | 21          | 40          | 57          |               | 46               |
| Southeast                            | 19          | 36          | 58          |               | 43               |
| South                                | 18          | 37          | 57          |               | 40               |
| Center-west                          | 12          | 36          | 55          |               | 35               |
| <b>Watches TV weekly</b>             |             | **          | **          |               | ***              |
| No                                   | 18          | 28          | 38          |               | 26               |
| Yes                                  | 17          | 34          | 54          |               | 40               |
| <b>Household has toilet facility</b> |             | **          | *           |               | **               |
| No                                   | 18          | 31          | 50          |               | 36               |
| Yes                                  | 17          | 37          | 56          |               | 42               |
| <b>Surveys</b>                       | 18          | 34          | 53          | 53            | 39               |

Source: The 1986, 1996, and 2006 Brazil DHS.

^ This model separates Protestants into traditional Protestants and Pentecostals.

$\chi^2$  (Chi-square) test: p \* <0.1 \*\*p<0.05 \*\*\*p<0.01

Preliminary evidence points to religious affiliation and religious service attendance as among the variables that account for differentials in premarital sexual activity in Brazil. The difference between Catholics and Protestants in 1986 and 2006, nevertheless, was lower than in 1996. In general, Protestants and those who attend religious services at least monthly are less likely to report having had premarital sexual intercourse before the age of 20, compared to those who belong to any other religious affiliations and attend religious services less frequently, respectively.

The influences of childhood and current residence indicate that young women who lived in big cities during their earliest ages and those who currently live in urban areas seem to be more likely to experience premarital sexual activity than those who lived in small cities during their childhood and those who were currently living in rural areas. Table 6.4 also shows that those who lived in Northeast Brazil in 1996 and 2006 were the least likely to report having had premarital sexual intercourse before the age of 20.

Regular television viewing and access to toilet facilities seem to be associated with a higher risk of premarital sexual intercourse in 1996 and 2006. Table 6.4 shows that young women who watched television on a regular basis presented a higher proportion of premarital sexual experience, as well as those who lived in a household with a toilet facility. Finally, the last line of table 6.4 shows that the propensity for young women to engage in premarital sexual relations during adolescence has substantially increased in Brazil, rising from 18 percent in 1986 to 53 percent in 2006.

## **6.2 - Results of multivariate Cox Proportional Hazard Models**

Table 6.5 displays findings for multivariate Cox Proportional Hazard Models. This table presents five models (Model 6.5.A – Model 6.5.E) showing the hazard ratios of an adolescent's having premarital first sexual intercourse when controlling for religious affiliation and socioeconomic, demographic, and community variables. The first three models present the ratios separately for each survey. The fourth model (Model 6.5.D), like the third one (Model 6.5.C), employs data from 2006, however the religious affiliation variable is categorized in a different way. That is to say, I separated Protestants into traditional Protestants and Pentecostals in Model 6.5.D. Lastly, Model 6.5.E presents results from the pooled data set, which includes information from all three surveys together.

Table 6.5 reveals that older women (20-24) present a higher hazard ratio of premarital sexual initiation before age 20 in 1986 and 1996. These findings are statistically significant and behave in an expected way; older girls have been under longer exposure to sexual activity than those between 15 and 19 years old. Next, results from Model 6.5.E show the hazard ratio of young women having premarital sex for the first time during adolescence was lower in a statistically significant way in 1986 and higher in 2006, when compared to 1996. Consistent with descriptive findings from Table 6.3, the categories representing the survey periods in Model 6.5.E indicate that the propensity for young women to engage in premarital sexual relationships during adolescence has significantly increased in Brazil over the last two decades.

**Table 6.5 - Hazard ratios from the Cox proportional models showing the risk of young women' having premarital intercourse before age 20 controlling for religious affiliation and interactions with surveys. Brazil, 1986, 1996, 2006.**

| Variables  | Model 6.5.A | Model 6.5.B | Model 6.5.C | Model 6.5.D | Model 6.5.E |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|  | 1986        | 1996        | 2006        | 2006 ^      | 1986-2006   |
|  | (N=2,477)   | (N=4,528)   | (N=4,993)   | (N=4,993)   | (N=11,998)  |
| <b>Age</b>   |             |             |             |             |             |
| 15-19  | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        |
| 20-24  | 1.48***     | 1.17***     | 1.00        | 1.02        | 1.09*       |
| <b>Surveys</b>                                     |             |             |             |             |             |
| 1986   |             |             |             |             | 0.38***     |
| 1996   |             |             |             |             | 1.00        |
| 2006   |             |             |             |             | 1.96***     |
| <b>Years of Education</b>                          |             |             |             |             |             |
| 0-4  | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        |
| 5-8  | 0.54***     | 0.83**      | 0.75*       | 0.75*       | 0.75***     |
| 9 or over  | 0.33***     | 0.48***     | 0.53***     | 0.53***     | 0.49***     |
| <b>Religious Affiliation</b>                       |             |             |             |             |             |
| Catholic   | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        |
| Pentecostal  |             |             |             | 0.75**      |             |
| Protestant   | 0.84        | 0.65***     | 0.77**      | 0.79*       | 0.67***     |
| Other religions                                    | 1.51        | 1.03        | 1.03        | 1.07        | 1.10        |
| No religions                                       | 1.72**      | 1.17        | 1.20        | 1.20        | 1.18        |
| <b>Interaction: Religious Affiliation x survey</b> |             |             |             |             |             |
| Protestant - 1986                                  |             |             |             |             | 1.23        |
| Other religions - 1986                             |             |             |             |             | 1.33        |
| No religions - 1986                                |             |             |             |             | 1.54**      |
| Protestant - 2006                                  |             |             |             |             | 1.11        |
| Other religions - 2006                             |             |             |             |             | 0.93        |
| No religions - 2006                                |             |             |             |             | 1.00        |
| <b>Residence</b>                                   |             |             |             |             |             |
| Rural  | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        |
| Urban  | 1.42        | 1.32**      | 1.32**      | 1.31**      | 1.32**      |
| <b>Residence at childhood</b>                      |             |             |             |             |             |
| Small City   | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        |
| Big City/Capital                                   | 1.39*       | 1.26**      | 1.18**      | 1.21**      | 1.22**      |
| <b>Regions</b>                                     |             |             |             |             |             |
| Northeast  | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        |
| North  | 1.25        | 1.59***     | 1.65***     | 1.67***     | 1.59***     |
| Southeast  | 1.08        | 1.43***     | 1.51***     | 1.54***     | 1.42***     |
| South  | 1.24        | 1.66***     | 1.60***     | 1.63***     | 1.58***     |
| Center-west  | 0.73        | 1.64***     | 1.38**      | 1.46***     | 1.36***     |
| <b>Watches TV weekly</b>                           |             |             |             |             |             |
| No   | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        |
| Yes  | 0.92        | 1.18        | 1.38        | 1.38        | 1.18*       |

(Continued)



(Table 6.5, continued)

|   |        |         |         |         |         |
|---|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| <b>Household has toilet facility</b>                                  |        |         |         |         |         |
| No  | 1.00   | 1.00    | 1.00    | 1.00    | 1.00    |
| Yes   | 0.83*  | 0.99    | 0.86    | 0.87    | 0.88*   |
| <b>Cluster-level aggregate: education mean</b>                        |        |         |         |         |         |
| Low   | 1.00   | 1.00    | 1.00    | 1.00    | 1.00    |
| High (more than 6 years of education)                                 | 1.17   | 1.09    | 0.94    | 0.95    | 1.03    |
| <b>Cluster-level aggregate: % of Protestants</b>                      |        |         |         |         |         |
| Low   | 1.00   | 1.00    | 1.00    | 1.00    |         |
| High (more than 18% within the cluster)                               | 0.85   | 1.01    | 1.19**  | 1.09    | 1.03    |
| <b>Interaction: Cluster-level aggregate:% of Protestants x survey</b> |        |         |         |         |         |
| % Protestants - 1986  |        |         |         |         | 0.76    |
| % Protestants - 2006  |        |         |         |         | 1.14    |
| <b>-2 log-Likelihood</b>  | -6,034 | -22,900 | -40,104 | -40,170 | -77,184 |

Source: The 1986, 1996, and 2006 Brazil DHS. p \* <0.1 \*\*p<0.05 \*\*\*p<0.01

^ This model separates Protestants into traditional Protestants and Pentecostals.

Not surprisingly, education is found to have a statistically significant association with premarital adolescent sexual initiation in Brazil. In each survey, girls with at least nine years of education were at a significantly lower risk of premarital sexual initiation before age 20 relative to those with four years of schooling at most, all else being equal.

With respect to religious affiliation, Protestant girls were significantly less likely to have had premarital sex during adolescence than were Catholics in 1996 and 2006, but not in 1986. Indeed, differentials by these religious denominations seem to have increased between 1986 and 1996, and become attenuated over the next decade. Interestingly, Model 6.5.D confirms that the association with delaying or absence of adolescent premarital sexual debut was statistically significant (and high in magnitude) among Pentecostal girls in 2006. However, the association with traditional Protestants

lost part of its statistical significance when this religious group is examined separately in Model 6.5.D.

In addition, as seen in Table 6.5, even after controlling for socioeconomic, demographic, and community variables, those adolescents with no religious affiliation were far more likely to engage in premarital sexual initiation than were Catholics in 1986. This association, however, lost its statistical significance in 1996 and 2006.

The remaining associations between young women's demographic, socioeconomic, and community characteristics and premarital first sexual intercourse operate in a largely predictable fashion. Table 6.5 shows that place of residence had an independent association with the hazard ratio of a young woman to have premarital sex before age 20 in 1996 and 2006, but not in 1986. In every survey, urban residence was associated with a higher risk of premarital sexual debut during adolescence than rural places. Similar results can be noted for childhood place of residence. Young women who spent their earliest years in an urban environment (who lived in a big city or capital) were at a higher risk of engaging in premarital sexual activity during adolescence than those whose early environment was rural areas or small cities. Moreover, the hazard ratios for regions of residence show that girls who lived either in the North, South, Southeast, or Center -west of Brazil in 1996 and 2006 were at a higher risk of premarital sexual initiation than those living in the Northeast.

The association between television exposure and reduced risk of premarital sexual debut before age 20 was observed only in 1986 (but the coefficient is not statistically

significant). Likewise, the hazard ratio of young women who lived in a household with a toilet facility was lower in a statistically significant way than the ratio of their counterparts only in 1986.

Table 6.5 also shows that the cluster-level associations were generally not significant and inconsistent across surveys. Although the hazard ratios are not statistically significant, in 1986 and 1996, young women living in clusters of higher education mean (more than 6 years) experienced a higher chance of premarital adolescent first sex, whereas in 2006 the opposite was true. Moreover, young girls living in clusters with a higher percentage (more than 18 percent) of Protestants in 2006 were at higher statistically significant risk of engaging in premarital adolescent sexual intercourse than those living in clusters with a lower percentage.

In addition, Table 6.5 presents time-trends in the effects of religious affiliation that were analyzed through interaction terms of the religious categories on the survey period. In 1986, the hazard ratio of an adolescent affiliated with a Protestant church being sexually experienced was 23 percent higher than that of her counterpart interviewed in 1996 (the reference year). However, the interaction term is statically non-significant, suggesting that this association likely remained essentially stable between survey periods.

In 1986, the hazard ratio of an adolescent with no religion being sexually experienced before marriage was 54 percent higher than that of her counterpart interviewed in 1996. Moreover, the significance of the interaction term ( $p < 0.05$ ) suggests that this association statistically changed during this decade. In other words, when

controlling for socioeconomic, demographic and community variables, the lack of membership with a religion was associated with a higher risk of adolescent premarital sexual initiation in 1986 than in 1996 in Brazil.

Finally, as seen in Table 6.5, girls living in clusters with a higher percentage of Protestants in 2006 were at higher risk of engaging in premarital sexual intercourse during adolescence than those living in a cluster with the same characteristic in 1996. However, the non-significance of the coefficient may suggest that this community effect likely remained essentially stable over this ten-year period.

Next, Table 6.6 displays other findings for the multivariate Cox Proportional Hazard Models. I present four models (Model 6.6.A – Model 6.6.D) showing the risk of an adolescent having her first premarital sexual intercourse when controlling for attendance at religious services and socioeconomic, demographic, and community variables. The first three models present the risk separately for 1986, 1996, and 2006. The last model (Model 6.6.D) presents results from the pooled data set.

Table 6.6 shows that attendance at religious services is associated with the hazard ratio of young women having premarital adolescent first sex in all the three surveys. The more young women attend religious services, the lower their risk of having premarital first sexual intercourse during adolescence, all else being equal. However, the hazard ratio of the interaction term representing those who went to church weekly or more in 1986 (0.66) indicates that this association seems to wane between 1986 and 1996. In other words, adolescents who attended religious services weekly or more in 1986 were

less likely to engage in premarital sexual activity than those with the same characteristics in 1996.

**Table 6.6 - Hazard ratios from the Cox proportional models showing the risk of young women' having premarital first intercourse before age 20 controlling for attendance at religious services and interactions with surveys. Brazil, 1986, 1996, 2006.**

| Variables   | Model 6.6.A | Model 6.6.B | Model 6.6.C | Model 6.6.D |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|   | 1986        | 1996        | 2006        | 1986-2006   |
|   | (N=2,477)   | (N=4,528)   | (N=4,993)   | (N=11,998)  |
| <b>Age</b>  |             |             |             |             |
| 15-19   | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        |
| 20-24   | 1.46***     | 1.14**      | 0.98        | 1.07        |
| <b>Surveys</b>                                    |             |             |             |             |
| 1986  |             |             |             | 0.41***     |
| 1996  |             |             |             | 1.00        |
| 2006  |             |             |             | 1.90***     |
| <b>Years of Education</b>                         |             |             |             |             |
| 0-4   | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        |
| 5-8   | 0.57***     | 0.86**      | 0.77        | 0.77***     |
| 9 or over   | 0.34***     | 0.50***     | 0.54***     | 0.51***     |
| <b>Religious Attendance</b>                       |             |             |             |             |
| Never   | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        |
| Less than monthly                                 | 0.70**      | 0.83*       | 0.90        | 0.84*       |
| Less than weekly                                  | 0.58***     | 0.63**      | 0.72**      | 0.63***     |
| Weekly or more                                    | 0.39***     | 0.54***     | 0.64***     | 0.54***     |
| <b>Interaction: Religious Attendance x survey</b> |             |             |             |             |
| Less than monthly - 1986                          |             |             |             | 0.88        |
| Less than weekly - 1986                           |             |             |             | 0.93        |
| Weekly or more - 1986                             |             |             |             | 0.66**      |
| Less than monthly - 2006                          |             |             |             | 1.17        |
| Less than weekly - 2006                           |             |             |             | 1.08        |
| Weekly or more - 2006                             |             |             |             | 1.17        |
| <b>Residence</b>                                  |             |             |             |             |
| Rural   | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        |
| Urban   | 1.39        | 1.32**      | 1.33**      | 1.31**      |
| <b>Residence at childhood</b>                     |             |             |             |             |
| Small City  | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        |
| Big City/Capital                                  | 1.33        | 1.17**      | 1.16*       | 1.17**      |
| <b>Regions</b>                                    |             |             |             |             |
| Northeast   | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        |
| North   | 1.54**      | 1.68***     | 1.80***     | 1.74***     |
| Southeast   | 1.01        | 1.44***     | 1.55***     | 1.48***     |
| South   | 1.49**      | 1.80***     | 1.61***     | 1.66***     |
| Center-west                                       | 0.93        | 1.68***     | 1.51***     | 1.47***     |

(Table 6.6, continued)

|  |        |         |         |         |
|--|--------|---------|---------|---------|
| <b>Watches TV weekly</b>   |        |         |         |         |
| No   | 1.00   | 1.00    | 1.00    | 1.00    |
| Yes  | 0.93   | 1.22*   | 1.38    | 1.18*   |
| <b>Household has toilet facility</b>                                     |        |         |         |         |
| No   | 1.00   | 1.00    | 1.00    | 1.00    |
| Yes  | 0.83   | 1.00    | 0.86*   | 0.89**  |
| <b>Cluster-level aggregate: education mean</b>                           |        |         |         |         |
| Low  | 1.00   | 1.00    | 1.00    | 1.00    |
| High (more than 6 years of education)                                    | 1.13   | 1.08    | 0.94    | 1.03    |
| <b>Cluster-level aggregate: % of non- attendance</b>                     |        |         |         |         |
| Low  | 1.00   | 1.00    | 1.00    | 1.00    |
| High (more than 23% within the cluster)                                  | 1.32** | 1.07    | 1.13    | 1.07    |
| <b>Interaction: Cluster-level aggregate:% of non-attendance x survey</b> |        |         |         |         |
| % of no attendance - 1986  |        |         |         | 1.16    |
| % of no attendance - 2006  |        |         |         | 1.05    |
| <b>-2 log-Likelihood</b>   | -5,984 | -22,770 | -39,928 | -76,806 |

Source: The 1986, 1996, and 2006 Brazil DHS. p \* <0.1 \*\*p<0.05 \*\*\*p<0.01

Moreover, unlike Table 6.5, Table 6.6 includes the cluster variable accounting for the proportion of women who never attend religious services. Results from the 2006 survey show that girls living in clusters with a higher percentage of women who never go to church were at a higher risk of engaging in premarital sexual intercourse during adolescence. Results from 1996 and 2006, as well as the interaction with period surveys in Model 6.6.D, do not present statistically significant hazard ratios. Findings for the remaining socioeconomic, demographic and community variables in Table 6.6 maintained almost the same associations with premarital first sexual intercourse during adolescence as those observed in Table 6.5.

