

Audiovisual Communication and Stereotype Formation: Homosexuality in Brazilian Television

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Abstract: The field of Discourse Analysis (DA) establishes as object of study the production of meaning effects attributed by social subjects who use language and produce truths. Audiovisual communication can develop a fruitful relationship with AD by problematizing the role of discourses in the production of social identities, because the rhetoric of prejudice is one of several ways of forming consciences and identities. Based on the premises that involve ethical issues in audiovisual communication, this article aims to reflect on the representativeness of gays in Brazilian television. Based on semantics, the partial results allow us to consider that television contributes to the propagation of a distorted image of reality, whose deconstruction reveals representations that value the heteronormative and homophobic social universe.

Keywords: Gay, preconception, television, media.

1. Introduction

Stereo types and reality depend on each other and ratify socially produced behaviors and values. The stereo type refers to ethnocentrism, a world view that considers one ethnic group, nationality or nation superior to the others. Stereo type and ethnocentrism relate to the judgment of cultural practices and patterns and the attribution of values to some characteristics of certain groups of individuals. Often pejorative, such judgment tend to place the people in inferior position, considerations that refer to racial interpretations of eugenic nature.

The rhetoric of pre justice is one of several ways of expression of social discourse. Discourse is a tool of identity construction that directly influences the perception that each human being has of himself. Thus, it crosses the media discourse and plays a fundamental role in the formation of consciences and identities. For Gregol in, "Discourse analysis may delineate some relationships that the media establishes, interdiscursively, with other textual devices that circulate in society" [1]. Based on this premise, how is the issue of homosexual representation on Brazilian television approached? According to Tucci Carneiro (1996), the discourse of intolerance is characterized by different forms of expression: written, visual and oral language [2]. Visual language includes films, soap operas, humorous programs, prints, caricatures and photographs as forms of expression in which words, phrases, gestures and behaviors can be identified that contribute to the perpetuation of prejudice through of stereo type reproduction. The stereo type can be defined as a cognitive device that facilitates access to new situations. It is equivalent to categories that define approximation and judgment patterns that guide the reading of the new from previous references and, thus, reduces the complexity of concrete interactions and contributes to increase the degree of predictability in new interactions. Rigid and simplified belief, the stereo type minimizes the variations present in individual behaviors, defined and explicit in specific interactions and social contexts.

Eugenia was a term coined by Francis Galton (1822-1911) in 1883, defined as the study of agents under social control who can improve or impoverish the racial qualities of future generations. Galton reached the application of genetic improvement to the human population. An extreme example of eugenics was Nazi Germany, where the regime of Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) preached the supremacy of the Aryan race. The Holocaust came from such a principle and resulted in the death of Jews, blacks, gays, people with disabilities, and other so-called 'inferior' races.

Popular expressions present in everyday life reaffirm the prejudice generated by the spread of stereotypes: it is the case of 'I have nothing against, but...', 'He's gay but nobody says it. Dress like everyone', 'I have no prejudice, I even have friends who are gay', 'It's okay to be gay, but you don't have to be muttering', 'You may be a lesbian, but you don't have to dress like a man', 'No You have to tell everyone you're gay' and 'He's so handsome, he doesn't even look gay'. They denote the rejection of homosexuals, a feeling that can be

explicit or veiled. Camouflaged homophobia appears as a refusal to accept that homosexuals are human beings equal to heterosexuals. Homophobics prefer not to keep in touch with homosexuals. The homophobic attitude, in general, is accompanied by the phrase 'I have nothing against it, but...'. In this sense, it is possible to consider that there is usually a religious discourse, with strong moral appeal, linked to stereotypes such as 'homosexuals are almost always promiscuous'.

The quoted sentences have an impact on media production, especially on audiovisual communication. In this sense, it is worth asking how mass media, especially television, influence the manufacture of stereotypes about gay men.

The expansion of these constructions and stays goes back to health and medical aspects, as homosexuality has already been considered a disease. In 1952, the American Psychiatric Association published in its first Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders that homosexuality was a disorder, leading several scientists to try to prove that there was a mental disorder in gay men. Lacking proof in 1973, the same association removed the sexual option from the list of mental disorders. "Another cause of hostility to homosexuality was its classification as pathology by the medical community of the 19th century. In the early twentieth century homosexuality was included in the field of mental illness and clinics were created to treat homosexual patients. The combination of medical insight with the emerging ideas of racial purity and eugenics in the 1930s had disastrous consequences: nearly 20,000 male homosexuals, identified by a pink triangle, were killed in Nazi concentration camps" [3].

In 1975, the American Psychological Association followed the same path and instructed professionals not to adopt such a stance, avoiding the spread of prejudice. However, the World Health Organization (WHO) included homosexuality in the 1977 International Classification of Diseases (ICD) as a mental illness, but withdrew it in 1990. For this reason, May 17 became International Day against Homophobia.

