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**MÍDIA**  
**E CONSUMO**

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# **Comunicação, mídia e consumo**

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## **Foreword**

CMC Magazine's second issue of 2018 gathers a set of studies that reflects about the dimension of politics in communication studies from macro and micro perspectives. The first set of texts focus on politics through a research that approaches participation and engagement in political campaigns through the relationship between online and offline behavior in the context of general elections in the United Kingdom and a study that raises questions about political autonomy and resistance practices in sociocultural processes in bricolage in different national contexts. The other two texts of this set deal with the trajectory of politization of representation of favelas in Rio in the cinematic genre of Brazilian musical comedies - the so-called *chanchadas* - and the configurations of urban violence experiences in Brazilian journalism through the analysis of character construction of victim and attacker in the journalistic narrative of both medias of Infoglobo (O Globo and Extra).

Politics crosses, still, the reflections proposed by authors in a second set of studies published in this issue. Through different theoretical-methodological emphases, these texts talk about the singularities which, managed in the crossings between perspectives of contemporary subjectivity and the field of discursive and narrative constitution, configure the mediatic-communicational field. The issue of authority in advertisement and the strategies of mediatic visibility anchored in the so-called "controversial values" is the theme of the first study. The second text is dedicated to an analysis of the exaltation of entrepreneurial subjectivity between the neo-Pentecostal audience, having as empirical reference the interpretation of biblical stories made by the Universal Church of

the Kingdom of God. In the third study of this set, the focus is on the strategies of persuasion of celebrities in spaces of social media - through modes of negotiation of intimacy and affection between idols and admirers. Finally, the last text proposes reflections about meanings in dispute in digital networks around Disney productions that, in the Twitter context, point towards tensions around the link between pop culture, cyber events and issues on gender and sexuality.

We wish you all a great reading.

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## Articles

## **Does mode matter? Measuring the effects of different types of online political engagement on offline participation<sup>1</sup>**

### **O modo importa? Medindo os efeitos de diferentes tipos de envolvimento político *on-line* na participação *off-line***

Marta Cantijoch Cunill<sup>2</sup>

David Cutts<sup>3</sup>

Rachel Gibson<sup>4</sup>

**Abstract:** *Recent studies have shown that online participation is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that replicates and extends existing forms of political engagement. What is less clear is the mobilizing potential of these different types of activity and particularly whether they trigger offline participation. This paper addresses these questions in an analysis of citizens online and offline behaviour in the context of a UK General Election. Specifically we identify three different modes of online engagement in the campaign, profile the individuals most likely to engage in them, and examine whether they affected individuals' likelihood of voting. Our findings show that while newer social media based 'e-expressive' activities are most likely to appeal to those individuals who are not already engaged in politics they do not necessarily increase the likelihood of voting. By contrast higher consumption of news and information online during an election does appear to significantly boost individuals' chances of turning out to vote.*

1 The dataset used for this project was funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) through Research Grant RES-051-27-0299 and is archived at the UK Data Archive <http://reshare.ukdataservice.ac.uk/850856/>

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**Keywords:** *online participation; digital media; voting, mobilisation; election campaign.*

**Resumo:** *Estudos recentes têm mostrado que a participação on-line é um fenômeno multidimensional que replica e amplia formas existentes de engajamento político. O que é menos claro é o potencial de mobilização desses diferentes tipos de atividade e, particularmente, se eles acionam a participação off-line. Este artigo aborda essas questões em uma análise do comportamento on-line e off-line dos cidadãos no contexto de uma eleição geral no Reino Unido. Especificamente, identificamos três modos diferentes de envolvimento on-line na campanha, relacionamos os indivíduos com maior probabilidade de participar deles e examinamos se afetavam a probabilidade de voto dos indivíduos. Nossas descobertas mostram que, embora as mais recentes atividades e-expressive baseadas em mídia social tenham maior probabilidade de atrair as pessoas que ainda não estão envolvidas na política, elas não aumentam necessariamente a probabilidade de votar. Por outro lado, o maior consumo de notícias e informações on-line durante uma eleição parece aumentar significativamente as chances de os indivíduos votarem.*

**Palavras-chave:** *participação on-line; mídia digital; votação, mobilização; campanha eleitoral.*

## Introduction

Over the past two decades a growing body of work has attempted to assess the impact of the internet on citizen participation in representative politics. This research has focused primarily on voting behaviour and particularly turnout as well as more targeted forms of non-electoral engagement such as contacting, donating and petition signing (BIMBER, 1999; 2001; BEST; KRUEGER, 2005; JOHNSON; KAYE, 2003; MOSSBERGER *et al.*, 2008; NORRIS; XENOS; MOY, 2007). While the results have generally become more positive over time the consensus has been that any mobilizing effects are small and contingent on the type of activity involved (BOULIANNE, 2009; BIMBER; COPELAND, 2013; BOULIANNE, 2015). Recent scholarship has sought to investigate more closely the idea that distinct modes of online political engagement exist and what implications they hold for citizen mobilization.