The subsequent table (Table 6.7) also displays findings for multivariate Cox Proportional Hazard Models. I present four models (Model 6.7.A – Model 6.7.D) showing the hazard ratios of a young woman having premarital first sexual intercourse

when controlling both for religious denomination and attendance at religious services simultaneously. As before, I control these findings by socioeconomic, demographic, and community variables. The first three models present the risk separately for 1986, 1996, and 2006. The fourth model (Model 6.7.D) also employs data from 2006; however, unlike in Model 6.7.C, Protestants are separated into two groups: traditional Protestants and Pentecostals.

In an attempt to avoid multicollinearity due the high correlation between religious denominations and religious service attendance (as suggested in Table 6.2), I created eight mutually exclusive dichotomous variables representing combinations of the four religious affiliations with two different frequencies of attendance at religious service. In order to facilitate the results' interpretation of them, I re-categorized the religious services attendance variable into two groups: (1) young women who attend religious services less than weekly, and (2) those who attend weekly or more.

The new eight mutually exclusive dichotomous variables included in Table 6.7 are: (1) Catholics who go weekly or more to church, (2) Catholics who go less than weekly (the reference group), (3) Protestants who attend religious services weekly or more, (4) Protestants who attend them less than weekly, (5) Pentecostals who go weekly or more to church, (6) Pentecostals who go less than weekly, (7) people from other religions who go weekly or more to church, and (8) people from other religions that go less than weekly.

**Table 6.7 - Hazard ratios from the Cox proportional models showing the risk of young women' having premarital first intercourse before age 20 controlling for groups of religious affiliation and attendance and other selected variables. Brazil, 1986, 1996, 2006.**

| Variables  | Model 6.7.A | Model 6.7.B | Model 6.7.C | Model 6.7.D |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|  | 1986        | 1996        | 2006        | 2006 ^      |
|  | (N=2,477)   | (N=4,528)   | (N=4,993)   | (N=4,993)   |
| <b>Age</b>   |             |             |             |             |
| 15-19  | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        |
| 20-24  | 1.45***     | 1.16***     | 0.99        | 0.99        |
| <b>Years of Education</b>                              |             |             |             |             |
| 0-4  | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        |
| 5-8  | 0.57***     | 0.86**      | 0.77        | 0.75*       |
| 9 or over  | 0.34***     | 0.51***     | 0.54***     | 0.53***     |
| <b>Religious Affiliation by Attendance</b>             |             |             |             |             |
| Catholics with low attendance                          | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        |
| Catholics with high attendance                         | 0.54***     | 0.77***     | 0.82**      | 0.82**      |
| Pentecostals with low attendance                       |             |             |             | 1.78**      |
| Pentecostals with high attendance                      |             |             |             | 0.50***     |
| Traditional Protestants with low attendance            | 1.35        | 1.20        | 0.99        | 0.74        |
| Traditional Protestants with high attendance           | 0.42**      | 0.45***     | 0.62***     | 0.75*       |
| Other religions with low attendance                    | 1.54        | 1.38        | 0.89        | 0.89        |
| Other religions with high attendance                   | 1.06        | 0.78        | 0.97        | 0.98        |
| No religion  | 1.44**      | 1.05        | 1.08        | 1.09        |
| <b>Residence</b>                                       |             |             |             |             |
| Rural  | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        |
| Urban  | 1.42        | 1.35**      | 1.34**      | 1.32**      |
| <b>Residence at childhood</b>                          |             |             |             |             |
| Small City   | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        |
| Big City/Capital                                       | 1.33        | 1.22**      | 1.16*       | 1.17**      |
| <b>Regions</b>   |             |             |             |             |
| Northeast  | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        |
| North  | 1.52**      | 1.68***     | 1.72***     | 1.77***     |
| Southeast  | 1.03        | 1.50***     | 1.47***     | 1.49***     |
| South  | 1.45**      | 1.77***     | 1.56***     | 1.59***     |
| Center-west  | 0.95        | 1.67***     | 1.44***     | 1.46***     |
| <b>Watches TV weekly</b>                               |             |             |             |             |
| No   | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        |
| Yes  | 0.94        | 1.13        | 1.31        | 1.31        |
| <b>Household has toilet facility</b>                   |             |             |             |             |
| No   | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        |
| Yes  | 0.82        | 1.00        | 0.86        | 0.88        |
| <b>Cluster-level aggregate: education mean</b>         |             |             |             |             |
| Low  | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        |
| High (more than 6 years of education)                  | 1.15        | 1.08        | 0.95        | 0.96        |
| <b>Cluster-level aggregate:&gt; 18% of Protestants</b> |             |             |             |             |
| Low  | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        | 1.00        |
| High (more than 18% within the cluster)                | 0.90        | 1.02        | 1.21**      | 1.09        |

(Continued)



(Table 6.7, Continued)

|   |        |         |         |         |
|---|--------|---------|---------|---------|
| <b>Cluster-level aggregate:&gt; 23% of non-attendance</b> |        |         |         |         |
| Low   | 1.00   | 1.00    | 1.00    | 1.00    |
| High (more than 23% within the cluster)                   | 1.45** | 1.19**  | 1.20**  | 1.18**  |
| <b>-2 log-Likelihood</b>                                  | -5,992 | -22,842 | -40,028 | -40,016 |

Source: The 1986, 1996, and 2006 Brazil DHS. p \* <0.1 \*\*p<0.05 \*\*\*p<0.01

^ This model separates Protestants into traditional Protestants and Pentecostals.

Table 6.7 reveals, at least, four main findings concerning the association between premarital first sexual intercourse during adolescence and the variables representing combinations between religious affiliation and attendance at religious service. First, Catholic young women who went to church weekly or more were at a lower statistical significant risk of engaging in adolescent premarital first sex than Catholics who attended less frequently. This is true for all the three surveys. Unfortunately, it is not possible to know (using the existing data) whether Catholic girls who attend religious services on a regular basis are also influenced by the Catholic charismatic movement. But one can assume that a large number of them belong to such a renewal movement, which may help to explain their lower risk of premarital sexual debut when compared to Catholics with low attendance (probably traditional Catholics).

Results from Table 6.7 clearly show the benefit of considering and examining attendance at religious services in studies on religion in Brazil. This is true because adolescents with greater religious commitment, even inside the same religious congregation, may be more apt to reproduce religious values and teachings in their actions. Likewise, they may be more exposed to the indirect effects of religion suggested by Smith (2003). Therefore, assuming that attendance at religious services is one of many

measures of religious commitment, it may help to differentiate among adolescents that belong to the same religion.

Second, as would be expected, Protestants with high attendance were also at a statistically significant lower risk of engaging in premarital first sex during adolescence than Catholics who attended less frequently. Third, a very interesting comparison can be made between Model 6.7.C (that keeps all Protestants together in one category) and Model 6.7.D (that separates Protestants into traditional Protestants and Pentecostals). As can be seen in Model 6.7.C, traditional Protestant young women who attended religious services weekly or more in 2006 did present a statistically significant lower risk of experiencing premarital first sexual intercourse during adolescence than Catholics with low frequency at religious services. However, Model 6.7.D shows that Pentecostals with high attendance keep their strong association with premarital sexual intercourse, while traditional Protestants lose much of the statistical significance of the association. In fact, when Pentecostal young women are examined separately, they presented the lowest (and statistically significant) risk of having their first premarital sexual intercourse before age 20.

Fourth, Model 6.7.D also shows that in 2006 Pentecostals with low attendance presented a substantially higher risk of having premarital first sex than Catholics who attended religious services on the same basis. Such a finding is unexpected since the research that has been conducted has pointed to Pentecostal Protestant churches as those that may be most effective at helping adolescent and young women to avoid or postpone

premarital sexual intercourse and childbearing. Nevertheless, perhaps those girls, who identified themselves as Pentecostals that rarely attended religious services, may be less exposed to the indirect effects of religion, as suggested by Smith (2003). On the other hand, as the hypothesis of reverse causality would suggest, some of these girls were no longer attending their church because they were ashamed for having had premarital sex.

Moreover, Table 6.7 shows that young girls living in clusters with a higher percentage (more than 18 percent) of Protestants in 2006 were at a statistically significant higher risk of engaging in premarital adolescent sexual intercourse than those living in clusters with a lower percentage. Table 6.7 also includes the cluster variable accounting for the proportion of women who never attend religious services. Results from all the surveys show that girls living in clusters with a higher percentage of women who never go to church were at higher risk of engaging in premarital sexual intercourse during adolescence. This is observed in all three surveys. There are some explanations for this finding. First, young women who live in a neighborhood with a higher percentage of women who never go to church may be less exposed to direct and indirect religious effects in their lives. Also, they may reside in poor settings, where the access to churches is very restricted. In this case, some unfavorable socioeconomic and contextual aspects, which are not efficiently controlled here, may be contributing to increase the risk of first premarital sexual intercourse.

Nevertheless, as noted in Chapter 4, it is important to highlight that other factors may be at work in the apparent association between religion and premarital adolescent

first sex presented in this chapter. Selectivity is one alternative explanation. Findings of this work, even controlling for socioeconomic, demographic, and community variables, reveal that the hazard ratios for religious denomination and religious service attendance are still statistically significant, suggesting that selectivity does not likely play a pivotal role here. The other two alternative explanations, reverse causation and social desirability bias, cannot be evaluated using the existing data. However, it is possible that Pentecostals—for whom premarital sex is a more serious violation of norms than for most other Christian groups—suffer from greater social desirability bias with both sex and religiosity questions. If so, the coefficients reported here may be overestimated. These girls may have more interest in presenting themselves in a manner that will be viewed favorably by others. Consequently, they may find themselves embarrassed and may lie about their sexual behavior. However, should this bias exist, it would not likely account for the entire difference observed among Pentecostal and Catholic girls.

Finally, in order to examine the assumption of proportional hazard models, I present in Appendix II the results for both procedures already introduced in Chapter 5: the Kaplan-Meier estimates of survivor functions separately for each religious covariate and a test based on the Schoenfeld residuals. Both were estimated for the three DHS, separately. Findings for Kaplan-Meier estimates suggest that the proportional hazards assumption is not violated. In other words, the survival functions for the religious covariates employed in this study are parallel and do not cross. This is true for all the three DHS surveys.

Results of the global tests based on the Schoenfeld residuals indicate, however, that the proportional hazards assumption is violated (at a level of significance  $<0.05$ ) when comparing the survival functions for the groups of religious affiliation in 1996 and 2006. As explained earlier in Chapter 5, a finding of statistical significance, when running this test, rejects the null hypothesis and means the proportional hazards assumption is violated. Fortunately, the same is not observed among the groups of attendance at religious services and the combinations between religious affiliation and attendance. This is true for all the three DHS surveys.

### **6.3 - Conclusion**

Multivariate analyses of this chapter portray that the hazard ratios of young women's premarital sexual initiation during adolescence differ significantly by religious affiliations in Brazil. Findings using data from the 1996 and 2006 Brazil DHS reveal that young women who belonged to traditional Protestant or (especially to) Pentecostal churches were at a lower risk of engaging in adolescent premarital first sexual intercourse than those who belonged to the Catholic Church. Such a result may indicate that traditional Protestant and Pentecostal churches have been more effective at delaying or inhibiting adolescent premarital sexual debut than Catholic congregations.

As mentioned earlier in this dissertation, most studies about Pentecostalism emphasize its pietism and conservative values. Among other things, Pentecostal practical theology disapproves of a variety of types of mundane pleasures, such as modern hairstyles or dress, the use of cosmetics and jewelry, and, as expected, places a ban on

premarital sex (Mariano, 2004; Chesnut, 2003; Burdick, 1993). Different authors emphasize that this forbidding regimen is sustained by social sanctions within closed communities (Mariz, 1994; Burdick, 1993). Pentecostal girls, therefore, may consider their religious faith and/or religious sanctions when making choices about sexual activity and reproduction. The hazard ratio for those belonging to Pentecostal churches in Model 5.4 may corroborate this assumption.

On the other hand, because this research employs cross-sectional data, the association between membership with Protestant churches and a lower risk of premarital sex or postponed first sex can also suggest that these churches impose several punishments to their followers, forcing young women to abandon (temporarily or not) the church when they disobey religious teachings on premarital sexual behavior. Unfortunately, it is not possible to document the direction of the causality with these data, but only to observe the association between these events.

Results regarding the 1986 DHS are different and may indicate that this association has changed over the last two decades. That is to say, membership with a traditional Protestant or Pentecostal church may have recently become an important and inhibiting factor concerning premarital first sexual activity during adolescence in Brazil. At this point, it is essential to highlight that the growth of Protestantism in this country was largely concentrated in the 1990s, a decade that experienced an explosive increase in the number of people converting to Protestantism, led by the Pentecostal Protestant denominations.

In addition, multivariate analyses show that high attendance at religious services has been associated with a reduced hazard ratio of premarital sexual intercourse before age 20. This is true for all three years analyzed. As suggested by the direct explanation of religious influence, young women with greater religious commitment may be more apt to reproduce religious values and teachings in their actions.

Finally, results of this chapter show a direct association between premarital sexual debut during adolescence and variables representing combinations between religious affiliation and attendance at religious services. Pentecostal churches, for instance, may be more effective at convincing adolescent women to avoid or postpone premarital sexual intercourse because they encourage girls to attend religious services regularly. Consequently those girls may be more exposed to the types of indirect influence of religion outlined by Smith (2003). Otherwise, Pentecostal girls who rarely attend religious services may be less exposed to such effects.

Findings of this chapter also reveal that Catholic girls who attend religious services on a regular basis are at a lower risk of experiencing premarital sex than Catholics who rarely go to church. Charismatic Catholic girls usually go to church more often than traditional Catholics. In addition, as noted in Chapter 3, different from traditional Catholics, charismatic Catholics combat promiscuous sexual behavior and offer support for youth who wish to remain celibate until marriage. Therefore, one can suggest that an expressive number of the Catholic girls, who attend religious services are often those influenced by the charismatic movement. Again, it is important to highlight

the benefit of considering attendance at religious services in studies on religion in Brazil. It is particularly important when working with data from Catholics.

Following the integrated account of religion's constructive influence in the lives of American adolescents of Smith (2003), Chapter 4 of this dissertation suggested several sources of direct and indirect influences of religion. Some of them include the achievement of cultural and social capital, and leadership and coping skills. As pointed out by other authors, such factors, through which religion can affect their follower's lives, can be very often observed in the Brazilian religious environment, especially within Pentecostal and renewed Protestant churches.

Certainly, the potential existence of these indirect effects of religion cannot be investigated using the existing quantitative data. In order to provide a better understanding, it is essential to conduct qualitative research. In the next chapter, I present the main results from my fieldwork in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, during which I had the opportunity to interview young women from different religious affiliations as well as religious leaders regarding, among other issues, questions concerning the presence or absence of such factors within their churches.



## **Chapter Seven – Qualitative Results**

This chapter presents results using qualitative sources of information —obtained by observing youth groups, Sunday school classes at the Assembly of God, religious lectures on sexuality, 22 semi-structured interviews with young women and religious leaders, and informal conversations—as explained in Chapter 5. Findings of this chapter allow me to better understand whether, and how, mechanisms of religious influence may act in the Brazilian context. More specifically, in this chapter, I seek to answer my two last research questions:

(3) How do religious leaders and their churches address sexual and reproductive issues among adolescents and young women in Brazil?

(4) Which are the common mechanisms or pathways through which religion can affect adolescents and young women’s sexual behavior in Brazil?

### **7.1 – The principal religious activities studied during fieldwork**

This first section presents the main religious activities that I attended during my fieldwork in Belo Horizonte. As I explained before, I conducted participant observation among different religious groups and affiliations by attending several Catholic masses, Protestant religious services, youth groups, single groups, Sunday schools, and religious talks/lectures. In this section I summarize my main impressions on them, including fragments of an interview with a pastor of a renewed Baptist church that told me about an interesting activity offered by his church, which is named classes for dating and marriage.

