

Maternity stories lived on TV: the role of testimony in a Brazilian reality show

Histórias de maternidade vividas na TV: o papel do testemunho num *reality show* brasileiro

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Abstract: *How to show an experience on television makes the viewer sympathetic with it as a partner and accomplice? It is on this issue that this article is structured, focusing specifically on a Brazilian reality show dedicated to showing the birth of babies: the program Boas Vindas, displayed by the paid channel GNT. The aim is to discuss the role assumed by the testimony on television, not only from the account of the characters in the stories, but the images that anchor the moment of birth and make the viewer a witness of the narrated experience. The analysis seeks to highlight at least two uses of testimony in the show: 1) there is an effort to minimize personal conflicts and value their overcoming; 2) testimony works as a way of constructing the subjects' authenticity and experiences.*

Keywords: *testimony; life histories; motherhood; reality show.*

Resumo: *De que forma mostrar uma experiência na televisão solidariza o telespectador, posicionando-o como parceiro e cúmplice do que é vivido? É em torno dessa questão que o presente artigo se estrutura, tomando como recorte um reality show brasileiro dedicado a mostrar o nascimento de bebês: o programa Boas Vindas, exibido pelo canal fechado GNT. O objetivo é discutir o papel assumido pelos testemunhos na televisão, não apenas a partir do relato dos personagens, mas das imagens que ancoram o momento do parto e tornam o telespectador testemunha da experiência narrada. A análise busca destacar ao menos dois usos do testemunho no programa: 1) há um esforço em minimizar os conflitos pessoais e*

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valorizar sua superação; 2) o testemunho funciona como forma de construção de autenticidade dos sujeitos e das experiências.

Palavras-chave: *testemunho; histórias de vida; maternidade; reality show*

Introduction

In July 1998, *Jornal Nacional* dedicated about 10 minutes of its schedule to talk about the birth of Sasha, daughter of the famous TV presenter Xuxa Meneghel, whose history were consolidated around performances as model and presenter of TV shows for children. Xuxa was not married and made clear her intention of having a child, which was widespread throughout media dedicated to cover celebrities' lives. For many years, TV viewers, fans of Xuxa or not, followed through the press her love relationships and the hope nurtured by the presenter of finally becoming a mother. In 1997, Xuxa began a relationship with the businessman Luciano Szafir, unknown to the audience since then, and then her motherhood story begins. Throughout her nine months of pregnancy, viewers intensely followed Xuxa's expectations, her growing belly, the decoration of Sasha's room and other details around the baby that was about to be born.

Sasha's birth made four different entrances on *Jornal Nacional*: Two news reports about the birth of the heiress of the "queen of the young ones", a live report from the maternity clinic and a homage to Xuxa's daughter in a videoclip. The first TV report (two minutes and 25 seconds) brings back Xuxa's pregnancy announcement in a TV show: "I will always have someone with me, a person that is going to be mine. I am pregnant".² In another interview, Xuxa tells: "[rubbing her belly] There is a person that helped me get this dream come true [referring to her partner Luciano Szafir]. [Cut. Xuxa looks at the camera and says:] We are already married". Beyond these excerpts, the report brings the recordings of the last show before the birth, all registered in José Mário's images, director of *Planeta Xuxa* and *Xuxa Parque*. Mixing the text in off of the reporter with testimonies that the presenter gave to the media throughout these nine months, the report had the objective of showing

2 The comments made on this study have as source the News reports posted on YouTube, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Up0IkRgOjEI> (acesso em: 15 out. 2015). They do not have credits of the soundbites or the reporters, what makes it harder to identify.

the emotion and joy of being a mother and, most of all, the achievement of a dream.

The second news report (three minutes and 48 seconds), made by the reporter Marcelo Canellas, spoke about the actual birth: How the maternity clinic prepared to receive Xuxa, her fans keeping vigil in front of the hospital, the child's birth, the medical staff, etc. In this second moment, the construction of narrative aimed at showing the unpredictability of the event and its overcoming, as it's clear on the reporter's speech: "a last-hour misfortune. The cesarean had to be rescheduled. The umbilical cord got wrapped around Sasha's neck. But everything went well". The news report shows the dad, Luciano Szafir, preparing himself to go in the surgical floor and into the operating room. However, Xuxa, the celebrity that was going to have her dream child, does not appear in the preparation for birth. We do not see her with a hospital gown, we do not have access to her fears before the surgery. We only know, through the reporter's speech and by a soundbite with a member of the medical staff, that "everything went well". In another soundbite, the doctor tells what happened in the operating room: "She [Xuxa] was conscious all the time. And when the pediatrician placed Sasha on her chest, she started crying, crying, crying. She cried more than Sasha did". This was the only testimony we have about the child's birth, that only appear in the arms of a nurse to take her first bath.