The findings to date on the first question have been consistent and positive in confirming that ‘e-participation’ is a multi-dimensional phenomenon which encompasses conventional activities such as campaigning and contacting government as well as more passive types of engagement such as looking for news and information (GIBSON; CANTIJOC, 2013; HIRZALLA; VAN ZONEN, 2011; SAGLIE; VABO, 2007). This growing understanding of the structural complexity of online participation follows in part from the expansion of items available to measure relevant activities but is also a product of ‘time’ itself, and particularly the recent technological diversification that has occurred with the arrival of social media platforms. One of the most interesting developments in this research has been identification of a potentially new mode of political behaviour – ‘e-expressive’ – that revolves around sharing and posting of political opinions (one’s own or others’) online. This newer mode along with lower intensity activities such as information seeking have been identified as possible triggers to more active types of both online and offline participation (HAMILTON; TOLBERT, 2012;

BOULIANNE, 2011, 2015; GIL DE ZUNIGA *et al.*, 2012; ROJAS; PUIG-I-ABRIL, 2009).

With regard to the second question – the mobilizing effects of different types of online activities and particularly e-expressive forms – the findings have been less clear and compelling. One reason for this is that the analyses have been conducted in contexts with limited generalizability. Specifically this has included the newly democratizing nation of Colombia and a self-selected sample of U.S. blog readers (ROJAS; PUIG-I-ABRIL, 2009; GIL DE ZUNIGA *et al.*, 2010). In addition the indicators used to measure this mode of engagement have varied considerably with some authors focusing specifically on social media based activities while others have adopted a broader definition that encompasses more conventional web 1.0 types of expression such as signing e-petitions and emailing a politician. Given the findings from a recent literature review by Boulianne (2015) showing that social media use has minimal connection with engagement in formal modes of electoral participation, then it is clear that this methodological diversity is consequential for understanding mobilizing effects.

The main goal of this paper is to provide more robust and generalizable test of the mobilizing effects of the various modes of online political activity than has been conducted to date, focusing particularly on the impact of this new type of e-expressive engagement on more formal modes of political engagement. To do so we re-analyze the dataset used by Gibson and Cantijoch (2013) to examine online political participation in the context of the UK 2010 General Election. In this study the authors tested and confirmed a multi-factor model of e-participation that specified several distinct modes of political engagement, some of which largely replicated offline modes – e-targeted, e-campaign and e-news, while others – e-expressive – appeared to be more original to the online medium. The analysis stopped short, however, of investigating the mobilizing implications of this differentiation in terms of whether this meant different people were attracted to each mode and whether this had any consequence for their actual participation in the election.

Our study seeks to address these questions. We do so by extending the measurement model of e-participation advanced by Gibson and Cantijoch (2013) into a full explanatory model. We do so by first identifying the socio-political correlates of those most likely to engage in each of the three modes of activity to see how far they are attracting less mobilized citizens into the electoral process. We then also compare the impact of engaging in each mode on individuals' involvement in the offline political arena and particularly the likelihood that an individual voted. In doing so we advance research on e-expressive participation by providing a clearer social media specific empirical definition of the concept. We also provide a more robust test of its mobilizing effects by examining the activities of a random sample of voters during a major nation election in an established democracy, the United Kingdom.

The research is important because it develops our understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of online participation, and in particular helps to better conceptually and empirically define this new mode of e-expressive engagement and thereby to evaluate its mobilizing potential. In addition, we provide a new case for analysis which *ceteris paribus* is helpful in extending the generalizability of the findings produced to date. Moreover the case of the UK is arguably more representative of the global experience of online participation than either of the two countries that have featured in the research to date into e-expressive participation. As an established democracy with relatively stable levels of voter turnout and a large majority of citizens online, the UK arguably presents a more standardized test of the impact of digital technologies on citizen behaviour than the less institutionalized environment of Colombia where internet use is much less widespread, and constitutes more of a novelty. Moving to the other end of the spectrum, although the U.S has been responsible for the lion's share of research into online participation its consistently low levels of voter turnout, combined with very high levels of use of online media during elections, actually make it something of an anomaly in comparative research on internet effects (VACCARI,

2013).<sup>5</sup> By presenting a new single-case study this paper contributes to the debate about the robustness of previous findings and informs future researchers wishing to adopt a comparative perspective.

## Research on Online Participation

The study of the internet and political participation at the individual level has expanded rapidly since the late 1990s. Early work by Bimber and others demonstrated significant but small effects on engagement in the formal political arena (BIMBER 1999, 2001; SHAH *et al.*, 2001; JOHNSON; KAYE, 2003). Other more critical studies reported that the internet was largely reinforcing existing participatory biases in conventional politics and possibly even reducing the pool of active citizens (HILL; HUGHES, 1998; KRAUT *et al.*, 1998; DAVIS, 1999; NIE, 2001; BONFADELLI, 2002; NORRIS, 2001; AND 2002; WILHELM, 2000). A third strand of research supports the notion that the digital media environment shouldn't be understood as an individual-level factor of change but as a transformation of the context where action takes place (BIMBER, 2017).

As measures of online political activities expanded more nuanced models of citizens 'uses and gratifications' (BLUMLER; KATZ, 1974) in using the internet were developed and applied to questions of mobilization. This greater differentiation of internet use led to increasingly positive findings emerging with information seeking in particular being regarded as a trigger to engagement in more active types of online and offline participation (HARDY; SCHEUFELE, 2005; MOY *et al.*, 2005; XENOS; MOY, 2007; MOSSBERGER *et al.*, 2008; QUINTELIER; VISSERS, 2008; BAKKER; DE VREESE, 2011; GIL DE ZUNIGA *et al.*, 2012). As Boulianne's (2009) meta-analysis of a decade's worth of study of the topic has pointed out, however, despite the positive

5 Vaccari compares the US population on use of the internet to find political news with publics in five established European democracies and Australia in elections from 2006-2010 and concludes that 'American citizens show a much greater inclination than voters in any other country to engage with the campaign online.' (Figure 9.1: 133).

trajectory in findings, the real impact on levels of public participation has been largely negligible.