### 7.1.1 – Youth groups

Youth groups represent the best place to observe teenagers and young people<sup>18</sup> in Pentecostal and Protestant churches—where in addition to prayer and praise, day-to-day issues that affect teenagers and youth are discussed. Topics related to school, job market, family matters, dating, sex, marriage and homosexuality, among others, are addressed in get-togethers that can last more than four hours. These gatherings involve music that, though of an evangelical nature, uses the same sounds and instruments found in the rhythms popular among youth, like funk, axé and rock. Dance, as much in worship as among the teenagers, is very common. Young churchgoers dance and sing, revealing their familiarity with the music as well as a practiced dance routine. It represents, without a doubt, a moment of happiness and enthusiasm for many of the participants.

Coincidence or not, all of the youth groups I observed met on Saturday nights, beginning around 8:00 pm and sometimes ending after midnight. This time of the week is important for teenagers, as it is often reserved for meeting friends, going on dates, to the movies, or to bars or clubs. Therefore, Protestant churches often offer a “healthy” alternative to these diversions on the day of the week that presents the greatest risk of “committing sins”.

In churches with higher volumes of attendance, as with the two largest Baptist churches in Belo Horizonte, a youth group can number more than 2,000 members. These groups generate an active participation, with members often helping in various church

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<sup>18</sup> In this study, I define “young people” and “youth” as those between the ages of 20 and 29.

activities, such as receiving churchgoers, working the information tables, and participating in dance, theater and orchestra groups. Moreover, youth ministers are often young themselves, and some are very popular and well-known in their communities. The young age of the minister facilitates communication with the teenagers; they openly discuss sensitive topics, such as sexuality and drug use, with ease.

### **7.1.2 – Classes for dating and marriage**

Many churches offer a class for engaged couples, in preparation for marriage. While most traditional Catholic churches offer a course that lasts one day or one weekend, one of the largest Baptist churches in Belo Horizonte has conducted a different kind of marriage instruction for more than 10 years. The church has developed a practice in which the engaged couple is accompanied by an experienced married couple from the church for three months. The married couple is trained to offer advice to the engaged couples. I found this practice particularly interesting, because it is an open space within the church to talk about sexuality before and after marriage. The groups meet every Sunday, from 8:00 am to noon, to discuss various issues that the couple will have to deal with after marrying, including finance, family conflicts and sex. According to one minister,

A doctor talks about birth-control methods in the marriage class. There's a talk about sex itself, in a very open fashion, very objective. We ask the couples, especially the women, not to hold back, to feel free to talk.

(Pastor Ronald, Baptist church).

At the end of each meeting, the couple has to answer and discuss an elaborate questionnaire with the coordinator. Furthermore, the pastor emphasized that:

The couple must be approved at the end of the course [by the counseling couple]. If not, the couple can't marry in our church. They can marry, but it can't be here or with ministers here. Unless the minister assumes the risk, you know? But he won't be able to perform the marriage here. It's a way for the church to protect itself.

(Pastor Ronald, Baptist church).

Meanwhile, the ministers that organized the marriage class saw that it would be necessary to create a class that helped dating couples, since many times engaged couples would begin the marriage class completely unprepared, according to the church's vision.

In the words of the pastor:

Many couples were not prepared for marriage. There was no respect, no communication between them, and they were already planning on getting married.

(Pastor Ronald, Baptist church).

Thus, the church established the dating class, in which the couple is counseled by another couple at the church. Furthermore, the dating couple attends a group session on Sundays, prepared especially for them. The pastor considers the course a success; since its conception, more than 500 couples have attended.

The couple is counseled, but it's not a "big brother", you know? It's not vigilance. It's someone that you feel comfortable with, to call when there's a crisis in the relationship, when there's doubt. Even more importantly, in the Christian way, since we live in a world today that's very liberated, so people experience strong conflicts in the areas of communication and sexuality, mainly.

(Pastor Ronald, Baptist church).

The class seems very well-organized. To register, the couple must fill out a form containing, in addition to personal information and a photograph of each person, dates of participation in small religious groups called cells, as well as their parents' religions. According to the pastor, the class grew so much that another gathering was created, called "chat with couples", where groups of 40 or 50 young people talk about issues related to dating.

### **7.1.3 – Singles groups**

This particular Baptist church's dating meet-up attracts mostly those younger than 25. For older churchgoers who are single but looking to marry, the church offers a special gathering every Saturday night, called the singles group. I attended one of these groups, and the minister spoke of the importance of building a relationship with someone of the same faith. He cited various examples of successful romantic relationships that began within the church and led to marriage. Furthermore, he stressed that some followers that pursued relationships outside the church ended up straying and moving away from their faith.

### **7.1.4 – Sunday school**

During my fieldwork, I attended Sunday school at the Assembly of God church in Belo Horizonte. Each Sunday, from 9:00 am to noon, groups of about 30 participants on average meet at the church to study the Bible and pray. The participants are grouped according to gender and age. There are groups for children, adolescents, young people

and adults. I attended a group of young women between the ages of 18 and 25. The Assembly of God is known for its conservative practices, such as with dress. Inside the church and during class, all of the women wore skirts.

The classes are led by two teachers (usually a man and a woman) who may or may not be ministers. Some are young—under 30 years old—which facilitates communication with the students. The teachers use books, based on Bible passages, which are created specifically for these meetings. Large and relatively comfortable, the classrooms have blackboards for notes, a table for the teacher and chairs for the students. A minister who seemed experienced led the first class I observed. He used a laptop to project a map of the Center-east on the wall—specifically, of the Gaza strip. Part of the class covered the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Later, in an interview, I learned that this particular minister stands out at the church for his knowledge of geography and history.

As a large and centrally located church in downtown Belo Horizonte, the Assembly of God receives followers of various social classes. The majority, both at church and in Sunday school, appear to come from low-income and low-education situations. Still, the young women, both during class and in interviews, showed a high ability to communicate and express themselves verbally.

I was very well-received at this Sunday school. The leader always asked if it was anyone's first time in attendance, and if so, who brought them and how did they learn of the school. Not long after my first visit, I had the chance to talk about my research. The

participants showed interest, and some young women offered to be interviewed. At the end of the meeting, the pastor prayed and asked God to bless my research.

## **7.2 – Direct Effects of Religious Influence**

As suggested earlier, it is well documented that religions may directly affect adolescent and young adherents' decisions. According to social control theories of adolescent behavior, religious functions are very often seen as a source of social and individual control that may encourage adolescents to avoid certain actions that they might otherwise have taken (Regnerus, 2007 and 2003; Rostosky et al. 2004; Smith, 2003; Hardy and Raffaelli, 2003; Rohrbaugh and Jessor, 1975). For instance, religion has been identified as one of the major sources of social control over sexuality (Studer and Thornton, 1987; DeLamater, 1981).

In this section I seek to understand whether, and to what extent, the churches where young women (interviewed for this study) are affiliated, may directly affect their decision on sexual behavior. Towards this end and using fragments of in-depth interviews, I investigate if these churches disseminate particular normative ideas of what they believe is right or wrong about premarital adolescent and youth sexual behavior, including moral issues concerning premarital sexual intercourse, courtship relationships, and expectations on marriage. I also seek to understand whether, and to what extent, religious leaders address these ideas at their religious activities.

I summarize my findings by trying to emphasize three aspects regarding a potential direct religious influence, partly based on the religious dimension of moral order suggested by Smith (2003). First, I seek to show whether and which norms (including prohibitions) on sexual behavior are transmitted to the youth. I also very briefly consider some examples of role models and spiritual experiences mentioned by the young women. Second, the existence of any kind of discipline or punishment for those who disobey those norms; and third, the consequences for deviances (e.g., perceptions on prejudice or public embarrassment) generated by the violation of those religious teachings.

### **7.2.1 – Moral Order**

As outlined in Christian Smith's theory of religious influence on American adolescents, the direct effect occurs in part because religion promotes moral directives of self-control and personal virtue. According to the author, in different American religious organizations, youths may internalize such directives and use them to orient their behaviors and life choices.

#### **7.2.1.1 – Moral Directives**

The first thing that caught my interest during fieldwork was how frequently issues related to the sexual behavior of teenagers and youth are discussed in Pentecostal and Protestant churches, as well as in the charismatic Catholic communities. In the latter, the topic is broached at retreats and lectures, but not in church. However, in Pentecostal and Protestant churches, participants discuss sexual issues in youth groups, dating groups,



Sunday school and lectures. Issues such as the first sexual experience, pleasure, sexual desire, and sex before and outside of marriage are usually discussed in an open and direct fashion. This was reflected in the openness and ease with which most of the young women and religious leaders I interviewed spoke of the topic.

I asked the young women and the leaders if topics related to sexuality are common in church—particularly in activities aimed at teenagers and youth—and if they are discussed clearly. Some answered positively.

I think the church talks, sometimes, very openly, because we talk about abortion, masturbation, sexual relations in a relationship and outside a relationship, the benefits and the harms.

(Darcy, 18 years old, Four-square Pentecostal Church, goes to church three times a week)

The church helps with everything that has to do with dating, by avoiding many things that can lead to something else, like sexual relations, for example.

(Helena, 24 years old, Assembly of God, goes to church six times a week)

It's very clear. They explain a lot about dating and sex, especially for teenagers.

(Nancy, 22 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

If the topic [sexuality] isn't the most talked about for young people at church, it's definitely one of the most talked about. We focus on it, especially in the youth group. We also promote presentations, seminars about sexuality that talk not only about the spiritual side of it, but also the medical side, and we try to do everything here, everything based on what the Bible says. The message we portray is clear and it's communicated through various resources we have; in our lessons, in our books, in our videos, in our music, on the Internet, comic books, pamphlets, everything that we can do to get our message out there, we do it.

(Pastor Daniel, Renewed Baptist Church)

Yes, at Sunday school. Sometimes the lesson doesn't have anything to do with the topic, but the teacher always tries to make a connection. Also, every Easter there's a seminar at church where we discuss the topic: "Dating, Engagement and Marriage" There's always this seminar, so I think that the topic is well-covered. However, among the older pastors and teachers, I think it's still taboo. The topic of sexuality for them is still taboo.

(Cristina, Sunday school teacher, Assembly of God)

However, the intensity at which topics related to teenage sexuality are discussed depends on the size of the church and the number of youth that attend. The subject is common in churches with a larger following. In smaller churches, however, with 100 to 200 members and a more traditional belief system, discussions of sexuality are not common. Another essential factor, at least in the Assembly of God, is the age of the pastor or teacher; older leaders experience a greater difficulty talking about the issue.

The accounts of both youth and leaders in traditional Catholic churches show that matters of teenage sexuality are not treated so clearly or consistently in these churches. Young Catholic women influenced by the charismatic movement have said that the topic is discussed, though outside the church.

Look, very little. The only thing I remember was a discussion one afternoon at confirmation class. Besides that, nothing.

(Vanessa, 21 years old, Traditional Catholic Church, goes to church less than weekly)

No. In church, it's not much. Generally during church service, the lectures are more generalized. They can't address specific issues because the sermons are short. So they save these topics for retreats and lectures.

(Melissa, 22 years old, charismatic Catholic community, goes to church twice a week)

Furthermore, the testimonies of two religious leaders from a traditional Catholic church suggest that in addition to fostering little discussion of sexuality, the church maintains a more liberal stance with respect to the sexual behavior of youth.

Here at our parish, we don't have that [religious teachings about sexuality]. In our marriage class, I try, with the rest of the team, to get the students to have a moment of self-reflection. Now, with family planning, the methods they're going to use, they're mature enough, in a post-modern, secular society with great medical progress, the couple is going to be able to choose the method that they want. So we don't take a position anymore, you know, of having to influence someone in this or in that. Now, in Pentecostal movements, they're fundamentalists and they emphasize much more the issue of sex only after marriage.

(Priest Paulo, Traditional Catholic Church)

Listen, on that issue, to tell you the truth, I never saw it discussed outside of confirmation class. For every class, a doctor comes to talk about STDs and about sex in general. Because when she's going to talk a bit about diseases, before showing the diseases, she shows photos, she talks about the symptoms, she shows what someone looks like with the disease, and the possible treatments. But before that, she talks about the act of sex. Then she talks about everything that's involved in the act of sex. She emphasizes self-esteem, liking yourself first and then choosing a great person, being careful. Then she goes on, and always open because there are certain kinds of questions that- There have been questions about how to put on a condom.

(Gaby, Confirmation teacher, Traditional Catholic Church)

#### **7.2.1.1.1 – Age to start dating**

In terms of when to start dating, both the young women and the religious leaders I interviewed said that their churches don't impose an ideal age. Actually, three criteria were frequently mentioned as important for dating: maturity, financial independence (especially for males), and the possibility of marriage. In other words, what some women and especially the religious leaders stated was that a couple should only date if they

intend to marry, or at least are open to the idea. As such, even without prescribing an ideal age to start, churches can indirectly encourage young people to delay dating.

They advise teenagers not to date because teenagers don't know what they want.

(Helena, 24 years old, Assembly of God, goes to church six times a week)

So, there was a time when a friend of mine, who was 15 years old fell in love with a girl who had just joined the church and he asked one of the leaders for permission to date her. He said:

- Listen, I want to date this girl, what do you think?

The leader said:

- Listen, I think your situation isn't favorable. Wait a little, you're still very young, you aren't responsible, you don't even have money to buy her a piece of candy!

(Rosa, 23 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

They don't say. Not even when I was a teenager did I hear anyone talk about "the age to start dating". I heard "maturate". People say: "When you think you're mature enough to begin a relationship thinking about marriage, then yes." In my case, I always avoided dating because I wasn't ready to marry, because that's what I learned at church. So, today I can think about dating because now I can think about marriage.

(Sara, 19 years old, Assembly of God, goes to church four times a week)

We see dating as a preparation for marriage. That doesn't mean that the person you date is the person you'll marry, but you have to date with that intention.

(Maria, 23 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

On the other hand, although both the religious leaders and the young women stated that they never heard anyone discuss how long couples should date—whether a long time or a short amount of time—some of the young women said they felt pressure,

even if implicit, to begin dating and to marry. Furthermore, in attending youth group activities and lectures about sexuality at a Pentecostal church, I observed that marriage was highly valued. One of the pastors explained in a presentation that “it’s not God’s plan that you stay single; you should marry.”

#### **7.2.1.1.2 – Courting**

Courting is a stage that comes before dating and allows the couple to get to know each other and thus decide if they want to date. Some young people and religious leaders affirmed that a few Pentecostal and Protestant churches still encourage this type of relationship. During courtship, the couple experiences no physical contact and often spends time at one another’s homes to meet each other’s families. Despite being less common among churchgoing teenagers today, courting was encouraged until recently. The level of intimacy experienced during courtship varied among the young women interviewed.

I began to date at 15. I was a leader, the youngest of the ministry, and it was absurd. Literally, it was absurd, because at that time, you had to court, and during courtship, you don’t touch the other person. You stay a virgin in everything with the person until you get married, so the most you can do is hold hands, and you can’t have any physical contact alone. He can’t kiss you, you can’t go to the movies, you can’t go to theater alone, in the youth groups they don’t let you sit by each other so you don’t have any kind of physical contact.

**Question:** Is that a common practice at your church?

Well, it was common, but later they stopped it, because it wasn’t working.

(Maria, 23 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

He liked me and I told him that I was starting to like him, too. So I said we should pray to see if it was God's will that it happen and I felt it in my heart. God spoke to me like this: Listen, you're very young, whether or not it's supposed to happen doesn't matter, what matters is that it's not to be now. I was 14 years old and he waited for me until I was 15, and then after I was 15 he waited another year to ask my father. That stage is called "courtship", and it's a kind of dating where you don't have any physical contact, you don't kiss, it's like a "friendship with benefits" as they say, but you don't have physical contact, you mainly talk. It was a time for me to get to know him, for him to get to know me; where I could see if that was what I wanted for me or not, and he could see too, get to know my faults, my qualities; so I thought it was really good. We "courted" for two years. And people didn't really know; I liked him, he liked me, I saved myself for him and he saved himself for me, we didn't have other relationships, it's like we were dating, but without any physical contact.

**Question:** Is that a common practice at your church?

It's like this, it's optional, the church recommends it, but you do it if you want to. Usually, young people will do one month, three months of courtship, just to get used to each other, to talk with each other's family and to see if it's going to work out.

(Darcy, 18 years old, Four-square Pentecostal Church, goes to church three times a week)

One young woman from a Pentecostal church, and a pastor of the same religion, said that kissing—and other, more intimate forms of physical contact like sex—complicates a couple's communication and ends up hurting the relationship. The church requires the couple to talk and get to know each other better before beginning a more serious relationship. This is why courting is important.

I think that sex takes away from a couple's intimacy or ability to talk, to get to know each other, to get to know each other's personalities, that kind of thing, and whether you want it or not, dating too, because when you date someone, there's kissing, there's hugging, you want to go out, you want to talk about boyfriend/girlfriend things—but not when you're courting. When you're courting, it's like you're friends.

(Darcy, 18 years old, Four-square Pentecostal Church, goes to church three times a week)

### 7.2.1.1.3 – Sex before marriage

Young women from different churches—Pentecostal and Protestant, as well as charismatic Catholic churches—reported similar perceptions of the rules and values conveyed by religion about sexual initiation. I asked the young women if the church talks about premarital sex and how it suggests that young women behave.