The third appearance about Sasha by Jornal Nacional was a live report (one minute and 43 seconds) made by the reporter Roberto Kovalic straight from the maternity clinic. Luciano Szafir talked about his feelings when her daughter was born:

[...] to have her in my arms is, without a doubt, the strongest feeling I have ever had in my life. You know, I got her in my arms, I started singing to her, she... She took one of my fingers in her hand, another one with the other, its... [sigh] it is... I have no words to describe it.³

3 Testimony available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Up0IkRgOjEI>. Accessed in: Oct. 15th, 2015.

The objective here was to get, in the father's testimony, the feelings around fatherhood. All the testimony and the performance revolved around the emotions that the baby had awakened in their parents. To finish, *Jornal Nacional*, by Xuxa's request, showed a videoclip with a compilation of images of her upcoming show.

At the time, the visibility that *Jornal Nacional* gave to the girl's birth was strongly criticized, especially by the audience, as we can see in the letters of readers published by the *Jornal do Brasil*:

[...] It is almost a subservient attitude of journalism working to this not at all humble lady, whose belly, extensively showing (sometimes, even in cold weather) was imposed to us as something to be adored, idolized by everyone and even kissed by adulators everywhere. An undisclosed obsession in facing her pregnancy as the event of the century.

I can't bear to hear about Xuxa's child anymore!!! Why does this child have to be treated like a demigod if she was conceived just like everyone else? [...] Why didn't anyone lend Xuxa a VHS tape on the hunger in Sudan? Maybe it would wake her up a little and stop with this nonsense? I can't take it anymore! Heeeeelp... (XUXA & XAXA, July 29th 1998).

If on the other hand the event was considered a futility, on the other, more recently, the subject found in its own formats a space for its existence and social legitimacy. If for a part of the audience the way broadcast journalism works with reality does not comprise a theme like this, reality shows, especially those related to lifestyle, base their structure and relation to the audience having as the central objective to show the birth of babies. It is necessary, however, to notice some differences.

Although we have, as TV viewers, followed the path to Sasha's birth narrated by her mother, we were deprived from the moment of birth. We did not hear Sasha crying and Xuxa's emotion, we did not see the baby being born. We only know her in her first bath, filmed by the mother's request with the reporter's narration. Xuxa, the celebrity, didn't reveal her vulnerabilities to the audience, she did not talk about her fears and expectations regarding the birth of her daughter. In that case, there was

a whole mediatic circus around the birth of a celebrity baby, but her arrival to the world was kept private from the viewers.

In reality shows, as it is common on the genre, there are common people that become celebrities when bringing to television the story of their lives. Differently from celebrities, common people do not book the floor of the maternity clinic for their child's birth (as Xuxa did), and they do reveal their vulnerabilities, pain and suffering. And that is the authenticity of these testimonies shared with the audience. These shows are structured around the testimony of two modalities: First, the narrative in a confessional tone of the story of the parents until the baby's arrival and, secondly, the visual narrative of the birth, that rejects any mediation of the event: Images are enough to legitimize the narrative, turning the viewer into an eye witness of their own story and, therefore, an accomplice of their happiness.

The following study has as the objective to reflect upon this form of testimony on TV and their implications on summoning of the viewer. How to show an experience on television makes the viewer sympathetic with it as a partner and accomplice? It is around this question that the present article is structured, focusing on a reality show dedicated on showing baby's births: the TV show *Boas Vindas*, broadcast on GNT, a paid channel which focus on lifestyle with a schedule based on cooking shows, debate programs and interviews, TV series and reality shows, in its majority. The life of common people is present in a majority of the schedule of the channel with the objective of sharing problems and their solutions. That way, common people learn how to cook (*Que Maravilha!*), renovate and organize their homes (*Decora e Santa Ajuda*) learn how to feed their children a balanced, healthy meal (*Socorro! Meu filho Come Mal*), learn how to throw parties (*Fazendo a Festa*), get married (*Chuva de Arroz*). With this schedule, GNT seem to want to assume a posture that makes it capable of minimizing possible conflicts of the viewer's personal life, showing how it is possible to live a happy,

balanced life. A part of the shows are filmed into people's homes or is referred to it, being placed in the most intimate part of people's lives, building healthy relationships. The channel is, thus, a partner of the viewer looking for quality of life and an accomplice of the challenges of the private life.