Following Boulianne's review article increased attention has been given to improving the measurement and modelling of e-participation. The continued expansion of survey items to measure new forms of web 2.0 or social media based political activities such as blogging, tweeting and sharing information through social network sites have fuelled these efforts, with scholars adopting increasingly sophisticated techniques to identify different types of e-participation (SAGLIE; VABO, 2009; BAKKER; DE VREESE, 2011; LEUNG, 2009; GIBSON; CANTIJOCH, 2013). While the precise modes of online participation identified to date have varied based on data availability, the results have consistently shown a division of activities into more active and passive types that largely mirror those found in offline participation. Gibson and Cantijoch (2013) have provided one of the most comprehensive analyses in this regard. Using a particularly rich data source from the UK 2010 General election that contained multiple indicators of online electoral and non-electoral activities, they identified four main modes of activity that included attention to political news, more targeted actions such as contacting a politician and donating to a political cause, party and campaign involvement, and finally a newer cluster of expressive actions revolving posting and sharing political views through social media.

Investigation of the mobilizing effects of these various forms of online engagement has been relatively limited to date and produced mixed findings. The evidence is strongest in support of online news and information seeking as a significant stimulus to political engagement (BOULIANNE, 2009). Subsequent panel data analysis has confirmed this very convincingly by showing how attention to election news increased levels of political interest (BOULIANNE, 2011) and turnout (HAMILTON; TOLBERT, 2013). For e-expressive activities the findings are somewhat less clear cut. The general consensus is that these actions serve as a stimulus to more active modes of online participation, however, there is some question over whether these effects carry over



to offline participation (ROJAS; PUIG-I-ABRIL, 2009; GIL DE ZUNIGA *et al.*, 2010). In addition the study of effects has been divided in its measurement and understanding of the core concept. Gil de Zuniga *et al.* (2010) use a three point scale that arguably captures less relevant web 1.0 based political activities such as emailing a newspaper editor or a politician, and signing an e-petition. Rojas and Puig-i-Abril (2009), however, apply more sophisticated modelling techniques to create a latent construct that relies exclusively on newer social media specific actions such as posting political commentary to a blog or social networking site. Interestingly, Gil de Zuniga *et al.* (2010) go on to examine the socio-political correlates of the e-expressive mode, and find that those engaging in it are typically already political engaged and fit a more conventional participant profile. Rojas and Puig-i-Abril (2009) do not report the correlates of those engaging in their version of e-expressive participation. Finally the samples used in both analyses are also problematic in that one relies on blog users recruited through open online invitations, thereby creating problems of generalizability to the broader population (GIL DE ZUNIGA, 2010). The other draws on survey responses from Colombia's urban population which as noted above, and as the authors themselves confess, limits the generalizability of their conclusions to the wider group of democratized nations.

Drawing together the literature on online participation to date therefore it is clear that e-participation, like its offline counterpart, is a complex phenomenon that can and should be divided into sub-modes of activity. Furthermore it appears that less intensive modes such as news gathering provide a stimulus to increased levels of political engagement. What is not so clear is whether other and potentially newer types of e-participation, and particularly these newer social media oriented activities act in a similar manner. This paper seeks to investigate this question and does so in three main stages. First we specify and test three main modes of online political engagement that draw on the main measurement models and findings established in the extant literature. Then we examine the individual characteristics of those engaging in them and

query the extent they are attracting the usual participatory suspects. Finally we compare the effect each type has subsequent offline political activity and specifically whether an individual voted or not.

## Data and Methods

As noted above to conduct the research we re-analyzed the 2010 survey data analysed by Gibson and Cantijoch (2013).<sup>6</sup> This dataset is particularly useful for examining questions about the structure of online participation since it contains an unusually rich set of items measuring a wide range of individuals' political opinions and online activities during an election period. It was conducted as a post-election face-to-face survey by BMRB, a UK polling company<sup>7</sup> and measured a total of nine election related online activities, four non-electoral online actions and their direct offline counterparts well as political attitudes and standard demographics. Given our primary interest was in the relationship between different modes of online activity and electoral mobilization we concentrated on the nine election relevant items. This included whether one paid attention to a range of official and unofficial news and information, undertook a number of more formal actions to support parties and candidates, as well as the more expressive activities such as posting, forwarding or embedding political content in your own or others social media profile. The specific items used and their frequencies are presented in Table 1. The overall N was 1,960, of which there was a sub-sample of 1,379 internet users<sup>8</sup>.

6 Available from the UK Data Service at <http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/>, reference number SN 850856.

7 The fieldwork was conducted between 20 and 26 May 2010. Control of quotas affecting likelihood of being at home (age and working status within sex) was applied following a one stage ACORN and region stratification. The data was weighted to ensure that demographic profiles matched those for all adults in Great Britain aged eighteen or over.

8 A proportion of the sample did not have access to the internet which meant they could not engage in online activities. Given that the focus of the paper is to assess how individuals engaged with the online campaign during the 2010 general election, it was decided to omit these respondents from the subsequent analyses.