Certainly, it is one of the factors most often mentioned about sexuality in young people. As one might think, these churches and communities explain that premarital sex is a sin and should be avoided at all costs. In my observations, this message was quite clear. During a talk about sexuality at a Pentecostal church, the minister said, “if a young person isn’t managing to contain his or her sexual desire, he or she should marry.” Moreover, he said that to marry as a virgin should be part of one’s life purpose, and that saving one’s self for marriage should be a source of pride.

Many of those I interviewed stated that this message is based on Biblical principles, and some affirmed that Biblical principles are the main reason the concept should be followed. Below, I present some responses about what churches and religious communities recommend, as young people see it:

So they really emphasize it: sex only after marriage.

(Nancy, 22 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

The church asks dating couples not to be alone, or if they must, to avoid many things. They really encourage people to avoid intimacy, to save it more for after marriage.

(Helena, 24 years old, Assembly of God, goes to church six times a week)

Because when we grow up in the church, you always hear “you’re going to stay a virgin until you get married”, so they really nail it in you. As you get older; teenager, child, youth, even in youth groups, they preach that kind of thing, to save yourself.

(Maria, 23 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

And they teach that, that it’s a sin, that it’s wrong and that you can’t do it, but they don’t just say that, they explain why it’s not good to do. They teach that it’s not something that you have to experience now, that sexual relations are something made by God for couples. It’s so much that when you get married, they say “The two have become one.” If I have sexual relations before marriage I become one with that person. So, if I had various sexual partners, I have a life with each one, so the problems of that person also come to me, because I had intimate relations with that person.

(Darcy, 18 years old, Four-square Pentecostal Church, goes to church three times a week)

They [the communities] are recognized by the archdiocese, they follow what the Vatican recommends. They can’t be, in reality, against anything, so they repeat exactly: abstinence until marriage.

(Melissa, 22 years old, charismatic Catholic community, goes to church twice a week)

#### **7.2.1.1.4 – Marrying non-believers**

Using an economic approach, Iannaccone (1990) explains that marriage between people of the same religion benefits from similar gains of scale and contributes to a more efficient religious involvement and participation. In Brazil, Protestant churches—both Pentecostal and traditional—are known for prohibiting their followers from marrying non-Christians or those of no faith. However, in practice, this rule, which is based on a Biblical interpretation of I Corinthians 7:10-7, can even preclude marriage between Catholics and Protestants.



All of the Protestant churchgoers I interviewed affirmed that this restriction exists and is very clear. Three main justifications are given. First, it's a Biblical principle that must be followed. Second, marriage between those that share the same faith can help prevent conflicts, such as ones about matters related to religious practices. Finally, it would be difficult to raise children as Christians if the couple is not Christian.

We encourage that [marriage among followers of the same religion], also based on the Bible. The Bible says that relationships can only be genuinely profound if the two share the same faith. And it's really difficult for a young Christian to have a meaningful romantic relationship with a non-believer. I'm not going to say that it doesn't happen; it does happen in the church, but it's not what the Bible counsels, it's not what the Bible teaches, and that's what we pass on to our members.

(Pastor Daniel, Renewed Baptist Church)

What we recommend is this: that they share the same beliefs, the same values, the same principles, so you avoid or minimize conflicts. If you were to look at any couple from the same church, do they have conflicts? Of course they do! They have misunderstandings. But sometimes the conflicts can be minimized because they share the same values, the same principles.

(Carla, Sunday school teacher, Assembly of God)

Yes, to avoid problems after marriage. Because there are certain things that, someone who doesn't believe in the same thing, doesn't understand. So there are a lot of cases when women who marry men that aren't evangelical afterward say, "Ah, they don't let me go to church anymore, they don't allow it". So, they suggest that they marry people who believe in evangelicals, who have the same beliefs.

(Helena, 24 years old, Assembly of God, goes to church six times a week)

I saw this a lot, because the majority of my friends build relationships within the church.

(Rosa, 23 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

It's important to highlight that Protestant churches discourage marriage between young people of different religions, but not of different churches. For example, a young woman from a Baptist church can marry a young man from the Assembly of God, but not an Atheist or a Jew. The same recommendation isn't observed among Catholics, even those influenced by the charismatic movement.

No, no way. I never heard any direct comment about this, quite the opposite, I know many Catholics married to evangelicals. But the evangelicals, I feel they tend to marry among themselves because, for example, they don't support the image of the Virgin Mary in their homes.

(Melissa, 22 years old, charismatic Catholic community, goes to church twice a week)

#### **7.2.1.2 – Role Models**

Role models at church can also be a source of social control (Studer and Thornton, 1987). Smith (2003) argues that young people can become inspired by certain churchgoers, and as that occurs, the cost of violating religious norms increases, since such violations could jeopardize the relationship with the role model. I asked each young woman if there was anyone at church she admired or considered a role model. Nearly all of them said they tried to model themselves after a teacher (at Sunday school, music school or confirmation class) or an organizer.

I think the orchestra teacher. He was my teacher and he's really committed. Everything he sets out to do, he does well.

(Nicole, 19 years old, Assembly of God, goes to church twice a week)

Marli, who's our Sunday school teacher, and her husband, João Carlos, who's also a teacher. They set a good example, of relationships, respect for each other. If I'm a teacher one day, I'd really like to be like that, like Marli. Besides that, their married life is a good example for me. If I get married one day and when I get married, to have a marriage like theirs.

(Helena, 24 years old, Assembly of God, goes to church six times a week)

Her name is Maria José. I really like her. She's a person of integrity. I think she's really great with principles, she's good to talk to, she knows a lot about religion, she's good at teaching, so I try to be like her.

(Darcy, 18 years old, Four-square Pentecostal Church, goes to church three times a week)

Furthermore, sanctions, common in some churches, can also be viewed as an attempt to minimize departures from religious norms, as well as punish bad behavior and set an example (in the case of sanctions, examples that should not be followed) within the church. One young woman from a Baptist church, as shown below, stressed that she had to leave a church activity so as not to set a "bad example".

I began to date so I was going against what the church had decided. I knew it was trouble. I had to leave the group so I wouldn't set a bad example at the time.

(Maria, 23 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

### **7.2.1.3 – Spiritual Experiences**

The role of spiritual experiences in young people's behavior (more easily observed in religious conversions) cannot be sufficiently analyzed through interviews, because most of the young women I interviewed had never experienced converting to another religion. Those who had converted, or had witnessed others convert, cited some changes in behavior, especially with respect to decisions about sex.

Because when I met Christ I really changed my behavior at school. I had never caused much trouble, but in terms of cheating, in terms of my behavior itself, like, with dating too. I had dated before, by dating, I mean “hooked up”, before converting to Christianity, so [after converting] I sort of changed my attitude.

(Rosa, 23 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

Zezé dated her husband for eight years, I think, but before, when she first started dating him, she wasn't part of the church, so she was having sex with him. As soon as she started going to church and she understood what the word says, what's best for her, both of them decided not to do it anymore. They still dated but they stopped having sex.

(Darcy, 18 years old, Four-square Pentecostal Church, goes to church three times a week)

### **7.2.2 – Sanctions**

As explained in Chapter 4, a religion can directly influence the behavior of its followers through sanctions. The norms taught in a religious environment are often associated with behavioral rules and restrictions that, when disobeyed, can engender sanctions (both formal and informal). As various authors emphasize, fear of punishment, such as prejudice, gossip or even exclusion from church activities, can reinforce commitment with a religion's established norms, thus creating a method of social control and conformity (Ellison and Levin, 1998; Wimberley, 1989; Studer and Thornton, 1987).

At the Pentecostal or Protestant churches I visited, when members transgress a particular norm or principle, they are usually called out and submitted to discipline<sup>19</sup>. The discipline often consists of excluding the transgressor from his or her religious activities, including communion. This is a type of punishment that can cause embarrassment among

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<sup>19</sup> Burdick (1993) had already studied this process through interviews with members of the Assembly of God.

church members in leadership positions, as well as those who participate in choir, orchestra and greeting worshipers—in other words, any church activity. According to the assertions of some leaders, during this period of absence, the follower has a chance to reflect on what he or she did and, eventually, to repent. In some churches, including Baptist churches, the transgressor is actually more closely followed during the exclusion period.

The young women I interviewed affirmed that this type of discipline is a common practice and that other members often recognize the absence of the young person from certain activities as a punishment. As such, in addition to punishing the young offender, the discipline also “sends a message” by spotlighting an example that should not be followed. The statements below show that young people are familiar both with sanctions and with how religious leaders justify them.

For example, if I date and have sex with him and the church finds out, I can't be a part of the leadership anymore.

(Darcy, 18 years old, Four-square Pentecostal Church, goes to church three times a week)

I'm going to tell you a story about a boy that I know who was raised in the church. The girl he had been dating for just a little while got pregnant. The boy was a father at 16 years old and her, a mother at 17. The church excluded them from all activities, communion, supper, worship. They could only go to youth group.

(Rosa, 23 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

When you disobey a law, the case is taken to the pastor and he's the one that deals with it. Usually there's a warning and an exclusion. A “punishment”. But, in reality, it's more a time for the person to think, to look at what they did, if they did the right thing or not. There's counseling for that person. Let's say it's a person who's active in the church, leader of something, so that person will be

banned from that responsibility, from those activities for a time so he can think and reflect, so he can see what happened. Because to err is human, it happens to everyone.

(Carla, Sunday school teacher, Assembly of God)

The purpose of the punishment is to make the person reflect on what they did and guide them to repent, to make a life change, to think it over, until they can re-integrate themselves into the leadership role.

(Pastor Daniel, Renewed Baptist Church)

Pastors and young people affirmed that the exclusion is also a period of decision-making. Church members that transgress a norm must decide if they want to continue living in sin or if they want to reconcile with God and change their behavior. One minister of a Protestant church explained that this decision is required when, for example, church youth have sexual relations before marriage. They must decide whether or not to continue with this practice.

Sanctions? Well, if the person leads a ministry. This happens sometimes. These days, unfortunately, it's common. What we do is this: we intensify our counseling, ask the couple to get closer to the church. If the couple isn't being counseled, it stops being an option and becomes a requirement if they want to continue being part of the dating group. Also, it depends if they are repentant, sometimes they chose that life, you know? What they can't have is both things, they can't have that lifestyle and live in an environment where it's considered wrong. So, we ask them what happened. It's never that the guy was walking along and someone walked by and took off my clothes, that's not how it works. Sex has a time, a place, an amount of light, alcoholic content, music; it's a premeditated crime.

(Pastor Ronald, Baptist church)

Last year, the girl went to someone at church and said:

— I'm having sexual relations with a guy.

And every time I asked the guy, he said everything was fine, that nothing was going on. I was in charge of the guy, I was his counselor. This was a serious thing!

So I found out from another person with permission from the girl, because she didn't have the nerve to say it. So I called the boy. First I called him out. Because it's not just a sexual crime, it's a matter of character, you lied. That's wrong. So first I called him out on his character. Then I talked about the issue of commitment. My wife and I, we called the girl over. My wife talked to her first and I talked to her, and then we all talked.

— [Pastor] Do you repent?

— [Couple] Yes!

— [Pastor] Do you want to change?

— [Couple] Yes.

— [Pastor] Then, we'll invest in you.

The boy was the vice-president of college activities. So I excluded him, but I didn't tell anyone, just his leader.

(Pastor Ronald, Baptist church)

One of the questions I asked in order to try to understand if and how the sanctions system took place in church was: *how does the church react when a single young woman, a member of the church, becomes pregnant?* Most of the pastors, teachers and young women from the Pentecostal and Protestant churches affirmed that in addition to excluding the girl from church activities (as well as the father of the baby, if he is also a member), the church leadership may require the young girl or the couple to make a decision regarding marriage. They wouldn't necessarily have to marry, but they would have to determine an outcome for their relationship.

Additionally, I asked if, in the case of an out-of-wedlock pregnancy, there were prejudices that would engender gossip, isolation or even malicious looks on the part of the church's members and workers. The young women and church leaders reported that they had heard gossip and spiteful comments, principally toward the pregnant girl and less so toward the father of the baby.

Young Catholic women affirmed that if a single girl becomes pregnant, she usually does not suffer prejudices (e.g., isolation from her peers) or gossip from those who attend the church. However, the preconception does exist in charismatic Catholic communities.

No. I think not publicly, but sometimes there'll be comments: "My goodness, so-and-so's son? My goodness!" But nothing radical, because our parish isn't radical. We don't have people from radical parishes. There might be a couple radical people, that condemn certain things, but the majority, no... I remember, someone I knew got pregnant. She did confirmation with me, I was her coordinator, and she got pregnant, but no one said anything, you know? It's like, we're not going to look down on the person, because it's none of our business.

(Gaby, Confirmation teacher, Traditional Catholic Church)

There was recently a situation with a girl who got pregnant. But it's not necessarily at church that there's prejudice, but in the communities. The looks, they really change. I see preconceptions, at least during the pregnancy. The looks betray what people are thinking, because of their own curiosity. People judge a lot.

(Melissa, 22 years old, charismatic Catholic community, goes to church twice a week)



Finally, I asked if anyone witnessed a young woman (or young couple)—pregnant outside of marriage and punished by the church—stop attending or completely abandon the church. The answers varied:

I have an example of that. I have a friend that got a girl pregnant. He worked at the church and he was excluded from everything he did. Now, I don't know if, if after marrying her, he could have come back, but that's not what happened. They got married, but he didn't come back to church.

(Maria, 23 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

Most stop coming. That's what I was going to tell you, that most stop coming. I don't know why, I don't know if they're ashamed or something, but most stop coming. It's like that, the others always get married, you know?

(Cristina, Sunday school teacher, Assembly of God)

During the pregnancy, I think so. I think she would prefer to disappear for a bit, because she'd know the preconceptions that she's going to suffer, so she'd prefer to wait to have the baby and then come back to introduce the baby. I knew a girl from church. I found out she was pregnant. Now she has a child and she goes to church.

(Helena, 24 years old, Assembly of God, goes to church six times a week)

No. If she gets pregnant and stays with the child, then there's no problem. She keeps coming to church.

(Priest Paulo, Traditional Catholic Church)

### **7.2.3 – Consequences for deviance**

In addition to sanctions, a religion can directly influence the behavior of its followers through the feelings and expectations that are associated with a lack of respect for religious norms (Ellison and Levin, 1998). Depending on the level of importance a follower gives religion in his or her life, the violation of such teachings can provoke

negative emotions (like guilt and fear) and embarrassment. As explained in Chapter 4, it is costly to violate the norms of the corresponding religious role because such violation produces the discomfort of cognitive dissonance (Wimberley, 1989: 127)—that is, a psychological distress associated with a disagreement between what an individual believes and what she or he behaves. The apprehension of having to experience such feelings, embarrassment or self-punishment can be a method of social control among teenagers and young people (Rohrbaugh and Jessor, 1975) and can help prevent an action contrary to the stipulated religious norm.

During some interviews, I perceived a feeling of guilt or regret on the part of some young women who had transgressed a particular religious value or norm related to sexual behavior. In the same way, as shown by the following statements, some pastors recounted stories in which young people displayed shame and fear of divine punishment for having gone against what the church recommends.

I've been dating for seven years, and I've never had sex with my boyfriend. But according to the church, I should completely abstain from sexual activities. By sexual activity, I mean touching, hugging in a different way, or some sort of exposure of the body beyond what's natural in a hug or a restrained kiss. So the church recommends that you hold back your desires so that everything happens within a marriage, including the types of sexual relations that people can have. In my case, I restrained myself for a long time, feeling guilty for every little thing that happened, even if it was just a different sort of hug. For example, if there was a different touch, I would get upset, I'd cry. So I'd have that constant inner duel between what was right and what was wrong.

(Melissa, 22 years old, charismatic Catholic community, goes to church twice a week)

Just yesterday a young man called me, left a message on my phone saying: "I just did the stupidest thing of my life, I went to a motel with a girl whom I didn't

know.” He was desperate, crying, repentant, saying that he was ashamed before God, that he was ashamed of himself, that he was sad, that he was very sad. And he said:

— Look, everything that you guys always teach us about in your sermons, I’m living it now. Everything you say about the burden, the guilt of sin, the shame of sin, these things that you teach are in the Bible, I’m seeing that it’s true in my life. I’m seeing that a mere second of pleasure of sin leads to an eternal loss for me.

(Pastor Daniel, Renewed Baptist Church)

The boy was from the church, he was a pastor at the church, so he met a girl who wasn’t evangelical, so then he had her ways, her lifestyle. Some of her ways are like the ways of the post-modern world, where sex is normal, so he started to have a sexual relationship with her. Then came the day he started to feel that guilt, a lot of shame. So he decided to come back to church. So they came to the group together, the boy reconciled with the church and she converted.