“Emotional, real and honest testimonies”: the testimony as an effect of reality

The TV show *Boas Vindas* is on their 8th season, each one having 13 episodes. It dialogues with a trend of the international schedule whose focus is the birth of babies, as it is the case of shows such as *One Born Per Minute* and *I didn't know I was pregnant*, shown in Brazil by *Discovery Home and Health*, channel that is also focused on lifestyle, health and quality of life.

Boas Vindas show, in its 30 minutes, the story of two families that willingly sign up to participate on the show and tell their life stories.⁴ The page of the program on the Internet anticipates a part of this promise to the viewers:

The series follow the most important day of so many people's lives: the birth of a child. *Emocional and real testimonies recorded in maternity clinics before and after birth will bring stories of families with different components, social classes and traditions. You will follow the apprehension, joy and sadness lived in a unique moment. The arrival at the maternity, the preparation for the labor, the birth are some moments registered by the cameras. The day to day life of a maternity clinic captured in an affectionate way, with honest testimonies of a family that is reborn with the arrival of a child. (our highlights)*⁵

In this excerpt, it is possible to perceive the emphasis that the show gives on the two testimony dimensions juxtaposed throughout the broadcast: the one verbally narrated (through the family's interview) and the

4 The analysis of this study is referred to the episodes of the 6th season, broadcast in the year 2014.

5 Available at: <http://gnt.globo.com/programas/boas-vindas/episodios.html#pag=5>. Accessed in: Dec. 16th, 2015.

one told visually (what we see, what the camera shows). That way, each family, when they share this experience, constitute their own testimony that is one of a kind. On the other hand, the show, when using the testimony as a communicative strategy, it constitutes the viewer as an “eyewitness” of the narrated experience, dimension that, in the national bibliography, is frequently attributed to broadcast journalism.⁶ The relation between testimony and journalism, we believe, is related to the authentication of the narrative to create the effect of reality. The reconstruction of events through a verbal or visual narrative is constituted in an evidence of its veracity, and that is why the testimony has been the object of analysis of many researches in journalism.⁷

Considering that other TV genre are also based on reality, in this study, we seek to expand the discussions on the field of broadcast journalism to think about the reality on television and its relation with testimony. It is the case of reality shows, genre that comprises our object of analysis. According to Freire Filho (2011), even though the label reality show is applied to a very heterogeneous group of programs, they are unified by a common promise:

[...] to supply the visualization (hilarious, touching, inspirational) of “the spontaneous” behavior and “the authentic” emotions of “real” people - that is, of individuals that are not acting professionally as actors, saying lines and taking decisions based on a script created by TV channels (FREIRE FILHO, 2011, p. 115).

In the case of programs focused on lifestyle⁸, the testimony narrated by the subjects creates a dimension on something that is happening in the broadcast. Therefore, the viewer is an accomplice of the process

6 It is interesting to remember the *slogan* of Reporter Esso, a historic TV and radio show from Brazil, was “eye witness for history”.

7 In October, 2015, french and brazilian researchers gathered on the 2nd International Seminary of French-Brazilian Television Studies (UFBA) to discuss the theme “Eyewitness, Media, Identity”. Part of the discussion was about testimonies on journalism, whether they were a problem or a cut-out.

8 Different from reality shows that work as games offering prizes, what is at stake on lifestyle shows is the transformation in one's life (on their body or home) which promotes an individual growth and/or the resolution of a problem.

of transformation – the weight loss, the house renovation, etc – since it is a “construction of the eye witness that founds the images that we see” (JOST, 2003, p. 62). According to François Jost (2003), the testimony can validate the narrative of someone who witnessed the event and, hence, has the authority to tell others, or put the experience into play, the feeling that can be told by someone who lived a situation and, because of that, can be an example of more broad questions and be an example for others. Still according to author, the testimony replaces information supplied by specialists for the authenticity of experiences lived by any person. Authenticity, therefore, is a value that attributes legitimacy to the genre, according to what we are going to discuss.