Table 1: Online Campaign Activities of UK Voters in the 2010 General Election (weighted data)

Type Of Activity	Total Sample (%)	Internet users (%)	N
<b>Official Campaign</b>			
Read/accessed official sites	15.5	20.6	301
Signed up as supporter/for e-news	4.6	6.1	89
Used online tools to campaign / promote parties	3.3	4.3	63
Total official campaign engagement	18.6	24.8	363
<b>Non-Official Campaign</b>			
Read/accessed mainstream news sites	27.6	36.7	539
Viewed/accessed non-official online video	5.7	7.6	112
Joined/started political group on a SNS	3.2	4.2	62
Posted political comments to own/ other blog/SNS	4.5	6.0	88
Forwarded non-official content (jokes, news items)	2.6	3.4	50
Embedded/reposted non-official content	1.1	1.4	21
Total non-official campaign engagement	31.4	41.7	613
Overall Activity	33.4	44.4	651

Source: BMRB National Face to Face Quota Survey of 1,960 UK adults May 20<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> 2010.

Official Campaign Question: Please could you tell me, whether you have done any of the following activities in relation to official parties or candidates online?

Non-official Campaign Question: Which, if any, of the following activities did you do online during the election campaign over the last month?

As a first step we replicated the measurement model of Gibson and Cantijoch (2013) and used the nine election-relevant items to define three modes or factors of political engagement. Thus the three items measuring news and information gathering activities i.e. visiting official campaign sites, YouTube and the mainstream media were used to define an *E-news* mode. The three items that captured the informal sharing, forwarding or posting of political content and opinion through social

media or email we labelled *E-expressive*<sup>9</sup>. Finally a third *E-party* mode was specified that focused on more active and collective efforts to get involved in the campaign itself either through using party provided online tools, registering for official e-news updates, and joining or starting an SNS/Facebook politically-related group during the election.<sup>10</sup> The three latent e-participation variables specified correspond to those presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Expected Dimensions of E-campaign participation using items from BMRB UK 2010 Survey

Factors	Variables
E-Party	Used online tools to campaign /promote parties Joined/started political group on a SNS Signed up as supporter/for e-news
E-Expressive	Embedded/reposted non-official content Forwarded non-official content (jokes, news items) Posted political comments to own/other blog/SNS
E-news	Read/accessed official sites Read/accessed mainstream news sites Viewed/accessed non-official online video

The measurement model was tested through simultaneous confirmatory factor analysis to establish how far the three factor model provided an accurate representation of the underlying patterns of participation within the population of interest.

Having specified our measurement model we then extended it into a full structural equation model that simultaneously then estimates the correlates of each mode of engagement and their impact on voting, controlling for a range of alternative plausible explanatory factors. In terms

9 The items in question do not specify the political content that is exchanged or posted although it does provide examples such as posting comment on blogs or a Facebook wall or forwarding video, news stories and jokes. This definition thus emphasizes the public 'speech' aspect rather than a wider range of more creative, artistic type of non-verbal content which could constitute e-expressive participation.

10 Involvement in a Facebook group we recognize may not have been linked with a political party, however, on balance we considered that it constituted a more organized, higher intensity and 'formal' type of engagement with the campaign than the actions associated with the other two modes.

of the correlates of each mode we included the range of conventional predictors such as levels of individual civic and economic resources, as well cognitive and attitudinal factors such as interest in politics, political trust, and a partisan identification (PARRY *et al.*, 1992; VERBA *et al.*, 1995; DALTON, 2002; PATTIE *et al.*, 2004; WHITELEY; SEYD, 1996; ZMERLI *et al.*, 2007). Given the very limited empirical evidence available to date on who is engaging in each mode we do not formulate specific hypotheses about the impact of these variables on the likelihood of undertaking each type of activity. Instead we opt for a more conservative strategy of testing the null hypothesis that the characteristics predicting involvement in electorally relevant and more conventional modes of offline participation will also be significant for predicting online engagement. While we apply this ‘default’ position to all three modes we expect it to hold most strongly for the ‘e-party’ mode given the higher levels of partisanship and political involvement likely to be present among those undertaking these activities. The one major deviation from the norm or null hypothesis that we specify is in relation to age. Although political activity typically increases with age, the long standing skew in internet usage toward younger people and particularly now in regard to social media (RAINIE *et al.*, 2012) we argue is likely to moderate or even invert this relationship. We expect this to be particularly so for the ‘e-expressive’ mode given its reliance on social media tools.