(Pastor Ronald, Baptist Church)

### **7.3 – Indirect Effects**

The following section emphasizes potential indirect religious influences on adolescent and youth behavior. More specifically, I pay closer attention to some of the mechanisms or pathways by which religion may help to bring about a desired outcome in their lives (Regnerus and Smith, 2005). As mentioned earlier, these mechanisms do not typically operate independently. In fact, they are connected and probably mutually reinforcing factors. Smith (2003) aggregated those around two dimensions: learned competences and social and organizational ties.

### **7.3.1 – Learned Competences**

According to Smith (2003), religion offers a context in which young people can observe, learn and practice valuable techniques and skills that can enrich their knowledge, increase their self-esteem, alter their aspirations, and increase their access to better opportunities in the adult phase. Techniques of community life and leadership, elements of cultural capital, and methods for overcoming hardships are a few examples of skills produced in a religious context that can be translated and employed in non-religious situations and spaces, such as family, school, work, friendship and politics, among other things. Although some authors have already observed that churches in Brazil, such as Pentecostal ones, are efficient in teaching these techniques (Mariz, 1994), little is known about how this process plays out among teenagers and youth.

To determine whether or not the churches I visited presented learning opportunities for their members—especially youth—I asked religious leaders if their churches offered a space for participation in activities wherein followers could obtain and develop such skills. I also asked the same question of the young people I interviewed, as well as whether or not they participated in any church activities, such as choir, event organizing, or greeting.

In my visits to youth groups and Sunday school, as well as during the lectures I attended, it became clear that teenagers and youth at Protestant churches have ample opportunities to learn techniques and acquire knowledge in a religious context. Two Renewed Baptist churches and two Pentecostal churches I attended are examples. The

youth at these churches participate in a variety of activities, including the following: choir, orchestra, dance, sports, greeting worshipers, worship groups, prayer groups, youth groups, dating classes, the promotion and organization of internal or external activities, social work in poor communities, parties, celebrations, retreats, conferences, shows, seminars, lectures, and trips.

Youth also contribute in the areas of communication and virtual outreach, helping with the creation of Web sites and blogs for the church. Many young people also lead “cells”, or small worship groups, and teach children, teenagers or other youth. Others are pastors of youth groups and coordinate lectures and seminars. Furthermore, some churches offer help and services during difficult life events, which can contribute to a young person’s self-esteem and help him or her develop techniques for dealing with such hardships.

Corroborating the above observation, the majority of young people in Pentecostal and Renewed Protestant churches responded that they participate in classes and activities in the church, and that this is common among youth. Some of the young women I interviewed attend church more than five times per week and participate in more than one religious activity. Religious leaders also stated that these churches have attracted young people by offering various activities and courses.

In addition to the groups, I go to Sunday school, I go to orchestra and band rehearsals, which are Saturday nights, and I participate in the Reading Club, too.

(Helena, 24 years old, Assembly of God, goes to church six times a week)

I'm part of the dance group and the youth group, which are on Saturdays; I'm a greeting leader, and on Sundays I just go to group. In general, activities for teenagers are led by youth.

(Darcy, 18 years old, Four-square Pentecostal Church, goes to church three times a week)

We don't even give youth time to breath here for all the activities we have. When one ends, we're already starting another one.

(Pastor Daniel, Renewed Baptist Church)

The activities offered at church occupy much of the teenagers' and young people's free time. One example of this, as discussed earlier in this chapter, is the day and time chosen for youth group gatherings. Additionally, churches promote activities on holidays, such as Carnaval, and other occasions, such as birthdays. Carnaval is a very popular festival in Brazil that officially lasts four days, but is usually extended through one week or more in February. The celebration is known for its extravagance and liberal ways, principally in terms of drug and alcohol consumption, as well as sexual practices. Some churches offer alternative activities, especially for teenagers and youth, during this time of year.

We always have lectures at church during Carnaval. I've participated in several.

(Helena, 24 years old, Assembly of God, goes to church six times a week)

Weekend camping trips, on New Year's, Carnaval. I like them a lot. Whenever I can, I go.

(Nina, 21 years old, charismatic Catholic community, goes to church twice a week)

We're going to do a camping trip over Carnaval, and we already have 700 registered to go. The limit is a thousand so I'm sure we're going to have a thousand youth by February 20th. So the response has been really good at our church.

(Pastor Daniel, Renewed Baptist Church)

We get an evangelical deejay, and we'll be at the Carnaval in Ouro Preto with a samba school. So they're creative things to do to attract young people.

(Pastor Ronald, Baptist church)

### **7.3.1.1 – Leadership and community skills**

Protestant churches, including Pentecostal, are usually made up of various ministries that promote different activities among members. In this context, the roles of the leader and assistant leader are fundamental. They are extremely important in organizing activities that may contribute to the development of knowledge, skills and techniques.

Perhaps the most immediate way to learn and practice leadership skills at most Protestant churches is through “cell” meetings—weekly gatherings where a small group of five to 15 people meets to read the Bible, pray, worship and have a moment of communion with God. They almost always take place in members' homes and must be led by one of these members. Many churches, as shown in the statements below, offer leadership courses to form these cells.

We have a leadership class for cells that lasts a year. Everyone who wants to start a cell has to take this course. In the youth group, there are cells that are specifically for youth to become leaders.

(Nancy, 22 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

At every activity that we go to, we have training in Christian leadership.

(Rosa, 23 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

I also asked religious leaders if the church provided a space for youth to participate in activities and practice leadership skills. Renewed Protestant churches offer the greatest number of opportunities, as suggested below.

Yeah, we have that. We have cells, which are smaller groups, so the first step for leadership is at the cell. The young person faces the small group and from there he starts practicing his leadership skills. If he already has skill, a certain gift, he enters a Ministry. As he's trained, as he grows, he assumes leadership. There's a lot of demand for leaders. A lot of demand.

(Pastor Ronald, Baptist Church)

We have a lot of leadership activities. One of the problems we had was just that: since there are a lot of youth in our church, there wasn't room for everyone to work, so we implemented a Ministry called "Save Lives". I was the one who created the Ministry just for this, for everyone to have an opportunity to participate. So, from greeting at the church entrance, to worship activities, to "intercession", which is when the youth pray throughout group meetings to ask God to bless the meeting. Anyway, lots of different activities. Also, we encourage leadership training, especially in small groups. These are small meetings that take place at home, at school, at work, in restaurants, in workshops, where a small group of Christians gets together for a short meeting, to read from the Bible, to say a prayer, and have a moment of communion with each other. The goal is to integrate people and to offer some relief in the middle of the daily rush. We encourage leadership training for these groups. Today we have 60 of these groups. But we had a meeting last week and we already doubled this number, so there are 120 leaders and all of them are youth.

(Pastor Daniel, Renewed Baptist Church)

The testimonials of young women and religious leaders from Catholic churches, however, reflect a different scenario. They reported that it is not common for teenagers and youth to participate in leadership positions or in the organization of church activities,



even at those influenced by the charismatic movement. Also, leaders from traditional Catholic churches affirmed that these churches usually don't offer activities that could interest young people. Often, the absence of young people at these churches is evident.

My church doesn't motivate youth to participate in leadership and in organizing activities.

(Vanessa, 21 years old, Traditional Catholic Church, goes to church less than weekly)

Young leaders aren't common at my church. In that case, they're people who have been there longer.

(Melissa, 22 years old, charismatic Catholic community, goes to church twice a week)

No, not with young people. Also, because of the time of day that we have mass, which is 8:30 in the morning. In this neighborhood, it's the only church that has mass in the morning, so the people who go are much older. So, they value older people more. The Minister of the Eucharist, for example, which is a really serious position; I'm sure that they would never ask a young person. They always ask older people.

(Nina, 21 years old, charismatic Catholic community, goes to church twice a week)

I think that a young person can feel motivated individually or by his family. Because the church doesn't promote the insertion of young people in these roles, calling them to participate, much less to participate as leaders.

(Gaby, Confirmation teacher, Traditional Catholic Church)

The absence of teenagers and young people in traditional Catholic churches can also be seen at mass, which is often attended by children, adults and the elderly. Unlike evangelical groups, traditional Catholic mass in Brazil has a reputation for being a dull activity that involves little enthusiasm. The charismatic movement, among other things, inspired a new type of mass, with characteristics similar to Pentecostal and Renewed

Protestant churches. Music, praise, applause and manifestations of joy are common elements in the movement.

One way teenagers and youth can participate in Catholic churches is through confirmation, which is the first Eucharist. Confirmation candidates, usually between 15 and 20 years old, are required to take a class that can last up to one year. During that time, students attend weekly church meetings to read Bible passages, which are often compared to prevailing issues young people face, in terms of work, family and material consumption. In these groups, participants have the opportunity to express themselves and interact, but they are not usually leaders or organizers. The young women I interviewed from a traditional Catholic church complained that the demand among young people for the confirmation class has significantly dropped, to the point where this preparatory class is no longer offered.

Another interesting observation raised by youth and religious leaders from traditional Catholic churches is the lack of age-appropriate activities for church members during all stages of life, especially from childhood to the adult phase. The three main activities the church usually offers children, teenagers and youth are: catechism (preparation for the first communion), confirmation and youth group. However, long lapses exist between these activities, which can allow the child or teenager to lose contact with the church permanently. The opposite occurs in Protestant churches, which usually offer activities for all ages.

Here in the community currently there isn't like, a lot of activity. I already did confirmation, I already did catechism, I already did youth group, so this late in the game, there's nothing left to do.

(Vanessa, 21 years old, Traditional Catholic Church, goes to church less than weekly)

Because we've got, for example, the first communion, which is for children, and when those children finish, if they don't have an incentive from their parents to go every week to mass, to study the Bible at home, something of that sort, they only come back for confirmation, at 15 years old at the earliest, so they're already really disconnected. So, it's the meeting, for example, every year or every two years at the most, during which that person didn't have any previous connection that he or she could come back to. So, there's nothing I can think of that attracts someone so that when they finish with the first communion, they go on to confirmation and so forth.

(Gaby, Confirmation teacher, Traditional Catholic Church)

The church encourages the participation of its followers starting at childhood. Teenagers and youth, for example, have infinite things to do [at church].

(Maria, 23 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

The interviewees also described church activities aimed at the community. As one might expect, churches promote volunteer activities that help others and poor communities. As suggested by Smith (2003), religious congregations need their members to participate in the organization of these activities, which can contribute to the followers' acquisition of skills that can be used in other areas of life. Organizing provisions of food, toys and school supplies, as well as hospital and prison visits, are some examples of these practices. I asked if it was common for young followers to engage in these activities and some leaders and youth answered affirmatively.

Today we held a social, evangelist activity in the neighborhood Rosa Neves, in Ribeirão das Neves, one of the poorest neighborhoods of Belo Horizonte's metropolitan area. They don't have basic sanitation; they don't have anything.

More than 100 youth took a bus there and distributed food baskets, gallons of water, toys and mainly school supplies.

(Pastor Daniel, Renewed Baptist Church)

Prisons and hospitals. The youth are companions mostly to sick people, but we have a Prison Ministry, which works with prisoners, visiting them, bringing objects of personal hygiene.

(Pastor Ronald, Baptist Church)

It's very clear, the issue of community, you know, of helping. The first step is prayer, and the second is, if you can help, for example, by visiting someone who has a health problem.

(Rosa, 23 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

We have a service for learning how to deal with people in difficult situations, like sick people in the hospital or prisoners. To learn how to act around them, that kind of thing. So you take that class and then you start to work in that area. I'm in the hospital area. I set out to visit hospitals.

(Darcy, 18 years old, Four-square Pentecostal Church, goes to church three times a week)

We collect donations from the community, and we take it to the homes of people in need. Sometimes in the case of sickness, we get a doctor who doesn't charge, or maybe we get enough money to pay for a visit, or we give medicine.

(Nina, 21 years old, charismatic Catholic community, goes to church twice a week)

### **7.3.1.2 – Cultural capital**

As mentioned above, religions can offer opportunities for members, including teenagers and youth, to acquire different aspects of cultural capital. According to Smith (2003), this is a mechanism by which religion can affect the lives of young people and alter their behaviors and attitudes in other areas, such as school or work. In this way, young people's well being, aspirations regarding the future, and life opportunities can

improve. Consequently, religion can indirectly influence decisions related to sexuality and reproduction.

One incident fascinated me in the beginning of a youth group gathering at a Renewed Protestant church. The church was full, and the pastor started the meeting by asking who had passed their exams to be accepted into the state's most competitive university. Several young people raise their hands and stated which majors they were going to pursue at the university that year. Next, the pastor asked the audience to applaud these young people and spent about 30 minutes reading notes from some of them who were thankful (especially to God) for the accomplishment. The pastor's interest in the educational success of these young people was one of the first indications of the church's ability to encourage its followers to accrue cultural capital—especially teenagers and youth.

The next week, the same church promoted a lecture (led by a very promising young pastor) on the 20 basic rules for how a Christian should behave in college. The preoccupation with this topic was justified by the fact that the entrance into college is an important, life-changing moment—a transition into a space that's highly influenced by the secular, rational world. Geared toward young people, the lecture took place before a youth group gathering, in one of the church rooms. In a very entertaining way, the pastor recited each rule, which related to alcohol and drug use, sexuality and appropriate university clothing, among other things.

I observed that the Protestant churches I visited promote the following: learning about Biblical literature; music, theater, painting and embroidery classes; literature clubs; and much more. Some even offer professional courses, lectures about the labor market, and scholarships. Sunday schools, for example, often become an area for reading, learning and improving communication skills. They are common in Protestant churches and attract people of all ages. The teachings are based on Bible passages, which, as suggested in the statement below, are often used as a conduit to discuss prevailing issues in the lives of teenagers and youth.

We use a book in Sunday school that always touches on issues related to the day-to-day life of youth. Last trimester, we studied STDs, depression, and we talked about drug and alcohol use.

(Cristina, Sunday school teacher, Assembly of God)

I asked the young women and religious leaders if their churches provide activities that can contribute to the intellectual growth of followers. Protestant church members and some of the Catholic members answered positively. One Sunday school teacher at the Assembly of God, for example, told me about a reading club that she founded. Once a month, young participants in the class get together to discuss a book. According to the teacher, she encouraged this type of activity in order to stimulate reading and to foster greater knowledge in her students. She said the idea was well received by the church. Additionally, other examples of church activities that can contribute to the accumulation of cultural capital among followers are mentioned below.

I come to Sunday school, and now I'm going to start going to music class at church.

(Nicole, 19 years old, Assembly of God, goes to church twice a week)

The teenagers have a theater group specifically for the network of teenagers, a dance group, choir, music group.

(Nancy, 22 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

Lecturers talk about finances, others talk about relationships.

(Maria, 23 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

The youth have more than three ministries. A young person who wants to paint can paint at church, if he wants to dance, wants to do heavy metal, there's a heavy metal band at church. We go to "underground" shows. So there's a lot of interesting things, different things.

(Pastor Ronald, Baptist church)

There are various music ministries at church. Every Sunday one of the ministries plays, and there's a music choir, a children's choir, a youth choir, which I'm a part of. We've had embroidery class, painting, computer class. There's always an activity like that at our church.

(Nina, 21 years old, charismatic Catholic community, goes to church twice a week)

Some young women, upon developing activities for the church or for a religious movement (such as the dissemination of the church and Christian principles), affirmed that they learned or practiced skills that contributed to the growth of their stock of cultural capital.

I worked a lot with, for example, Power Point presentations and videos for presenting our church movement. We would have "Philosophical Breakfast", to talk about a controversial topic. We bring someone to talk and openly discuss, like, for anyone in college. Debating the "why" or the "why not", our beliefs. This

kind of event is a lot of work for me, it's propagation. And there's really coffee, and people get together. It's financial help we have to look for. And other events to get the attention of freshmen and show them that college is about a lot more than studying.

(Rosa, 23 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

In general, I observed that most of the young women showed strong verbal communication and ability to express themselves, even among those with less education.

I also saw a direct concern in some churches, mainly the Renewed Baptist ones, with education and the job market.

The church has various programs; there's a school that gives scholarships to church members. In the college league, we promote a lot of things that emphasize to young people the importance of the job market, so once a month we have a seminar, where people talk about jobs and abilities. Every Monday the church has a group for unemployed people, and in this group, job openings and professional courses are advertised by church members who are business owners. Last Monday there was a meeting that offered more than 1,000 employment opportunities.

(Pastor Ronald, Baptist church)

The church helps the poor community. For example, there's a baker's class. Also, there just opened a salon for teaching how to cut and style hair, how to do manicures. These classes are offered not just to members, but to the community too.

(Nancy, 22 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

There's a class on Tuesday nights for poor people who don't have the means to pay for a pre-college course.

(Maria, 23 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

One Catholic leader from a traditional church, however, was a little pessimistic about the prevalence of courses and activities that enrich the cultural capital of youth.

According to her, there are courses—like a theology one, for example—but the church



doesn't encourage young people to participate. Below, I present her statement about this lack of encouragement.