Boas Vindas has the mediation of a narrator that ties the cases together throughout the broadcast. The narrator’s voice rarely appears and is restricted to specific moments: in the opening of the program, with a somewhat standard sentence to introduce the episode characters (“Every year, more than a million babies are born”); before and after the break; and, sometimes, throughout the show to conduct the narrative, leaving queue for possible conflicts (“because she tried for so long, Rosana had many insecurities with her pregnancy”, “Fernanda enjoyed calmly her pregnancy until she had a big scare”). From this, the voices that appear are from the child’s relatives presented to the viewer in its family functions – father, mother, grandmother, uncle, godmother -, which focus on the child that is about to be born. There are rare moments in which the show resort to specialists to deal with the theme, and even so, the specialists appear to comment on the case that is being shown, not to talk about the general scenario.

In the first part of the program, the couple tells the audience how they met, the beginning of their relationship up until their marriage and the pregnancy announcement. Sometimes, the show talks about some difficulty that occurred along the way and the implications of that to the couple. In episode 10, entitled “Not everything is a fairy tale”, Boas Vindas seek to explore the difficulties faced by couples before or during the birth.

Narrator: Carolina have always wanted to be a mother and it seemed that her dream would come true in the first try.

Mother: I've always dreamed of being a mother. We only thought that I would not get pregnant that quickly. I stopped taking my birth control pills and 15 days later I was pregnant. And everyone was very excited, first child, first grandchild of my family, a lot of euphoria. And then, in the first ultrasound, we could hear the little heartbeat. When I went for the second appointment, we saw that his little heart wasn't beating anymore. There was two weeks that I had him dead inside of me. It is very difficult to talk about it because you feel anger and sadness at the same time.

Father: There is no difficulty. An obstacle, to us, is only a different path. (BOAS VINDAS, season 6, episode 10).

The story is followed by scenes of the couple giving their testimony along with images showing their love and affection - kisses, hugs - supposedly captured as spontaneous. It is clear that there is an effort of the show of transforming people's life story to be more acceptable for the viewer, even if, in order to do that, it is necessary to act moments of intimacy of the couple narrating their experience. After showing the steadiness of the relationship, the show goes on talking about the baby's birth, publicizing and intensifying the feelings lived by the couple, becoming the peak of their life story. Therefore, even though there are different models of family in society, the feelings of the show are always positive.

Let's see two cases of Boas Vindas as an example: In the first, the show – entitled “Suddenly, family” – brings the story of two families that did not plan the pregnancy, but, when it happened, were excited about the arrival of a new family member. The young couple Livia and Thiago told that the early pregnancy united them even more.

Mother: It is a complete change, because you are not desiring it... It isn't even planned. Because I also don't think things should be like that: Everything calculated and all.

Father: Yeah, it wasn't like: “are you pregnant? Wow! That's perfect, let's have a family”.

Mother: It wasn't our plan.

Father: Yeah, we already talked about children: "Oh, I don't want to have children".

Mother: I used to have a lot of fear about putting someone in the world, you know? Too much responsibility. But when we heard the baby's heartbeat...

Father: Everything changed. From that day on, we were stoked.

Mother: We wanted to be mom and dad (BOAS VINDAS, season 6, episode 1).

Erica's testimony, in turn, highlights that any difficulties that may arise for being single can be overcome. Érica suffered from depression before getting pregnant and the news made her overcome her emotional struggles and form a family composed by brothers and friends. On the fact of becoming a solo mom, Erica said:

Mother: I cannot be angry [at the children's father] because it is impossible to be angry at a person that gives you a gift, a baby like this, you know? He is aware that it is his loss. There is no such drama: "Oh, I will be a single mother. What now? How is it going to be from now on?". No. There are other ways of having a child without necessarily having someone beside you, mommy, daddy and child (BOAS VINDAS, season 6, episode 01).

Therefore, even though the TV show reveals struggles in the process of birth or even in the background story, the moment of birth is the moment of overcoming all struggle. *Boas Vindas is not a show that reflects about social questions, but it puts different stories as a model for overcoming life's obstacles.* In this sense, the self-narrative must seem spontaneous and authentic. The "real me" that the show intends on showing has conflicts surpassed by love and complicity of people surrounding the child.