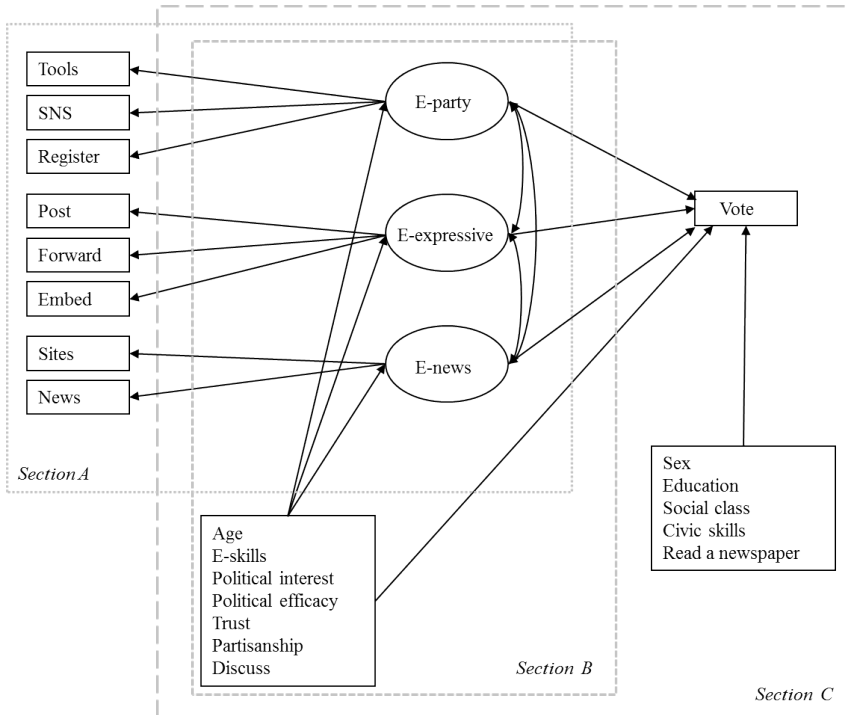
Having profiled the individuals’ most likely to engage in each mode of behaviour we then examine their impact on offline participation and particularly whether an individual voted or not in the 2010 general election, controlling for relevant socio-economic and other political characteristics. Here we use the profiles generated in step two of our analysis to develop more specific predictions about the relative likelihood of each mode leading to a significant increase in the likelihood of voting.

## Model and Results

To conduct our analysis we used structural equation modelling which allowed us to simultaneously examine and estimate all three components

of our analysis.<sup>11</sup> Figure 1 shows a path diagram of the full model. Below we outline the components of the model corresponding to each step of the analysis and present the results.

Figure 1: Path diagram of the full structural equation model tested.



11 The model was fitted using Mplus 6 software (Muthén and Muthén, 2005). The analysis of the small amount of missing data (less than 4.2 per cent of sample size) was handled through the estimation-mobilisation (EM) algorithm to compute missing data estimates using full information maximum likelihood (FIML) (Muthén and Muthén, 2005). This estimation approach is preferred because it provides unbiased parameter estimates and standard errors under missing at random (MAR) (Little and Rubin, 1987). We use the WLSMV estimator because it handles missing data on the covariates which is where our missing data was situated – please see Asparouhov and Muthén (2010) for the discussion of missing data using Weighted Least Squares modelling which is available on the Mplus website at [www.statmodel.com/](http://www.statmodel.com/). All the regression models reported in this article are probit models.

### Developing a typology of e-participation: the measurement model

In a first step we specified our three factor model of online participation shown in Table 2 and estimated it using latent variable modelling<sup>12</sup>. This is represented in our Figure 1 as Section A. Overall we find support for the three factors and confirmation of the results produced by Gibson and Cantijoch (2013). One deviation was noted in the loading of the online video item on the E-news factor which failed to reach significance and it was removed from the analysis. While this would seem to contradict the findings of Gibson and Cantijoch (2013) it is clear from initial analyses using the more simple measurement section of the model (i.e. Section A) that the item loaded with the other indicators. However, when the factor was entered into the full structural model presented here to test the mobilization questions (i.e. sections B and C) problems emerged with the online video item<sup>13</sup>. Table 3 provides the standardised and unstandardized regression estimates of measurement indicators on the three e-participation latent variables (the results are drawn from full model in Figure 1).

12 In simple terms, the latent variable model can be written:

$$Y_{ij} = \lambda_{ij} \eta_j + \varepsilon_{ij} \quad (1)$$

where

$$\eta_j = \gamma_{ij} X_{ij} + \zeta_j \quad (2)$$

$Y_{ij}$  is the  $i$ -th indicator of the  $j$ -th latent variable  $\eta_j$ , with loading  $\lambda_{ij}$  and unique factors  $\varepsilon_{ij}$  (i.e. unshared variance and error). The latent variables  $\eta_j$  accounts for the effects of the regressions  $\gamma_{ij}$  on the exogenous causes  $X_{ij}$ , as well as the variance  $\zeta_j$  not accounted for by  $X_{ij}$ . Here it is assumed that error terms ( $\varepsilon_{ij}$  and  $\zeta_j$ ) have a mean of zero (Cutts et al, 2011). In addition to the model shown in equations (1) and (2) and Figure 1, the latent variables  $\eta_j$  were allowed to correlate freely, representing the non-independence of e-campaign participation. The model structure also allowed all exogenous predictors to covary freely.

13 The e-video variable failed to contribute very much to the E-news latent variable (as measured by the STYX and variance explained). Indeed, it produced less than 45% of the variance in e-video. This variable also has a highly skewed distribution which meant that its inclusion as a covariate in the final model of voter turnout was highly problematic despite our attempts to deal with this using standard techniques. For instance, during testing, its inclusion resulted in model instability as indicated by poor model fit statistics. Subsequent exploratory testing revealed some modest but nevertheless problematic correlation with a number of items on the other latent factors. Due to these numerous problems and in the interest of obtaining the most parsimonious model, we decided to omit this variable from the analysis.