Despite being open to all, most of the people who attend the theology class are older. So, I come back to the same point: a young person, if he goes, it's because a parent goes and invites him to come along. So the class exists, it's possible for a young person to participate, but the church doesn't really try to get them to participate. It's allowed, but there's not a lot of effort.

(Gaby, Confirmation teacher, Traditional Catholic Church)

### **7.3.1.3 – Coping skills**

Religions often promote beliefs and practices that can help followers overcome life's hardships—when they're experiencing, for example, emotional, spiritual, physical or financial problems. This support can occur through the offering of different resources, such as prayer, counseling, forgiveness, and reconciliation (Smith, 2003), as well as through encouragement for the believer to change his or her behavior. Some changes, as mentioned before, include reducing the consumption of products that are harmful to one's health, such as alcohol and drugs (Brusco, 1995), and minimizing the risk of having extra-marital relations (Hill, Cleland and Ali, 2004; Burdick, 1993), of single motherhood (Mariz, 1994) and of teenage pregnancy (McKinnon, Potter and Garrard-Burnett, 2008).

I asked the young women and religious leaders I interviewed if their churches offered resources that could help overcome problems and difficult moments related to family, work, school, marriage or other areas of life. The answers varied; however, as shown below, most of those interviewed stated that prayer, advice, and, in some cases,

professional help are common, especially in situations of personal tragedy, such as suicide attempts or crises associated with addictions.

In addition to the pastors being prepared to counsel, we have a psychology department at our church where trained psychologists with experience counsel young people. Because there are so many problems—problems with stress, depression, loneliness, abortion. We take in young people who tried to kill themselves, suicide. A few months ago, a 13-year-old girl got here with her wrists all cut up because she tried to kill herself. I talked to her, we gave her medicine, we sent her to the hospital, and we talked to her family. We kept talking to her, she accepted Christ, she was baptized and now she works at our church. So, there are a lot of situations like that and we're always there. Two weeks ago, a young man from our church died at 18 from a heart attack, so we counsel not just young people, but their families too; we were at the funeral, so at all stages.

(Pastor Daniel, Renewed Baptist Church)

If a young person wants advice at church, he'll find it, easily. He can call, schedule something, whatever way, we do it. He can also, at any time, look for his leader. For example, if you come to me with a situation that I think is too big, I have older pastors I can refer you to. I've done that several times. There was a woman: "Ah, I'm divorced, I have three kids, I'm having this problem." I don't see myself as being able to help her, but I know that there's someone at church who can, so that's what I do. Two weeks ago, one mother whose son was an addict was wanting to send him to rehab. The church has a place like that, and the pastor has to take care of the issue. Because he knows how to treat the addict and his family. So he's a psychologist, he's a pastor, he has experience with the issue, so why waste time? "I'll direct you, call, take you there." Alcohol and drug use is an issue that's addressed a lot among the youth, in worship, and we seek to always refer youth in extreme cases. We try to help in that way.

(Pastor Ronald, Baptist Church)

My church has a really large structure. We have the House of Prayer where you call when you need help, and they talk to you and pray with you on the phone.

(Maria, 23 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

In my Catholic community, this counseling is really essential. Our counselor looks for people and he guides them. He's always visiting or calling, or when they go there they talk about the major personal decisions in their lives, they usually ask. My mom, for example, as a member of the community, everything that she

needs as a wife, as a mother, everything she needs, she asks for advice from our founder, but not necessarily from the priests of our parish.

(Melissa, 22 years old, charismatic Catholic community, goes to church twice a week)

Some churches, mainly Protestant ones, offer specific services, which vary according to the age of the person soliciting help and according to the problem. For example, two Renewed Baptist churches I visited have ministries that take care of issues related to children, teenagers and youth, and also problems such as prostitution and having children out of wedlock.

We have specific ministries that take care of youth, of children, of teenagers and there's one that takes care of families—there are psychologists, lawyers. So, depending on the problem, you're referred. Or maybe the youth group leader can help you. Sometimes it's about family, or dating, so you're referred depending on the kind of problem you're having. Or sometimes it can be anything, depending; it doesn't have to be a specific problem. There are various areas. So it's like that, each stage has a ministry that's responsible, that you can call on.

(Nancy, 22 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

We have a ministry for prostitutes and for single mothers who have children that they don't have the means to raise. There's a specific ministry for them. It takes them in, counsels them, handles them. So even if the young girl- if the young woman goes through that situation, in no way is she going to be rejected. Because it would go against the basic principle of loving your neighbor. Everyone makes mistakes. So it's like that, the pastors, everyone, we take people in, we accept. Including, there are some cases where- where this happens. But in terms of refuge, we give support.

(Maria, 23 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

There are volunteers that are always ready to counsel you, to help you. For example, I've seen lawyers saying to the pastor:

- Oh, pastor, we're doing things related to law, and anything that our brother needs and doesn't have money for, tell him to come talk to us.

(Cristina, Sunday school teacher, Assembly of God)

For example, if it's an issue related to family or sexuality, whatever- there are people today at my parish that support that person or even my priest, because he's young, he also counsels, he helps, he indicates who can assist that young person.

(Nina, 21 years old, charismatic Catholic community, goes to church twice a week)

It was clear in the interviews that the interactions with priests or pastors, and with other church members, are important elements of religious support and can help with problem-handling skills (as suggested by Krause et al. 2001). And these interactions exist independently of the church's size. Whether the church is large or small, the pastor usually provides support for church members in different ways.

Listen, usually, since my church is really small, when there's a problem we call the pastor. My pastor is a man of God and he takes God very seriously. So I have his cell number, and I call when, for example, I have a dream that I don't understand its meaning, or I have a problem, or I'm just not feeling well. I call him and he prays and I feel better. That's what it's like, our church is really close to him and his wife. Now, among us, among the church members when there's a problem, I have several couples that I'm friends with, so we talk about things. Now, let's say someone came to me, not as a church member, in trouble. I've had friends in that kind of situation, feeling badly, not sleeping well, having nightmares. I pray for them because I know that God will listen. But usually I go see the pastor and we pray together with these people. We listen and we try to counsel them.

(Julia, Sunday school teacher, Renewed Baptist Church)

I've always got support and advice whenever I need it. About anything. Relationships, arguments at home, dating, work, whatever it is, you always find

support at church. Always. And not just at youth group, but with the moms of youth group people. They're members of the church too. So it's like that, they care a lot about us, so sometimes it's not even at church, but we go to their houses, they give us advice, help us a lot. We learn a lot with them, too.

(Nina, 21 years old, charismatic Catholic community, goes to church twice a week)

It's common to look for a colleague of mine that's evangelical. That's common. Not from this church, but she's evangelical and we talk a lot and we give each other advice, and see what can get better.

(Nicole, 19 years old, Assembly of God, goes to church twice a week)

### **7.3.2 – Social and organizational ties**

#### **7.3.2.1 – Social capital**

According to Smith (2003), apart from educational institutions and leisure and athletic activities, religion represents one of the few contexts in which teenagers have a chance to interact with people older than them. Intergenerational relationships, in turn, promote interactions based on trust and care among young people, and can become a valuable source of information, resources and opportunities.

It is essential to note that social capital is important for most of the factors mentioned by Smith (2003). It is clear from the statements above that social capital can contribute, for example, to the generation of cultural capital, as well as coping and leadership skills. Researchers have observed that the presence of social and intergenerational interactions in a religious context can aid in academic progress, including time spent on homework and educational and expectations about one's professional future (Muller and Ellison, 2001). Furthermore, other authors observed that

people tend to use better coping skills in a religious context if they interact and receive emotional support from pastors or spiritual support from other church members (Krause et al. 2001). Finally, participation in small groups, as with the aforementioned “cells” is based on strong interpersonal relationships (Cleary, 2007), and helps with the development of leadership skills (Mariz, 1994), including among youth.

Knowing the role of social capital in the establishment of better opportunities for teenagers and youth, I sought to better understand intergenerational relationships within churches. Therefore, I asked the interviewees if they maintained relationships with older people or adults in their churches and, if so, what those relationships were like. The answers varied according to the church. Young people from the Assembly of God stated that it depended on the adult. Some adults still find it difficult to interact with young people, and thus maintain a more traditional concept of how youth should behave. However, in general, Protestant churches tend to promote contact and good relations between youth and adults or the elderly who are members of the same church or at least the same religion. Some accounts, as stated previously, show that pastors, group leaders, and teachers maintain close contact with teenagers and youth, and try to influence their behavior directly, including in relation to sexual decisions. Below I present some narratives about interacting with older people at church:

Generally young people don't have that much intimacy with adults in terms of the day-to-day. Here at church it's not like that. They talk to us; I think that opens the door so that if something's happening, you can talk, you can communicate.

(Nicole, 19 years old, Assembly of God, goes to church twice a week)

Oh, yeah. It's easy. There's always what we call the "pastor on duty". You have his phone number, and you can call. So, if you need to talk to someone older, you can do that. For dating too, there's someone responsible for that, for engagement, family. So, it's divided into areas. So there's a youth pastor, but there's the pastor that's in charge of dating, there's one for families, so you can talk to whichever one. Depending on that, you schedule something or call. There's easy access.

(Nancy, 22 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

Of your own free will, you can choose someone older that you get along with to be your counselor. So I go twice a week and I talk to her for an hour, hour and a half. Because I think that, these days we deal with a lot of sexual issues that aren't talked about, and they can talk to me openly: "Listen, some things are right and people say they're not, and other things are really wrong."

(Maria, 23 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

I also noticed a concern on the part of churches and religious leaders for keeping young people close. One statement reveals a teacher asking older church members to take care of young people, and another testimony emphasizes the establishment of alternative ways to access and counsel youth.

I think that the church seeks a friendly relationship. The other day, I had the opportunity to hear a teacher asking a group of elderly to be more open. Because the elderly tend to be more traditional, so the teacher asked them to be careful, and even if they think a young person is wrong, to try to be understanding.

(Cristina, Sunday school teacher, Assembly of God)

It's very simple. Very easy. The church has more than 100 pastors. They're men with a lot of experience in the faith, with a structured life. Most of them are married, with children, people with life experience, many of them also pastors, doctors, lawyers, sociologists, with college degrees. The pastors have numbers for people who are on call 24 hours a day, you can call them anytime, so it's a 24-hour duty, and it's really easy for young people to access someone to guide them. It's really easy.

(Pastor Daniel, Renewed Baptist Church)

Furthermore, a young woman from a Pentecostal church spoke about a trusting relationship she developed with some church members.

I think that people look for people at their own church. Instead of reaching out to someone at work, for example. There's a bond of trust. I think there's more attention to God. I'm not saying that everyone at church is a saint, but if you get advice at church I think the probability of it being bad advice is less than with someone at work that could be jealous, or something like that. So I seek advice from people at church, people I have more of a connection with, who are more involved in my life.

(Darcy, 18 years old, Four-square Pentecostal Church, goes to church three times a week)

Testimonials from young women and leaders at Catholic churches suggest that intergenerational relationships only emerge and strengthen with difficulty and some controversy, especially between adults who work at the church—including the priest—and teenagers who participate in youth group. Some young women reported that these adults resisted or even became aggravated by youth groups who are influenced by the charismatic Catholic movement but pertain to traditional Catholic churches.

No, it's not that. He [the priest] is open to children, but for young people it's complicated. We have youth groups there, that I don't participate in, but we watch them. But the priest is serious. Sometimes someone wants to sing a psalm in a different way or wants to do a tribute for a 15th birthday party in the middle of mass, a 15th mass, like what happened this week, and the father doesn't want to do it exactly as people plan. Maybe the time for young people to express themselves in liturgy is diminished or totally eliminated.

(Melissa, 22 years old, charismatic Catholic community, goes to church twice a week)

Listen, in my community it's complicated, because since the youth group I'm a part of has operated in the community for several years, people in the community have a certain resistance to living with the group. I don't know, maybe it's



conspiracy. I don't know, but the cooperation isn't very good. And it happens even at church. For example, sometimes there's a meeting, and the coordinator of each group goes, the minister of the Eucharist, the prayer group, the main people responsible for the youth group. So, each one has its point of view. And it's always the youth group that's wrong, it's always the youth group that's not doing this, or it's the youth group's fault, it's always like that, you know? And, thank God, the priest, he's different, he gets it. Really, everyone in the community sees that it's an implication of the group. Older people don't have much interest in encouraging youth participation in the church, unfortunately.

(Nina, 21 years old, charismatic Catholic community, goes to church twice a week)

### **7.3.2.2 – Network closure**

Network closure is the last factor analyzed here. According to Smith (2003), social networks constructed in church encourage positive practices among teenagers and youth because these networks can involve people who care about them, thus establishing a valuable tool for supervision and control in young people's lives. Furthermore, social networks involving interactions between teenagers and sources outside of family, such as pastors, Sunday school teachers, leaders and the parents of friends at church, can reinforce a paternal influence in the life of the teenager, which is associated with better behavior and results in the teenager. This is because parents usually have access to these church members, who can be a source of information and help. In addition, many churches encourage activities that involve the whole family, such as trips and celebrations, helping to promote interactions between parents and their children (Muller and Ellison, 2001).

I asked the religious leaders I interviewed if parents tend to look to the church to talk or ask for help for their children. This question allowed me to understand whether or

not parents use their children's interactions with other church members to increase the control and supervision they maintain over their children's lives. The answers revealed that this practice is common in some churches, even when it comes to young people's sexual behavior.

We have regular meetings with the parents; our relationship is good. We explain what the subject in class will be, what we're going to work on, and they take home some extra activities. And when there's a problem they're free to look for us. Last week a mom came to me and said:

— I've got a problem with my daughter: she's lying. I already caught her in several situations where she's lying a lot. Can you talk to her?

So, I prepared a class that talked about the importance of being truthful with God, that God doesn't like lying.

(Julia, Sunday school teacher, Renewed Baptist Church)

A friend, she had a problem with her teenage son, who started to have an active sexual life very early. She got help here at church to deal with the issue.

(Cristina, Sunday school teacher, Assembly of God)

So, there was a mom that called me saying that her son was into drugs, and if we could pay a visit to her house to meet her son and talk to him.

(Coordinator Fausto, charismatic Catholic community)

I've seen some cases where parents find out their kids are homosexual, so they come talk to us about how they should act.

(Priest Paulo, Traditional Catholic Church)

It's common for parents to look to the church to talk about their children. Sometimes a teenager stopped going to church and they want us to seek him out, to talk. Here, every day of the week pastors get lists and lists of names and phone numbers. They meet in the main room at 8 am to pray. After, at 9 am, they distribute the phone lists. It's crazy! Then, they only leave the temple after they've made the last phone call.

(Pastor Ronald, Baptist church)

The testimonial of a young woman about the close relationship between parents and youth pastors—and the implicit trust in that relationship—caught my interest. The statement below suggests that parents are informed about the life and behavior of their children in church, and that they probably trust the decisions made by pastors (at least in reference to dating).

Starting at 16, [the church pastors] allow dating, without much physical contact, at least in front of them. The pastor spoke, talked, there was a sermon about it. People [the teenagers] accepted it really well, since with the permission of the pastor, their parents would know. So it was a way to control hidden dating, so, if the pastor knew, then the parents would know.

(Maria, 23 years old, Renewed Baptist Church, goes to church twice a week)

#### **7.4 – Conclusion**

This chapter examined whether Christian churches in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, are capable of shaping the sexual and reproductive behavior of youth. Based on the results above—obtained by observing youth groups, Sunday school classes at the Assembly of God, lectures on sexuality, 22 semi-structured interviews with young women between the ages of 18 and 24 and religious leaders, and informal conversations—I was able to see that some churches can directly and indirectly influence the sexual decisions of their young followers. Direct influence occurs through: (1) the teaching of behavioral norms related to sexuality, (2) punishment that results from disobeying these teachings, and (3) the anticipation of feelings of regret, shame and guilt among youth for not having followed the rules of sexual behavior promoted by their churches. The indirect effect that some churches can exercise occurs through the teaching

of techniques and skills and the promotion of social interactions that help create better opportunities for teenagers and youth, and can affect their decisions and behaviors, including sexual ones.

During my fieldwork, it became evident that topics related to the sexual behavior of teenagers and youth are frequently broached in Pentecostal and Renewed Protestant churches, as well as in charismatic Catholic communities. Counseling against premarital sex, for example, is very common. One aspect that, in a certain form, surprised me is the candidness with which the issue is discussed. During youth group meetings and lectures, both the pastors and youth exhibited ease with discussing matters related to sexuality.

On the other hand, interviews with Catholic youth and leaders from traditional churches revealed that sexuality issues of teenagers and youth are not treated so clearly and consistently in these churches. Furthermore, the testimonials suggest that these churches maintain a more liberal position on sexual behavior as compared to, for example, Pentecostal ones.