The long period in which homosexuality occupied the position of mental disorder gave gay men stigmas of disease and later contributed to the emergence of the association between homosexuals and a serious illness of the 1980s: AIDS. The 80's generation faced the disease as a death sentence, the so-called 'gay plague', a term fraught with prejudice and symbolism, which marked anonymous and famous characters.

In June 1981, the United States Center for Disease Control recorded the first cases of a disease that was considered unknown at the time. In 1982, it was given the provisional name of '5H Disease', due to cases identified in homosexuals, hemophiliacs, Haitians, heroin users (injecting heroin users) and prostitutes (hookers).

In the same year, health authorities detected the possibility of transmission through sexual intercourse, injecting drug use and exposure to blood and blood products. In Brazil, the first case is diagnosed in São Paulo. The disease is given the definitive name Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) or AIDS.

In 1984, the team of French virologist Luc Montagnier isolates and characterizes a retrovirus, a mutant virus that transforms according to its environment, as the cause of the disease. Experts conclude that AIDS represents the final stage of an HIV disease.

Three years later, AZT is the first drug to reduce the multiplication of the virus in the human body. Still in 1987, the World Health Assembly announces December 1 as World AIDS Day. According to 2011 data from Portal Brasil, the reported cases in the country totaled 2,775 in the period, followed by 4,535 in 1988 and 6,295 in the following year. Only in 1991 the free distribution of antiretrovirals begins. The World Health Organization (WHO) already registered 10 million infected people worldwide.

2. Homosexuality Throughout History: Homoaffectivity and Homophobia

There are several records that point to homoaffective relationships, from cave paintings to bodies buried with evidence of homosexual sexual practices and transsexuality. Historical personalities, who acted in the construction of civilization, whether in the arts, science, politics, religion and philosophy, were homosexual or alluded to in their works. However, the understanding of homosexuality was undermined and influenced by values devoid of critical sense, based on common sense and religious dogma, which eventually encouraged the emergence of a culture of hatred towards homosexuals, which reflected in the social and legal stance in relation to different genres.

Contrary to popular belief, homosexual behavior has not always been seen as wrong. In several ancient civilizations of Asia, Africa, Middle East and South America was considered normal.

"The reason for the change may be based on Judeo-Christian tradition and the interpretations of their Scriptures out of the need to secure the lineage, the Israelites, constantly harassed and threatened by many others, had in fact condemned pleasure and defined homosexuality as a sin. Thus, from the Middle Ages, homosexual behaviors were included in the fight against all forms of non-normative behaviors. There was a tendency to cluster practices such as witchcraft and the connection with the devil, and groups such as heretics, Jews and homosexuals, into one distinct and threatening category" [4]. The term "homoaffectivity" was created

to include same-sex unions within the framework of the protection of stable union and civil marriage regimes. This is because same-sex marital unions are based on the same romantic affection as opposite-sex unions. The term homoaffectivity was coined by Maria Berenice Dias in order to highlight romantic love (and not brotherly affection) between two people of the same gender [5].

Homosexuality has been the object of strong prejudice throughout human history and, as a result, has come to be regarded by society in general as something "unnatural", a sin or even a disease, deviation or psychological perversion. "In ancient times the homosexual relationship was accepted. Even in ancient Greece the heterosexual relationship was purely for procreation. And affection, for the most part, was found in homosexual intercourse. So homosexuality is a reality that has always existed, it is as old as heterosexuality. In primitive societies, sexual relationships between men were a constant and widely accepted practice, institutionalized in culture. This relationship was usually made between an older man and an adolescent (until he reached adulthood), because in this type of relationship one saw the way in which the adolescent would achieve masculinity by excluding his contact with his mother and his mother. of women in general. Some of these practices were also based on the belief that the young would only achieve the fertility necessary for future procreation through their realization" [6].

Only sexual relationships between men are mentioned, and there are not many historical references about women, since the prevailing understanding among men of the time was that one could not talk about sexual intercourse without the presence of a man. Thus, women's sexuality was ignored because of prejudice. "The term lesbianism, in turn, also denotes ancient times, has connection with the inhabitants of the island of Lesbos, around 600 a. C., when the poetess Sappho wrote poems describing the beauty of girls, demonstrating that she was attracted to women, the term then took on its current meaning" [7].

According to Poeschl, Venâncio and Costa (2012), the term 'homophobia' was coined by psychologist George Weinberg in 1972 to refer to the contempt of some homosexuals and also to the recovery of certain homosexuals themselves with the same sexuality [8].