Table 3. Estimates of E-Campaign indicators on latent variables (factor loadings, full model)

Variables	Estimates ( $\beta$ )	SE	StdYX	R <sup>2</sup>
<i>E-Party</i>				
Used online tools to campaign / promote parties	1.00	-	0.85	0.73
Joined/started political group on a SNS	0.91	0.10	0.79	0.62
Signed up as supporter/for e-news	0.99	0.08	0.85	0.72
<i>E-Expressive</i>				
Embedded/reposted non-official content	1.00	-	0.96	0.93
Forwarded non-official content (jokes, news items)	0.84	0.08	0.85	0.72
Posted political comments to own/ other blog/SNS	0.86	0.08	0.86	0.73
<i>E-news</i>				
Read/accessed official sites	1.00	-	0.94	0.89
Read/accessed mainstream news sites	0.68	0.07	0.70	0.49

Note: Data is weighted. Correlations between e-party and e-expressive (0.55\*\* standardised); e-party and e-news (0.38\*\* standardised); e-expressive and e-news (0.36\*\* standardised).

The standardised estimates (StdYX) are equivalent to factor loadings from a common factor analysis. The unstandardized estimates for online tools (e-party) embedded/reposted campaign content (e-expressive) and official candidate sites (e-news) are constrained to equal 1 with estimates for the other indicator variables providing relative values. All indicators are significantly and positively correlated with each latent variable. The coefficients and the large standardised loadings for each indicator suggest that each latent variable is a good representation of the variables. This is confirmed by the r-squared statistics which indicate the proportion of variance in each indicator which is explained by the model. Given that the indicators are regressed only on the latent variables, the r-squared values are the square of the standardised coefficients. The e-party latent variable reproduces more than two thirds of the variance



in online tools and official register and just under for unofficial SNS. For e-expressive, it reproduces nine tenths of the variance in embedded/reposted campaign content and more than two-thirds of the variance in forwarded campaign content and posted comments. Finally, the e-news latent variable reproduces nine tenths of the variance in official websites but less than half in mainstream news websites. To test the significance of the independent contribution of each indicator we re-specified the model without each of the indicators in turn and found that the inclusion of each indicator made a significant contribution in the reduction of log likelihood.

### Who engages in e-participation?

Having confirmed the multi-modal nature of online engagement in the 2010 UK General Election we move on to the more original component of our analysis and the questions of how far each type can be seen as leading to voter mobilization. To do this we first find out who is engaging in the different e-campaign modes. This involves extending our measurement model, where the latent variables are considered to be the *cause* of the relationships from a set of indicator variables (e.g. online tools, visiting sites, sharing online information), into a multiple indicator, multiple cause or MIMIC model (JÖRESKOG; GOLDBERGER, 1975) where the latent variables are being *caused by* other, exogenous, variables (e.g. political interest, internal political efficacy, partisanship etc) (ZUMBO, 2005; FIELDHOUSE; CUTTS, 2010; CUTTS *et al.*, 2011). In figure 1 Section B this is shown by the causal arrows running into the latent variable and represents the regression of the latent variables on the covariates.

As shown in figure 1 section B, we measure age effects as a categorical variable with separate dummies for young people aged 18-29, middle aged 30-44, middle older aged 45-59 and old age 60 plus. We also include an internet skills variable<sup>14</sup> to measure the overall competence

14 E-skills is also a count variable 0-4. The z-score for skewness and kurtosis was 5.65 and -7.56. Hence it was log transformed to deal with non-normality.

of internet use, as developed by new media scholars to test for any independent effects on rates of participation, offline and online (BEST; KRUEGER, 2005).<sup>15</sup> Individuals who have an interest in politics, feelings of internal efficacy, trust British politicians, discuss politics with friends and family and are partisans are more likely to become politically active.<sup>16</sup> The estimates for these models are presented in table 4.

Table 4. Regression of latent variables on covariates by E-Campaign: E-Party, E-Informal and E-Communication in the 2010 General Election (Full Model)

Variables	E-Party Estimates ( $\beta$ ) (StdYX)		E-Expressive Estimates ( $\beta$ ) (StdYX)		E-news Estimates ( $\beta$ ) (StdYX)	
Young Age 18-29	0.57**	.26	0.59**	.23	0.73**	.28
Middle Age 30-44	0.13	.06	0.53**	.22	0.64**	.27
Middle/Older Age 45-59	0.04	.02	0.07	.03	0.04	.01
Lots of Political Interest	0.51**	.19	0.25	.08	0.41**	.13
Political Efficacy	0.01	.03	0.04	.10	0.04**	.09
Trust	0.72**	.23	0.18	.05	0.79**	.22
E-Skills	0.68**	.17	1.77**	.36	1.41**	.29
No Partisanship	-0.36*	-.17	-0.16	-.05	-0.01	-.00
Discuss politics with friends	0.13	.07	0.51**	.22	0.36**	.16
R2	.25		.31		.33	

Data is weighted. N = 1379. \*\* Significance at the 0.01 level. \* Significance at the 0.05 level. Reference category for Age = Age 60 plus.

15 This variable correlated highly with other indicators of socio-economic status (SES) such as education, social class and civic skills. In order to improve the parsimony of the model and to reduce the risk of multicollinearity, the variable internet skills was chosen as the only predictor included in this section of the model to measure SES effects. This selection was based on the relevance that this concept is acquiring in the study of online engagement and on its performance in the model.

16 Political interest is coded as a dummy – lots of political interest = 1; all others = 0. Feelings of efficacy is distributed normally with no evidence of skewness. However, missing data here (for 17 cases) was recalculated by using the mean score. Efficacy was included as a continuous variable. Trust in politicians was found to be moderately positively skewed (z-score = 2.6) and there was also evidence of negative kurtosis. We log transformed this variable to remove non-normality and included it as a continuous variable. Partisanship is coded as a dummy – no partisanship = 1; partisanship = 0. Discussing politics with friends and family (over the past 12 months) is coded also as a dummy – has discussed = 1; hasn't discussed = 0.