I also researched the existence of penalties for disobeying religious teachings. The most common punishment in Renewed Protestant and Pentecostal churches is temporary suspension from certain religious activities. The young women and religious leaders I interviewed confirmed that this disciplinary method is used for “sexual crimes” such as premarital sex or pregnancy. The main objective of the punishment is to promote self-reflection, regret and a change in behavior. However, it also serves to reinforce the norms and values taught in the church.

Some interviews revealed lingering feelings of regret, shame and guilt on the part of some youth for not having followed the religious norms of sexual behavior that their churches foster. Naturally, these feelings vary according to the level of involvement the young person has at church, and the role religion plays in his or her life.

I also studied the development of techniques and skills that could help create better opportunities for teenagers and youth and indirectly affect their decisions and behaviors. Upon visiting Renewed and Pentecostal churches, I noticed various activities aimed at this age group, which often participates actively. Sunday school; dance, music and athletic groups; projects in poor communities; and the propagation of church ideals in communities are a few examples of the activities and practices that involve skills that can be employed in situations outside of religion, such as at school or in the workforce. Furthermore, churches offer services and help to manage life's hardships, contributing to the development of techniques for overcoming such issues.

As for leadership-building activities, the Renewed Protestant churches stood out for offering opportunities for youth to learn and practice leadership skills, through the creation of "cells", as well as leadership courses. Again, the testimonials of young women and Catholic religious leaders revealed a different scenario. They reported that teenagers and youth do not often occupy positions of leadership or participate in the organization of activities at church. Furthermore, Catholic religious leaders said that their churches—in this case, those not of the charismatic influence—don't often attract young

people with activities that could rouse their interest. They also stressed that the absence of youth in their churches is evident.

The offering of elements of cultural capital for teenagers and youth is also common in Protestant churches and, in some cases, in Catholic churches under the charismatic influence. The youth reported that they attend (or know others who attend) music and dance classes, professional courses, Sunday school, and lectures on the workforce, among other things. In general, the Protestant churches demonstrated interest in educational development and better employment opportunities for their followers, especially youth.

As expected, almost all of the interviewees said that it is common for churches to offer help in difficult moments. While the most common method of help is prayer and advice, other services—such as appointments with psychologists or lawyers—are offered at some churches, especially Renewed Protestant ones.

Finally, I asked about social relationships at church, emphasizing two different sources. The first was through interactions with older people who, in some way, are concerned with the well-being of the young person. Such interactions can serve as a source of opportunity, resources and information. The second type of social relationship I explored can occur through interactions between church members and the parents of teenagers and youth at the church, which can boost parental supervision and control. Protestant churches, in general, tend to encourage contact and good relations between youth and adults or the elderly who are members of the same church or followers of the

same religion. Youth groups influenced by the charismatic Catholic movement show a greater difficulty interacting with older members of traditional Catholic churches. The young women interviewed experienced resistance or aggravation on the part of organizers or older church members. Finally, reports from religious leaders, especially of Protestant churches, demonstrated that parents often look to the church to talk about or request help for their children. Moreover, some statements indicated that the opinions and decisions of pastors relating to the behavior of children are taken seriously by parents.

## Chapter Eight – Final Conclusions

Religion is becoming an important and highly present factor in the lives of many adolescents and youth in Brazil. In terms of attempting to attract this age group, Pentecostal and renewed Protestant churches, as well as charismatic Catholic communities, stand out, as they've used their resources to create a space for this segment of the population to participate in a religious environment. Youth groups, dating groups, trips, trade courses, lectures, and aid work in poor communities, among other activities, have been frequently observed in Protestant churches. In charismatic Catholic communities, or in traditional Catholic churches that are under the charismatic influence, youth groups, confirmation and other activities such as retreats and courses are the dominant activities for youth. Both types of churches have been successful at creating mechanisms through which religion can influence the lives and behavior of young people.

With the growth of Pentecostalism over the last few decades in Brazil, conservative norms related to the sexual behavior of adolescents and unmarried youth began to play an important and systematic role in the lives of an increasing population of Brazilian youth. In addition to offering greater space for youth to maintain close relationships, the Pentecostal movement has promoted the dissemination of clearer standards and objectives, as well as punitive sanctions, with respect to the sexual initiation of its followers.



## **8.1 – Main findings**

A main aim of this dissertation was to examine the associations between religion and sexual initiation in Brazil. With the goal of addressing the first two questions in the introduction of this study, quantitative results in Chapter 6 show that adolescent and young women affiliated with Protestant churches, whether traditional or Pentecostal, presented a lower risk than their Catholic counterparts of initiating sexual activity during adolescence and of having premarital sex. The temporal analysis of this research suggests that these differentials emerged between 1986 and 1996. After 10 years, the differentials had weakened, but were still strong in 2006.

The risk of premarital sexual initiation during adolescence was also lower among girls who attended religious groups regularly as compared to those who never participated, even after controlling for demographic, socioeconomic and community variables. However, the comparison between the three different DHS years suggests that this risk has diminished over time in Brazil.

These findings would seem to corroborate the standards and values taught in Protestant churches, especially in renewed and Pentecostal ones. At the same time, the findings suggest that membership in these churches, as well as greater attendance at groups and church services, facilitates the indirect effects religion may have on the lives of adolescents and youth.

A combination of variables related to religious affiliation and attendance in groups showed important differences among the same religious affiliations. In the three DHS, Catholic youth who attended mass weekly presented a lower risk of premarital sexual initiation during adolescence than Catholics who rarely went to church. In addition to suggesting that the charismatic Catholic renewal influences the lives of youth at this church, this finding shows that Catholic women are a heterogeneous group and should be analyzed accordingly. There is a significant number of Catholic women in Brazil who are influenced by the charismatic renewal and who often behave similarly to young women from Pentecostal and renewed Protestant churches.

Another important finding was the difference between Pentecostal youth who attend church on a weekly basis and those who rarely attend. The former group demonstrated the lowest risk of experiencing premarital sex during adolescence, while the latter showed the greatest risk. These results again indicate the importance of considering attendance in religious groups and services in studying religion in Brazil. As before, one explanation of this difference is the indirect influence of Pentecostalism on young people's decisions about sexual initiation, which in turn depended on the religious attendance of those young people.

On the other hand, results of the fieldwork certainly support the idea that Pentecostal young women who transgress the virginity norm might be inclined or motivated to leave their congregation. Some of these girls were probably no longer attending their church because they were ashamed of having had premarital sex.

Therefore, it is important to repeat that because this work uses cross-sectional data, the direction of the causality may be reversed, that is, decisions on premarital sexual behavior may be causing decisions on religious involvement – such as attendance at religious services – and not the other way around.

The direct and indirect influence of religion on the behavior of Brazilian adolescents and youth was evident in Chapter 7, in which I reported on the qualitative results of this dissertation and sought to address the final two questions established in the introduction. One of the findings that surprised me was the openness and ease with which the young women and religious leaders from Pentecostal and renewed Protestant churches discussed issues related to sexual initiation during interviews and in the activities I observed. Since they defend conservative values in terms of sexuality, I imagined these churches would treat the issue as a taboo, or at least with greater reserve. In actuality, these churches use various communication mechanisms with adolescents and youth to address the issue.

These churches can exercise an indirect effect on the sexual behavior of adolescents through mechanisms that can contribute to improvements in other areas of young people's lives. My fieldwork showed that Pentecostal and renewed Protestant churches and renewed Catholic communities offer various activities for adolescents and youth that can generate an increase in their stock of leadership and coping skills, as well as cultural and social capital.

Generally, the results of the qualitative analysis support the quantitative findings of this dissertation. The findings of my fieldwork suggest that adolescents and youth from Protestant churches and charismatic communities seem likely to delay or abstain from premarital sexual initiation. It also supports the idea that some of the Pentecostal young women who disobey the virginity norm might be inclined or motivated to leave their congregation.

## **8.2 – Future steps**

As mentioned earlier, few studies have examined the association between religion and demographic phenomena in Brazil. If on the one hand, this gap limits our understanding, it also creates a great opportunity for research on the subject. Among so many possibilities, I will suggest a few topics for future studies.

The first is to analyze the association between religion and other dimensions of sexual and reproductive behavior of adolescents and youth in Brazil, such as age upon marrying and type of union, the use of contraceptives, and fertility, using data from the DHS in 1986, 1996 and 2006, as well as other data sources. The second research suggestion is to evaluate how mortality rates (infant and adult), and other indicators of public health, such as abortion, violence and crime, physical and mental illness, and the functional capacity of the elderly, are associated with religious involvement in Brazil.

Third, greater attention should be allocated to adolescents and youth from charismatic Catholic communities. That population has grown in Brazil and is following

many of the conservative standards of Pentecostal Protestant churches. Future studies should compare these groups, with traditional Catholic churches as well. Fourth, researchers should investigate more closely those who state they have no religion. This group, which has also grown in Brazil, occupies, on average, an unfavorable socioeconomic situation where factors such as greater risk of pregnancy out of wedlock, lower use of contraception, and higher rates of divorce or consensual unions are concentrated.

Finally, probably one of the most efficient mechanisms that religion uses to influence followers' lives is the promotion of social capital. Future studies should consider this mechanism in the behavior and fulfillment of adolescents and youth in Brazil in different areas of life, such as educational success.

## Appendix I

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

#### Young women (18-24)

##### Participant's Religion

- \* What religion, if any, do you consider yourself to be? [**probe for specific denomination if relevant**]
- \* In which religion were you raised?
  - [**If it is not the same as the current**] Why and when did you change for another religion?
- \*How often do you attend religious services?
- \*Do you consider yourself a religious person? Why?
  - [**If yes**] What do you usually do as a religious person? (Praying, promises...)
- \*Is your faith important to you? Does it affect your daily life?
- \*What is the importance of religion in your life?
- \*Do you have friends at your church?
  - [**If yes**] How often do you hang out with them?
  - [**If yes**] Do you usually hang out with them in places outside the church?
- \* Do you participate in any church activities, such as choir, event organizing, or greeting?
- \* Have you ever participated in any activity at your church (contributing to church and community) (e.g., taking courses, voluntary working, etc)?
  - [**If yes**] How much time do you dedicate to religious activities per week (not including religious services)?
  - [**If yes**] Do you usually receive any advices from older people when doing such activities? Could you explain, please?
- \* Is there anyone at church that you admire or consider a role model?
  - [**If yes**] Could you explain, please?

\* Do you usually look for help (advises) at you church if you are in a difficult moment at your life?

- **[If yes]** Could you explain, please?

\*Do your (or other) parents tend to look to the church to talk or ask for help for their children?

\*Do you maintain relationships with older people or adults in your church and, if so, what were those relationships like.

### About your church

\* Does your church provide activities that can contribute to the intellectual growth of young followers?

- **[If yes]** Could you explain, please?

\* Does your church provide a space for youth to participate in activities and practice leadership skills?

\* Does your church offer resources that could help you to overcome problems and difficult moments related to family, work, school, marriage or other areas of life?

\* Do parents look for counseling within the church about how to deal with their children's behavior? Does your church offer this kind of assistance?

### Religious values and teachings on sexual and reproductive behavior

\* Are topics related to sexuality common in church—particularly in activities aimed at teenagers and youth? Does your church teach/talk to followers about sexual and reproductive matters?

- **[If yes]** Are they discussed clearly?
- **[if yes]** How so? Do they talk about what circumstances you should have sex or premarital sex, you should marry, use contraception, and have children? Do they provide you with specific orientation/courses about it?
- **[If yes]** Do they impose an ideal age to start dating?

\*How does your church react when members transgress a particular norm or principle?

\*Have you ever witnessed any situation (regarding sexual matters) that your church have disapproved or blamed?

\*What would happen if any adolescent or young women [affiliated to your church] did something contrary to your church's rules regarding sexuality? For instance, if a young

women get pregnant before getting married. How do you think your church would react to this event?

\* Have you ever witnessed a young woman (or young couple)—pregnant outside of marriage and punished by the church—stop attending or completely abandon the church?



## **INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### **Religious Leaders**

- \* What religion, if any, do you consider yourself to be? [**probe for specific denomination if relevant**]
- \* What do you usually do as a religious leader?
- \* How long have you worked as a religious leader?
- \* How much time do you dedicate to religious activities per week (not including religious services)?

#### About your church

- \* Does your church offer activities that can contribute to community (e.g., voluntary working, etc)?
  - [**If yes**] Does your church provide a space for youth to participate in such activities?
- \* Does your church provide activities that can contribute to the intellectual growth of young followers?
  - [**If yes**] Could you explain, please?
- \* Does your church provide a space for youth to participate in activities and practice leadership skills?
- \* Does your church offer resources that could help you to overcome problems and difficult moments related to family, work, school, marriage or other areas of life?
- \* Does your church facilitate relationships between young people and older people or adults?
- \* Do parents look for counseling within the church about how to deal with their children's behavior? Does your church offer this kind of assistance?

#### Religious values and teachings on sexual and reproductive behavior

- \* Are topics related to sexuality common in church—particularly in activities aimed at teenagers and youth? Does your church teach/talk to followers about sexual and reproductive matters?

- **[If yes]** Are they discussed clearly?
- **[if yes]** How so? Do they talk about what circumstances you should have sex or premarital sex, you should marry, use contraception, and have children? Do they provide you with specific orientation/courses about it?
- **[If yes]** Do they impose an ideal age to start dating?

\*How does your church react when members transgress a particular norm or principle?

\*Have you ever witnessed any situation (regarding sexual matters) that your church have disapproved or blamed?

\*What would happen if any adolescent or young women [affiliated to your church] did something contrary to your church's rules regarding sexuality? For instance, if a young women get pregnant before getting married. How do you think your church would react to this event?

\* Have you ever witnessed a young woman (or young couple)—pregnant outside of marriage and punished by the church—stop attending or completely abandon the church?

\* Have you ever notices negative feelings (e.g., guilt, embarrassments) among those members who disobey a religious teaching?

## ***Informed Consent to Participate in Research***

### **The University of Texas at Austin**

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The Principal Investigator (the person in charge of this research) will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**Title of Research Study:** Reproductive Behavior and Religion among Young Women in Brazil

#### **Principal Investigator, UT affiliation, and Telephone Number:**

Ana Paula de Andrade Verona  
Population Research Center  
1800 Main Building  
Austin, TX 78712  
(512) 471.8340

#### **What is the purpose of this study?**

Approximately 20 young women will be interviewed as part of this study. The Principal Investigator will ask the young women affiliated to different religious denominations in Brazil questions about their lives, including their family history, sexual and reproductive behavior, and religious beliefs. More specifically, this research seeks to better understand how (if ever) they reconcile their religious faith with their choices about sexual and reproductive behavior.

**What will be done if you take part in this research study?**

The Principal Investigator will interview you once in your home (or any place that is convenient for you). It will take about an hour. At any time, you may choose not to answer a question or questions, if you don't want to answer. The interview will be digitally recorded.

**What are the possible discomforts and risks?**

There are no known physical risks associated with your participation in this study. Your privacy and confidentiality are very important and will be protected. If you wish to discuss the information above or any other risks you may experience, you may ask questions now.

**What are the possible benefits to you or to others?**

Benefits of being in the study are not direct or personal. You may benefit from the opportunity to talk about your experiences. Unfortunately there is not economic compensation.

**If you choose to take part in this study, will it cost you anything?**

It will not cost you anything to participate in this study. Moreover, if it is necessary, the principal investigator will compensate the participants for any transportation costs due their participation in this study

**What if you are injured because of the study?**

Although the risks to participants in this study are minimal, some respondents may experience mental stress when they tell the interviewer about their medical or contraceptive history. In those cases, unfortunately, we will not be able to provide medical treatment or pay for such treatment.

**If you do not want to take part in this study, what other options are available to you?**

**Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to be in the study, and your refusal will not influence current or future relationships with The University of Texas at Austin.**

**How will your privacy and the confidentiality of your research records be protected?**

We will collect your name and address on the final page of this consent form in order to contact you for an interview in your home (or place you choose). Once you have read and signed this consent form, the last page containing your name and contact information will be detached from the rest of the form and be kept in a locked file cabinet accessible only by the interviewer and the researchers. After you are interviewed, the information sheet with your name and address will be destroyed and your responses to interview questions will only be identified by a number.

We will record the interviews that we do with you in your home. The digital recording will be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them. The computer file of your recording will be kept in a secure place (on a password-protected computer that only the project team members have access to) and your recording will be heard only for research purposes by the research team members. We will retain the files for possible future analysis, but none of these files will have the participants' names or address.

**Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin and the Institutional Review Board have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. If the research project is sponsored, then the sponsor also has the legal right to review your research records. Otherwise, your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order.**

**If the results of this research are published or presented at scientific meetings, your identity will not be disclosed.**

**Will the researchers benefit from your participation in this study?**

This research will develop knowledge on a theme limitedly studied in Brazil, which concerns the potential associations between religion and young women sexual and reproductive behavior. The existence of effects of religion on adolescents' lives and behavior can provide valuable information to those shaping social policy on adolescent fertility in Brazil.