The sense of authenticity and spontaneity can be perceived by the participants' performance, along with the images and narrative broadcast.

According to Erving Goffman (2005), meetings between individuals in everyday life are marked by basic operations that denote a specific way of acting in this situation. Because of that, individuals share certain basic information about one another, information that can be supplied before or during the interaction. As consequence, Goffman says that, every time, when they are in contact with each other, individuals are playing a role in front of an audience, and what is different is the belief they have on that role, either the belief of the interlocutor or the belief of the speaker in themselves. When there is a coincidence between personal belief and the belief of other interlocutors on the attitudes and words spoken by an individual, what happens is what the author calls *façade*, that is, a pattern of an individual's behavior in many situations. The *façade* represents the "real me", a set of actions that characterize the individual, and, because of that, allows that the other participants know how to act before him/her. It is that correspondence between the impression you want to create and the belief that the others have about the interlocutor, between the "real me" and the attitudes of the speaker, that gives authenticity to the individual. When these spheres are not corresponding, there is the impression of fakeness, and as consequence, there is a lack of credibility of the individual. Then there is the effort of TV shows in making life stories seem authentic, especially when the shows are anchored on a dimension of reality.

François Jost, when talking about the "real world", says that the "first reflection of the viewer is to determine whether the images speak to our world. Whatever the idea the viewer has of this world" (JOST, 2003, p. 42). Because of that is that the spontaneity emerges as a criterion for validation of authenticity of television testimonies, in an attempt of getting the show closer to the day do day practices.

According to João Freire Filho (2009), the pleasure that the viewers have on reality shows consists on seeking points of honesty and spontaneity in the performance of the individuals in the television scene. Freire Filho talks about the work of Adrejevic, according to whom the measurement of value of these shows are not in the pleasure of peek into

someone else's life (typical conception of authors that say that voyeurism is a pathology of our contemporary society), but seeking for objective glimpses (not scripted or planned) of the subjective" (FREIRE FILHO, 2009, p. 7). It is in moments of emotional frailty that the "real me" is manifested and it is in this attribution of veracity in the role played on screen that builds the pleasure of reception in these shows.

We are sensitized, through narratives and emotionally persuasive explanations, to the importance of elaborating authenticity, of setting an identity and a distinctive image true to our own self (FREIRE FILHO, 2009, p. 11).

On *Boas Vindas*, if, on one hand, the narrative of the background story seeks to be revealed without conflicts to create this favorable mood for the baby's birth, on the other, the images of the birth seek to create the true event. The show elongates the labor pains through the voice of the narrator, the characters do not hide their vulnerability, women do not hide their bodies, as if the show wanted to show reality without embellishment or reducing the "television intervention" about the event – as it was done in case of Xuxa. The authenticity of the stories and experiences is built on the visibility *Boas Vindas* gives to the struggles and their overcoming. A lot of the program is surrounded on a dream: the dream of becoming a father/mother, the dream of having a normal labor, the dream of having a girl/boy, the dream of having a big family. Hence the moment of birth implicates the achievement of this dream, because of that it is necessary to show with details this achievement, which we share as viewers.

When it shows the labor room, the show is also inserting the viewer in this moment as an accomplice. The framings of the camera seek to induce the viewer to look for the expressive aspects the subjects imply when they are living their experience: because of that, these framings preferably vary from the medium to the closed-up shot in order to show the subjects' movements.

Verbal text	Images
[Instrumental music of suspense]	Sign on the hospital saying “Operation Room” Maternal-fetal ITU. Admission nursery Rooms of natural childbirth”.
Narrator [off]: Thaís’ baby was born, but he hasn’t cried yet.	Member of the medical team massaging the newborn baby. Horizontal panoramic until framing the father, who watched the procedure crying. <i>Zoom in on the father.</i>
[Instrumental music of suspense]	The baby, in the foreground, receiving a massage from the member of the medical team. In the background, the mother, lying over a gurney, watches the procedure.
[Baby starts crying]	<i>Close-up on the father crying.</i>
Father [off]: I think it was the only moment I cried, that I said: “Oh wow, I want to see my child ok”. My relief came in the moment my son took his first breath.	<i>Close-up on the father crying.</i>
Father: “My son is ok, man, my son is ok”.	Close-up on the father giving the interview after what happened.
[Baby soundtrack] Father [looking at the child]: “Welcome, my son. You are always going to be my son”.	The nurse gives the crying baby to his father; in the background, the mother, still lying down, watches the moment. [cut] Father turns his back to the camera and walks over to his wife to give her the baby. The camera follows him in a sequence shot.