For each model we can see that the variance explained (r-square) is at least one quarter of the total. The results for our individual predictors are interesting in that to a significant extent they challenge the null hypothesis that the same factors that are relevant for electorally relevant types of offline participation are also linked with online modes. Certainly the findings with regard to age are particularly striking with those aged between 18-29 being the most likely to engage in all forms of e-participation (e-party, e-expressive and e-news). Furthermore online skills appear to be one of the most important drivers to engaging in these modes of participation, even when accounting for a range of traditional predictors of political engagement. Somewhat contrary to our expectations, however, the lure of e-expressive is less strong among younger voters than e-news and particularly e-party. While the standardized coefficients for age show that e-news and e-expressive also appeal to slightly older voters, e-party is actually much more clearly dominated by the youngest cohort. Thus, despite the fact that those engaging in e-party activities are significantly more likely to be interested in politics and to be partisans there is a reversal of expectations regarding age which does signal that online channels may allow parties to reach a new pool of previously untapped activists.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps the clearest evidence in favour of the mobilization thesis, however, comes from our findings about who is engaging in e-expressive activities. Essentially these are a group of young tech-savvy individuals who are quite keen to talk about politics but who are not particularly involved or engaged with the political process as measured through their levels of partisanship, trust in politicians, interest in politics or feelings of efficacy.

17 Further evidence to suggest e-party activism is offering a new channel for less new types of volunteers to get involved and help parties and candidates is provided by the finding that e-expressive and e-party factors were correlated quite strongly at 0.55. This suggests some support for the idea presented earlier that party related activities occurring online may be taking on a more expressive and self-directed quality that differs from the formal and party controlled character they followed in the pre-internet and particularly social media era.

### **E-campaign participation on vote in 2010**

Given the results of our profiling exercise have shown that there are distinctive features of those engaging in the three modes of online engagement which indicate varying levels of proximity to the already engaged or 'ideal' citizen type, in a final step we formalize these findings into a series hypotheses that specify the effect of each mode on offline participation and in particular, voting in the 2010 general election, controlling for socio-economic and other political factors.

Overall we argue that the most likely predictor of the three will be greater engagement in e-news seeking. As noted in our review of the literature this mode of online activity has been consistently and increasingly convincingly linked with increases in participatory attitudes as well as more intensive offline and online political behaviours. In addition, based on the profiling results reported above we know that those seeking information are not highly partisan although they are likely to be at least somewhat interested in politics. As such they may be more undecided over whether to vote and whom to vote for, and thus open to persuasion by the information and mobilization efforts of others they experience online.

By contrast, increased engagement in e-party activities is not anticipated to significantly increase the likelihood of an individual voting. As we have seen, despite its youth appeal and the potentially new source of volunteers it might help supply, e-party activists are highly engaged in the election and it is unlikely that more engagement of this type would increase their commitment to turnout. Finally for e-expressive activities we have competing expectations. On the one hand we might expect the e-expressive factor to prompt greater offline participation. Its more social and informal nature may provide an easier point of entry for people who are typically less engaged and interested in politics compared to other modes. Conversely, precisely because this type of activity is informal, even if it is campaign related, and revolves around the sharing of unofficial content and expression of personal opinions through peer networks, one can argue that it would be unlikely to connect people

with more formal and active channels of engagement such as voting. Certainly this lack of connection has been endorsed by a number of studies to date (BOULIANNE, 2015). Thus while we do not expect its effect to reduce turnout we might expect it to be neutral or have no effect. We capture the above reasoning in the following three hypotheses.

*H1: Levels of e-news news consumption during the election campaign will be positively and significantly related to an individual's likelihood of voting.*

*H2: Levels of e-party activities and/or e-expressive activities during the election campaign will not be significantly related to an individual's likelihood of voting.*

*H3 Levels of e-expressive activities during the election campaign will be positively and significantly related to an individual's likelihood of voting.*

To test these hypotheses the MIMIC model is extended to a full structural equation model where the latent and observed variables are included simultaneously and the direct effects of both are estimated on the vote in the 2010 UK general election (JÖRESKOG, 1973; BOLLEN, 1989). This extension of the model is represented in Section C of Figure 1. The model includes socio-demographic factors (sex, social class and education<sup>18</sup>) and civic skills<sup>19</sup>, variables that have been identified in the wider participation literature as strongly linked to individuals' propensity to participate (PARRY *et al.*, 1992; VERBA *et al.*, 1995). Whether an individual reads a daily newspaper is included as a dummy variable to control for the effects of the mainstream offline news media on voting.<sup>20</sup>

The model also allows us to decompose the direct and indirect effects of various factors affecting voting in 2010. For instance, age, e-skills,

18 Sex is a categorical variable. Both class and education are continuous variables.

19 Civic skills is a count variable 0-4. However, closer inspection of the data found that it was positively skewed with a z-score of 12.12 for skewness and a large amount of kurtosis. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z test of normality also revealed that the distribution was non-normal. Therefore we log transformed the civic skills to deal with the moderate to excessive amount of skewness.