**In addition, if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Jody Jensen, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (512) 232-2685 or email: [irbchair@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:irbchair@austin.utexas.edu)**

**Signatures:**

**As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, the procedures, the benefits, and the risks that are involved in this research study:**

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**Signature and printed name of person obtaining consent** **Date**

**You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this Form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.**

---

**Printed Name of Subject** **Date**

---

**Signature of Subject** **Date**

***Informed Consent to Participate in Research (Religious Leaders)***

**The University of Texas at Austin**

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The Principal Investigator (the person in charge of this research) will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**Title of Research Study:** Sexual Initiation and Religion in Brazil

**Principal Investigator, UT affiliation, and Telephone Number:**

Ana Paula de Andrade Verona  
Population Research Center  
1800 Main Building  
Austin, TX 78712  
(512) 471.8340

**Address and Telephone number in Belo Horizonte – MG:**

Rua dos Construtores, 587.  
Bairro Alípio de Melo  
(31) 3474.2567

**What is the purpose of this study?**

Approximately 10 religious leaders will be interviewed as part of this study. The Principal Investigator will ask religious leaders questions about how their churches address sexual and reproductive issues, and how they perceive the potential influence of religion on young women's lives.

**What will be done if you take part in this research study?**

The Principal Investigator will interview you once in your home (or any place that is convenient for you). It will take about an hour. At any time, you may choose not to answer a question or questions, if you don't want to answer. The interview will be digitally recorded.

**What are the possible discomforts and risks?**

There are no known physical risks associated with your participation in this study. Your privacy and confidentiality are very important and will be protected. If you wish to discuss the information above or any other risks you may experience, you may ask questions now.

**What are the possible benefits to you or to others?**

Benefits of being in the study are not direct or personal. You may benefit from the opportunity to talk about your experiences. Unfortunately there is not economic compensation.

**If you choose to take part in this study, will it cost you anything?**

It will not cost you anything to participate in this study. However, if it is necessary, the principal investigator will compensate the participants for any transportation costs due their participation in this study

**What if you are injured because of the study?**

Although the risks to participants in this study are minimal, some respondents may experience mental stress when they tell the interviewer about their medical or contraceptive history. In those cases, unfortunately, we will not be able to provide medical treatment or pay for such treatment.

**If you do not want to take part in this study, what other options are available to you?**

**Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to be in the study, and your refusal will not influence current or future relationships with The University of Texas at Austin.**

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only by the interviewer and the researchers. After you are interviewed, the information sheet with your name and address will be destroyed and your responses to interview questions will only be identified by a number.

We will record the interviews that we do with you in your home. The digital recording will be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them. The computer file of your recording will be kept in a secure place (on a password-protected computer that only the project team members have access to) and your recording will be heard only for research purposes by the research team members. We will retain the files for possible future analysis, but none of these files will have the participants' names or address.

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**If the results of this research are published or presented at scientific meetings, your identity will not be disclosed.**

**Will the researchers benefit from your participation in this study?**

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**In addition, if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Jody Jensen, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (512) 232-2685 or email: [irbchair@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:irbchair@austin.utexas.edu)**

**Signatures:**

**As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, the procedures, the benefits, and the risks that are involved in this research study:**

---

**Signature and printed name of person obtaining consent** **Date**

**You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this Form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.**

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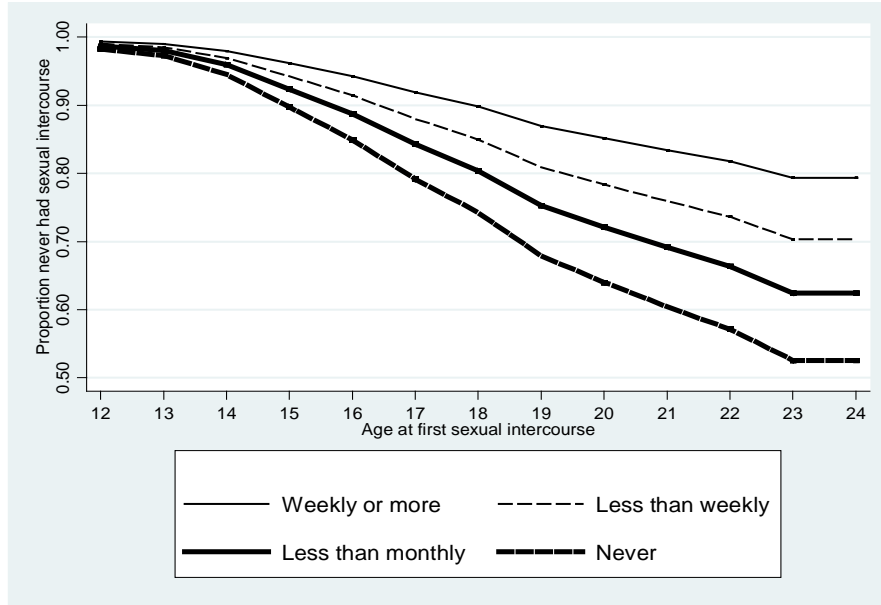
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**Signature of Subject** **Date**

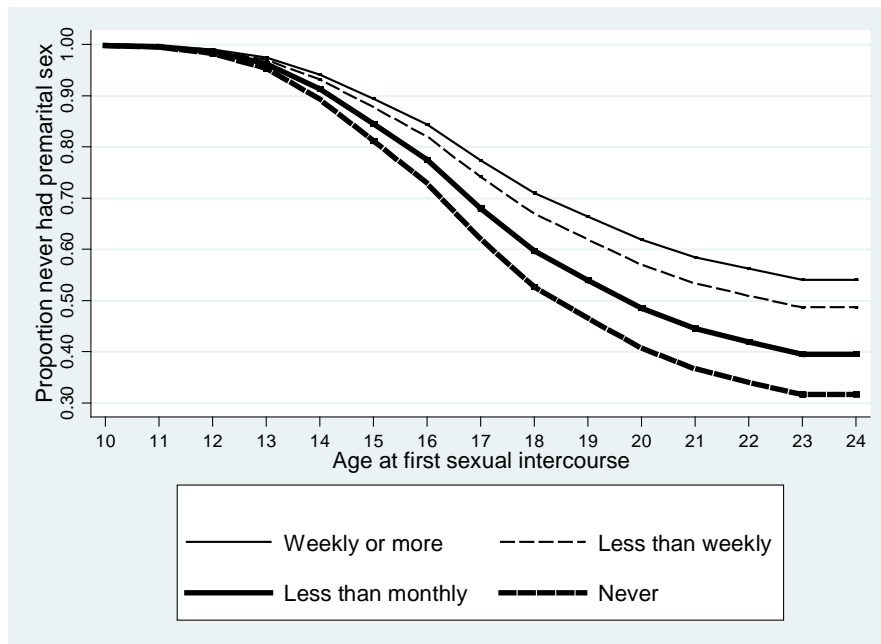
## Appendix II

Figure A.1: Kaplan-Meier survival estimates by attendance at religious services in 1986.  
Brazil.



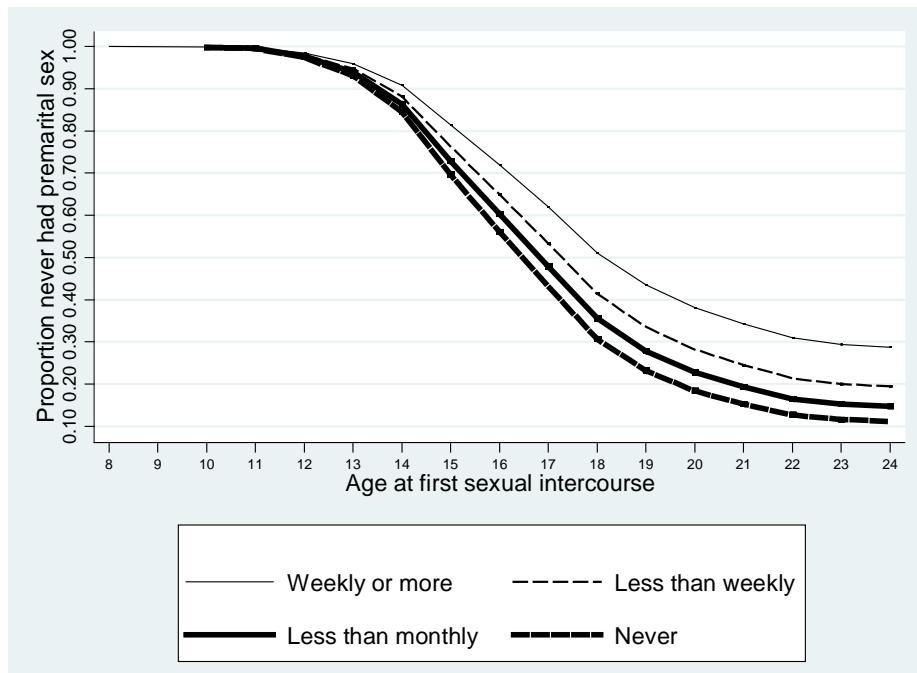
Source: 1986 Brazil DHS

Figure A.2: Kaplan-Meier survival estimates by attendance at religious services in 1996.  
Brazil.



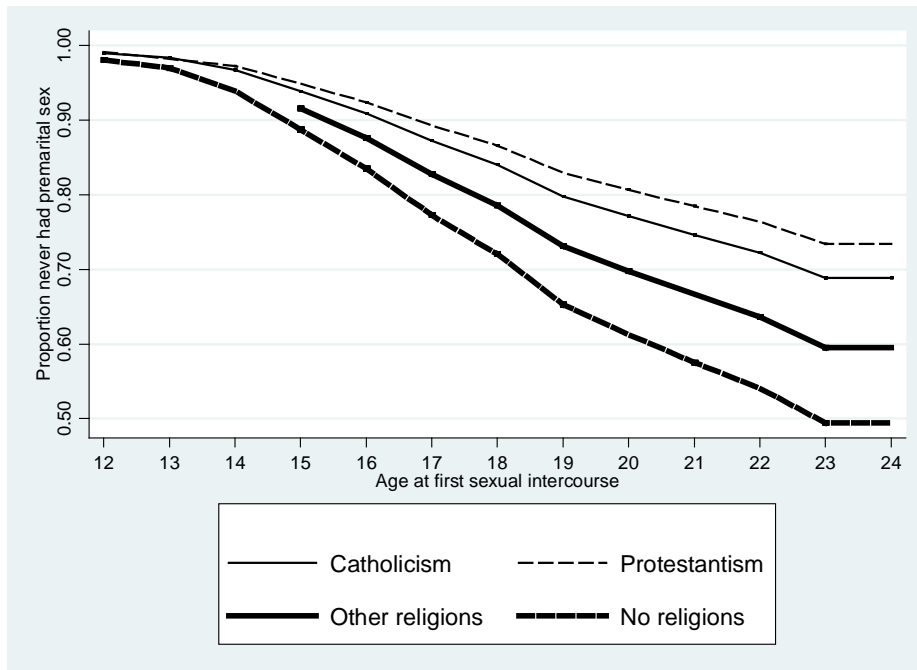
Source: 1996 Brazil DHS

Figure A.3: Kaplan-Meier survival estimates by attendance at religious services in 2006. Brazil.



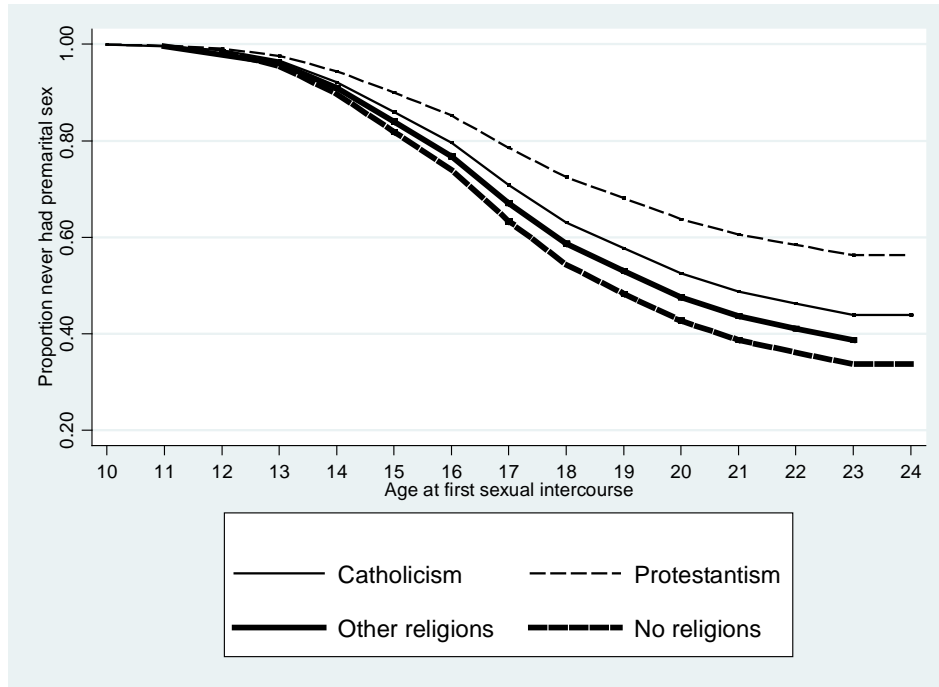
Source: 2006 Brazil DHS

Figure A.4: Kaplan-Meier survival estimates by religious affiliation in 1986. Brazil.



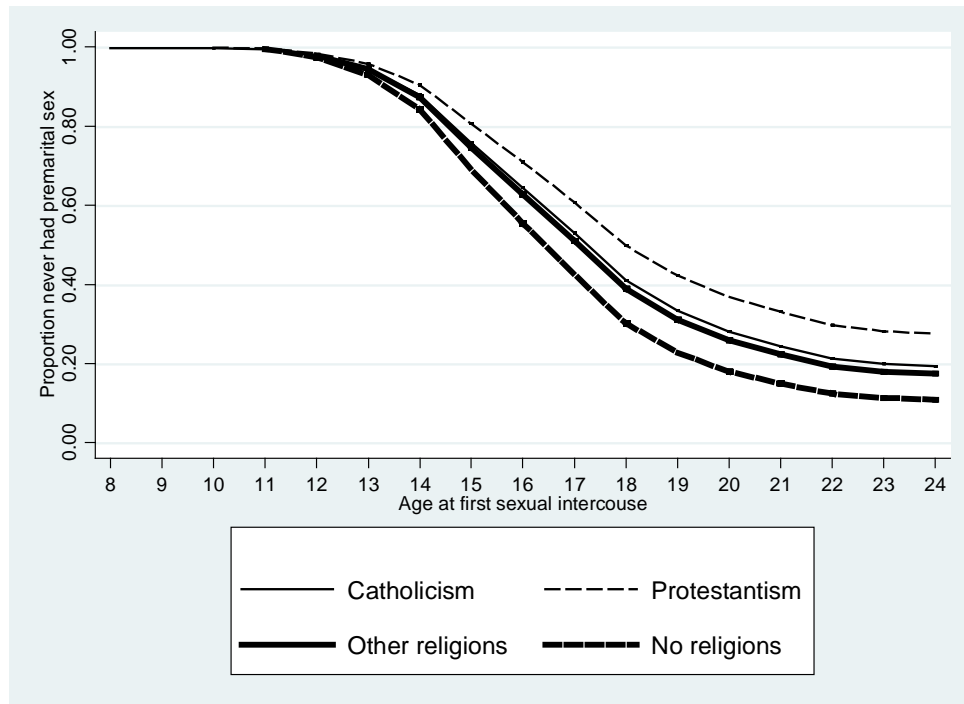
Source: 1986 Brazil DHS

Figure A.5: Kaplan-Meier survival estimates by religious affiliation in 1996. Brazil.



Source: 1986 Brazil DHS

Figure A.6: Kaplan-Meier survival estimates by religious affiliation in 2006. Brazil.



Source: 2006 Brazil DHS

Table A.1: Global tests based on the Schoenfeld residuals. Brazil, 1986, 1996 and 2006

| Surveys | Religious Variables                                  | Global test |    |           |
|---------|--|-------------|----|-----------|
|         |  | Chi2        | Df | Prob>Chi2 |
| 1986    | Attendance at religious services                     | 3.42        | 3  | 0.3307    |
|         | Religious Affiliations                               | 3.13        | 3  | 0.3723    |
|         | Combinations of religious affiliation and attendance | 5.01        | 6  | 0.5429    |
| 1996    | Attendance at religious services                     | 2.29        | 3  | 0.5140    |
|         | Religious Affiliations                               | 8.40        | 3  | 0.0384    |
|         | Combinations of religious affiliation and attendance | 12.53       | 6  | 0.0611    |
| 2006    | Attendance at religious services                     | 1.14        | 3  | 0.7678    |
|         | Religious Affiliations                               | 14.70       | 3  | 0.0021    |
|         | Combinations of religious affiliation and attendance | 15.38       | 8  | 0.0621    |

Source: 1986, 1996 and 2006 Brazil DHS

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