Table 1. Verbal and visual narrative at the moment of labor. Source: My own making

This sequence had 53 seconds of duration and intended to show not only the labor, but the moment of vulnerability that happened, with the low vital signs of the baby. The sequence begun with the narrator’s voice talking about what happened, since it was after the images of another family. After that, only the voice of the father sews together the events in the maternity room. When the labor happens, Boas Vindas usually puts

a soundtrack for when they take the baby for the first time, as if it was the "baby song". The soundtrack is usually a calm song that talks about feelings of love. In this episode, this song just entered when the father took the baby in his arms, after the baby cried.

The relatives build the moment of birth in their personal narratives, directing what we see in the images with the feelings lived in that moment, what suggests that the link between image and verbal text – that here is formulated by the person herself, with their language and the way they speak – seeks to promote a strong identification and intimacy between the characters on screen and their viewers.

“Now I am going to read, get informed”: Sharing experiences as a way of information

By centering the program on sharing personal experiences, Boas Vindas plays a role of helping people living similar situations or even giving information about the process of labor (type of labor, water birth, type of anesthetic, overcoming individual struggle, etc.). However, as typical of the genre, these types of information come by personal testimonies of lived experiences. It is the case of the episode “Sempre cabe mais um”, on the sixth season of Boas Vindas. The character Andréa talks about her wish of having a vaginal birth and the voice of the specialist (the obstetrician) comes only to confirm what is said by her. This is one of the few moments in which members of the medical staff speak as experts:

Mother: I always wanted to have vaginal, natural childbirth. Since my first pregnancy. But in the first one there was a confusion on some procedures and it didn't work out. In the second pregnancy, I said: “Oh, she [the obstetrician] will try, I hope...” I trusted. It didn't work out. And in the third pregnancy, when I found out, I said: “No. “Now I am going to read, get informed”: And then, in 38 weeks, I said: “Baby, let's try another doctor”.

Grandmother: She said she wanted the natural [birth] so badly, but she kept the same obstetrician, and, according to her it would be a cesarean. Two weeks before, she said she would change doctors. Ok. It is her right to

have a normal delivery. Could it have consequences to her? I don't know. I'm not a doctor. So, it is worrying. We feel the impact of their child.

Mother: Until the end I felt worried if it would be dangerous for the baby. Because what people say is exactly that: It is almost impossible having a vaginal delivery after having one or two cesareans, that is too big of a risk, bigger than another cesarian, even.

Dr. Bernadette⁹ (obstetrician): The bigger risk is that uterus rupture exactly where there is a scar (or scars) of a previous cesarean. But here we are talking about a spontaneous delivery [...] (BOAS VINDAS, season 6, episode 4).

This case is beneficial given the high percentage of cesareans performed in Brazil, especially in private hospitals. For the women that choose vaginal birth, the show *Boas Vindas* gives voice to their testimony.¹⁰

As we already discussed previously, the testimony can give private life a dimension that surpasses voyeurism, but allows a reflection on broader social questions through the experiences of these people. To base arguments having as a starting point an everyday situation and to awake common interests between the TV characters – supposedly "people like us" – and the viewers are other attributions of the mediatized testimony on television (SILVA, 2011). Another function is giving meaning to experiences lived through their own narrative. We believe that the reality of TV "works for the reader to interpret their experience as an experience shared by the community to which they belong" (MEAD, 1926, p. 390). George Mead's statement applies to journalism and its social role, that goes beyond information and reaches a dimension of uniting people around the same interests. Despite that, we believe that other ways of dealing with reality in television can also play that role, which is confirmed by the television critic Artur de Távola when he says that the

9 Dra. Bernadette appears as an obstetrician for many character of the show.

10 In Brazil, there's a movement getting stronger that aims at raising awareness on the various forms of obstetric violence, which constitutes as forcing a patient to accept medical intervention when there is no diagnosed risk.

simultaneous character of TV reception, and, especially, the reception of dramatic images build an emotional bond among viewers: “When the drama of reality surpasses fiction and everyone participates, a new form of solidarity and love must be growing (and it is, I know that), otherwise everything would be hopeless” (TÁVOLA, Dec. 22nd, 1972).