Homophobia can occur in a variety of ways, including heterosexism: social institutions, through their discourses on gender and morality, try to maintain the status of groups dominant and deviant, condemning any behavior or relationship that is not heterosexual. Sexual prejudice is a pre-judgment. "Homophobia also continues to manifest itself in the health professions: Studies show that 89% of health-related people show negative reactions (such as embarrassment, rejection, or excessive curiosity) when a patient identifies himself or herself as gay or lesbian. There are several situations where homophobia manifests itself, such as the fact that the partner is not entitled to visits in case of hospitalization of the other in intensive care, not being able to accompany him in the ambulance, and not being entitled to know your state of health" [9].

Also according to Poeschl, Venâncio and Costa (2012), there are differences in the levels of sexual prejudice manifested by individuals: many studies show that women are, on average, more tolerant of homosexuality than men and that female homosexuality is better accepted than male homosexuality [10].

Given the influence of Judeo-Christian religions, the Western world has become homophobic, especially in the Theocratic States (where state and religion mingle). Defending the idea that homosexuality is a sin and goes against God's will, religion has contributed to the spread of prejudice.

3. Gays in the Brazilian Soap Opera

The Brazilian soap opera, like everything else, does not portray reality as it is. It is a fiction, a literary construction, but powerfully influences Brazilian culture.

Regarding the treatment given to gays in the Brazilian audiovisual media, the contrasts produce a harmful meaning to the LGBT community. Homoaffectivity has been with humanity since its inception, making it difficult to accurately determine the first historical or literary reference to the phenomenon. However, it is known that in virtually all civilizations homosexual relations have always been present

Media discourse can also be blamed for the image of homosexuals. In soap operas and series shown on Brazilian television, gay men are portrayed with countless attitudes and are generally effeminate. Characteristics attributed to them give a tone of humor, bringing them closer to the audience, which more easily welcomes funny characters. To conceal or soften what is supposed to be a defect, a caricature is elaborated which, in turn, enters the path of generalization

It is not incorrect to say that gay men can be effeminate and that in some cases they behave similarly to women. Lesbians can also assume male behaviors. However, even if this dimension exists, it should be considered that homosexuals are different in their identities, with personalities built on singular life histories, which leads them to have other bodily, behavioral, struggle and resistance manifestations in relation to normative standards. that rule and manufacture gays. That is to say, there is no fixed identity, but diversity in difference.

Stereotypes followed the homosexuals who lived through the 1980s, when AIDS gained momentum and spread around the world. The association between HIV and gay people undoubtedly came to the realization that all homosexuals were promiscuous. The creation of stereotypes and their reproduction has as one of the foundations precisely the generalization, the creation of labels. Discrimination continues to exist. According to Gianna (2017), a survey conducted by CRT DST / AIDS-SP, in conjunction with the Faculty of Medical Sciences of Santa Casa de São Paulo, in 2011, in São Paulo, men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender as transvestites and transsexuals are victims of prejudice. Among 1,217 respondents, 33.5% said they had been abused, 15.1% suffered physical assault and 62.3% verbal abuse [11].

Thirty years ago, AIDS was synonymous with death. Nowadays, it is considered a chronic disease and, given the advances in the diagnosis and treatment of the disease, people infected with HIV live with better quality. The current challenge is to promote human rights and prevent new infections in young MSM. In order to meet this challenge, the struggle of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transvestite and transgender (LGBT) rights groups has contributed to the recognition of this portion of the population and the respect of society. Important steps in combating prejudice have already been taken despite existing difficulties. However, it is considered that, given the impact of audiovisual media on the wider social life, greater representation of gays is necessary so that they do not appear only as sick and subjugated.

Thus, without pretending a unilateral interpretation, it is correct to affirm the existence of changes in progress, since Brazilian soap operas have shown same-sex relationships with kissing scenes and caresses, something difficult to imagine, in the 1980s, for example. A recent case was portrayed by the soap opera 'Liberdade, Liberdade', aired by TV Globo in 2016. "Staged by Ricardo Pereira and Caio Blat, the scene is considered to be the first involving sex between two men in Brazilian television drama" [12]. Similar to the first kiss between two men in the 2014 soap opera *Amor à Vida*, the scene generated controversy.

The soap opera takes place in 18th century Brazil and depicts habits, customs and perceptions of that historical period. In this context, there is the boldness of the television work to approach a homosexual relationship, something considered a crime in a conservative society and influenced, to a large extent, by religious values. The characters lived by Caio Blat and Ricardo Pereira are in hiding and fear being caught together. The narrative considers that homoaffective relationships existed, but social conventions and moral rigidity imposed huge barriers on gay men, which made it difficult for homosexual citizens to love and work at the time the plot unfolds. Despite these limitations or difficulties, homosexuality has been shown.