When they narrate themselves, Boas Vindas characters use their experience to strengthen their bonds of intimacy that the show intends to build. At the same time, the viewer is located around the pleasure of listening and watching another person talking about themselves. Such characteristic was highlighted by Sonia Livingstone and Peter Lunt (1994), which show that talk show viewers – another genre that has its roots linked to the exposure of the private life of common people – can rearrange everyday practices through testimonies; “Some think they can learn something about the social world through these shows” (LIVINGSTONE; LUNT, 1994, p. 83).

To be a witness, therefore, is not only to witness an event, but to live it and share it through the feelings it conveys. Personal testimonies invite the viewer to occupy a place not as much of a person who wants to learn about something new, but of a person that shares the same world. The story of personal experiences capture the viewer by the sensitivity and by the emotion, that is manifested by what is lived by the common person and the way he/she can give meaning to experiences and share it with others. It is these meanings that, according to Mead (1926), allow the perception of a “real” world and the socialization of individuals through the imagery that generates a feeling of appreciation and pleasure by the simple fact of being shared with others (SILVA, 2011, p. 328-329).

Final considerations

It is possible to notice that there are not much evident differences on the content of the coverage made by Jornal Nacional of the moments before Sasha’s birth and what is done on Boas Vindas: On both cases, the focus lies on the preparation of the family and the emotions lived with the arrival of a baby. The differences are in the format – Jornal Nacional tells

the story with the mediation of renowned reporters, while Boas Vindas delegate the narrative authority to the characters involved – and, especially, on the approach of the delivery itself - on the first case, silencing and absence; on the second case, visibility and detailing. In the birth of Sasha, the conduction of the coverage revolves around the renowned celebrity – Xuxa; in the case of Boas Vindas, the center of the story is common people and their struggles.

TV shows like Boas Vindas suggest the existence of conditions that allow their legitimacy on the television schedule through a dimension of nonexistent sharing of the delivery of Sasha, which demonstrate transformations on the expectations of society about the role of television. The perception, of the audience, of the absence of newsworthiness of Xuxa's pregnancy in the end of the 90's contrasts with the desire of knowing, watching and participating of the story of common people's lives, tendency that is shown outside the environment of television. It is noticeable, nowadays, the variety of channels of information (blogs and websites) about maternity/paternity, child rearing, among other subjects.¹¹ A part of these spaces is formed by mothers that simply share their everyday experiences with the intention of helping other moms with their dilemmas. Boas Vindas' website has a section called "Pregnancy and Post-Partum Period" with information on types of birth, child development during the pregnancy, recommended diets for pregnant women and when to go back to the routine after the delivery. Even though there are specialists (psychologists, educationalists, doctors) they also identify as mothers or fathers, creating a more humanized layer of the expert knowledge and a proximity with common people that are looking for information. The construction of a sense of authenticity is dislocated from the distanced testimony of reporters for the lived experience.

Boas Vindas is structured around the diversity of families – young couples, experienced couples, homosexual couples, single women -, but whose conflicts are lived and overcome in an individual context. It is

11 *Matemar, Dona Mamãe, Mamatraca, A Mãe Coruja*, besides special magazines websites, such as Crescer e Pais e Filhos, are some of them.

important to remember what the anthropologist Roberto da Matta says about the street and the home:

Facing some problems and relations [we, Brazilians] prefer to include the street [with our problems] to our home, treating the Brazilian society as if it was a “big family” living under a wide and generous roof (DAMATTA, 1997, p. 9).

Certainly, as it was in Xuxa’s case, the theme that is around *Boas Vindas*, is related to the home, which is strengthened and becomes a privileged place for experiences that will still be built. When it narrates life stories and shows a child’s birth, the show confirms the strength of individual domestic relationships and reduces the ambiguity that may come from an unwanted pregnancy, a miscarriage, a couple’s divorce. Throughout the duration of the program, everything is built in an uplifting mood, implying that this child that had just born may have a brilliant future, because the context that surrounds them are always favorable to their success.

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