'A Força do Querer', 21 hours soap opera, author Gloria Perez, addressed the dilemmas experienced by Ivana, character of actress Carol Duarte, who went through gender transition throughout the plot. Silvero Pereira's character, Nonato, was a transvestite, named after Elis Miranda. Rejected by his family, Nonato went from Ceará to Rio de Janeiro, where he tried to be an artist. Without much acceptance, ended up working as a driver. Fearing stereotypes and prejudice, he hid being a transvestite. The character Ivana does not recognize her own body as her own. She doesn't like her breasts and prefers to wear men's clothes, like her brother's. She seeks psychological support to answer her questions and lives in permanent conflict with her mother, who tries to make her feminine, wear dresses and have a fondness for makeup. Through transsexuality, the author deals with topics such as gender identity and sexual orientation, terms that can cause confusion among viewers, making their discussion meaningful.

Society spreads the belief that the genitals define whether someone is male or female. However, the factor that determines whether a person is male or female is not biological but social. According to Jesus (2012), in biological terms, what determines a person's gender is the size of their reproductive cells (small: sperm, therefore, male; large: eggs, therefore female), and only [13]. This does not define the masculine or feminine behavior of individuals: it is determined by culture, which classifies someone as masculine or feminine. Sex is biological and gender social.

"Contrary to the common belief nowadays, adopted by some scientific strands, it is understood that the experience of a gender (social, cultural) discordant with what one would expect from a particular sex (biological) is a matter of identity, and not a disorder. This is the case with people known as transvestites, and transsexuals, who are collectively treated as part of a group that some call a 'transgender', or more popularly, trans" [14].

Cisgender is the term used to designate the person who identifies with the gender assigned to him or her at birth. Non-cisgender individuals, who do not identify with the gender assigned to them, are called transgender or transsexual. According to Jesus (2012), analyzing the diversity of ways of living the gender, two aspects fit the general dimension we call 'transgender', as different expressions of the trans condition. The experience of the genre can occur by: identity (which characterizes transsexuals and transvestites) or functionality (represented by crossdressers, drag queens, drag kings and transformists) [15].

Gender refers to ways to identify and be identified as male or female. Sexual orientation is the affective sexual attraction to someone of some gender. One does not depend on the other. Transgender and cisgender people can have any sexual orientation: heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual.

Transsexuality is a matter of identity and does not correspond to disease or sexual perversion. "Transgender people often feel that their body is not suited to the way they think and feel, and they want to correct it by adapting their body to their gendered image of themselves" [16].

Transvestites are people who experience female roles but do not identify with men or women, but are part of a third gender. Most transvestites prefer to be treated in females. So, say 'the transvestites'. According to Jesus (2012), it should be noted that not every transvestite is a sex worker. Many are forced into marginality, having sex for money, which is due to stigmatization, discrimination and social exclusion [17].

Historically, the transgender or transgender population is segregated, the victim of prejudice, as the belief in abnormality predominates among a part of society. The fact that one does not identify with the gender attributed to birth relegates such an individual to a category of people that many consider 'abnormal'. "Physical, psychological and symbolic violence are constant. According to the international organization Transgender Europe, in the three-year period between 2008 and 2011, three hundred and twenty-five trans people were murdered in Brazil. Most of the victims are transgender women and transvestites. By mid-2012, according to a survey by the Gay Group of Bahia, ninety-three transvestites and transsexuals were murdered"[18].

Crimes are motivated by hatred or aversion to characteristics of the assaulted person, who identifies them as part of a discriminated, segregated group separated from society. Hence the use of the term transphobia to define prejudice and discrimination suffered by transgender people.

In view of the reproduction of stereotypes, the spread of prejudice and discriminatory attitudes against gays, lesbians and transgender people, television plays a relevant role in the debate of ideas that revolve around the subject. Especially when it is known that for 76.4% of Brazilians, TV is the preferred medium. According to Alcântara (2014), this data is part of the *Brasileira Brazilian Media Research*, a document prepared at the request of the Presidency to assist in the creation of the Federal Executive's communication and social disclosure policy [19].

Specifically attending to the audience of the 21 hours soap opera, 'A Força do Querer', it is observed how great is the penetration of the newsletter in Brazilian homes and how significant can be its participation in the highlighted issue: according to Peccoli (2017), the average audience for Gloria Perez's plot between April 3 and June 3 this year (9 weeks) on the PNT (National Television Panel) was 32 points, with 49% participation. In São Paulo, the average is 32 points with 47% participation and, in Rio de Janeiro, 34 points with 51% participation [20]. Data from the IBOPE media website show that the aforementioned soap opera is among the most watched programs on Brazilian television.

4. Final Considerations

It can be considered that television discourse contributes to the construction of gay representativeness in Brazilian society. The participation of such a social segment in the construction of Brazilian identity is the target of television programs and can be portrayed in a pejorative or notway. Such an approach depends on the speech employed. Words and images may enhance and value cultural and behavioral traits, but may also be derogatory, depending on the context in which they appear. Semantics may be one of the keys to this. According to the ideology of television rhetoric, gays may be recognized as an integral part of the nation's citizenry or may be marginalized.

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