20 Reading a newspaper is coded as a dummy – reads a newspaper = 1; doesn't read a newspaper = 0. It is also important to note that we ran our analysis with separate dummies for tabloids and broadsheet newspapers but their inclusion made little or no difference to the model findings.

political interest, political efficacy, trust in politicians, partisanship and discussing politics with friends are allowed to condition both on the three latent variables measuring e-campaign participation and vote in 2010. Thus these variables have an effect via these measures of e-campaign participation as well as directly. So for example, part of the effect of political interest is transmitted via the e-campaign participation latent variables. However, the effect of e-campaign participation on voting in 2010 is net of the direct effect of political interest etc. and can be considered as an e-participation effect, albeit partly determined (itself) by these other variables.

The direct effect estimates for these regression models are presented in Table 5<sup>21</sup>. Before discussing this set of final findings it is important to report the fit of the full structural equation model that included Sections A, B and C together, assessed against standard goodness of fit measures. Despite presenting the results in three stages it should be remembered the findings are actually simultaneously estimated and that the breakdown of the results is done simply for clarity of interpretation to address our three research questions. The statistics reveal a good overall fit of our model to the data. The Comparative Fit Index (0.949) and the Root Mean Square of Approximation (0.024) indicate a 'good' model fit (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

Table 5. Regression of 2010 Vote on E-Campaign (E-Party, E-Expressive and E-news) and Control Variables (Full Model)

Variables	Vote 2010 Estimates ( $\beta$ ) (StdYX)	
Sex	-0.10	-.04
Young Age 18-29	-1.48**	-.51
Middle Age 30-44	-0.97**	-.36
Middle/Older Age 45-59	-0.44**	-.16
Read a Newspaper	0.08	.03

21 After running a number of well established tests (including tolerance statistics and variance inflation indicators), we found no evidence of multicollinearity in the model.

Table 5. Continuation

Variables	Vote 2010 Estimates ( $\beta$ ) (StdYX)	
Social Class	0.20**	.19
Education	0.12**	.14
Lots of Political Interest	0.19	.05
Political Efficacy	-0.02	-.05
Trust	0.43*	.11
Civic Skills	0.32	.06
E-Skills	-0.34	-.06
No Partisanship	-0.39**	-.11
Discuss politics with friends	0.16	.06
E-Party	-0.07	-.06
E-Expressive	-0.01	-.01
E-news	0.33**	.30
R2	.41	
CFI	.949	
RMSEA	.024	

Data is weighted. N = 1379. \*\* Significance at the 0.01 level. \* Significance at the 0.05 level. Reference category for Age = Age 60 plus.

Table 5 shows that our final sub-model has a reasonable degree of explanatory power and explains more than forty per cent of the variance in turnout in 2010. The results also confirm the importance of the traditional predictors of vote such as class, age and education although gender and civic skills were not strong drivers. Political attitudes clearly did play a role with those more trusting of politicians being significantly more likely to vote while those less attached to a political party were significantly less likely to participate. Political interest and discussing politics with friends were surprisingly insignificant. Given that both variables were significant predictors of two of the three e-engagement variables (as shown in Table 4) however, it is likely that their effects are being absorbed by our latent variables and now exerting an indirect effect on our dependent variable. Internal political efficacy, reading a

daily newspaper and online skills were also insignificant after controlling for other factors.<sup>22</sup>

Turning to the e-participation variables, we find support for both H1 and H2 but not H3. While higher engagement in e-news activities during the campaign had a significant effect on turnout, the e-party and e-expressive modes of engagement did not. As noted above, however, these insignificant effects we consider to have quite different explanations. Those who are engaging in party related activities online are already highly likely to vote and thus not gaining any additional impetus to vote. Those carrying out the more informal acts associated with the e-expressive mode such as forwarding jokes, news items to friends and family are not as positively oriented toward the political system. It appears that these activities do not bring them any closer to more institutionalized forms of politics.

Despite the lack of support for H3 we do not rule out a mobilising effect of e-expressive participation. It may be that it increases the propensity to engage in other types of informal offline activities such as political consumerism or even protest. It may also lead on to other types of more active online activities which in turn lead to offline participation. This latter interpretation certainly conforms with the findings from the structural modelling of Rojas and Puig-i-Abril (2009) who found no direct effects for e-expressive participation on offline participation but did detect an indirect effect through more active uses of social media to contact family and friends. Due to our reliance on cross-sectional data we were unfortunately unable to test this more sequential and causal pathway between our various modes of online engagement.

By contrast, and again as predicted, those engaging in e-news activities were significantly more likely to vote. Indeed the standardised effect

22 Here we defined internal political efficacy as whether politics was too complicated or not. Conventional theories and models of turnout often define political efficacy as an individual's sense that he/she has the skills and resources to influence the political process. This measure is commonly used in rational choice models of turnout – whether an individual feels there is a chance of being influential or not (see Riker and Ordeshook, 1973; Blais, 2000) – and civic voluntarism where a combination of social characteristics, contexts and psychology are used to explain political participation.



is extremely large, and after age, it was the most important predictor of turnout in the 2010 general election when compared against other variables. The predicted probability of voting for those individuals engaged in e-news seeking is 0.19 holding all other variables at their mean.<sup>23</sup> In addition to higher levels of political interest we also find that those consuming e-news generally trust politicians and feel that they understand politics but do not feel close to a political party. As such we can see them as a version of ‘critical citizens’ (NORRIS, 1999) in that they are detached from partisan politics but not alienated from the political system as a whole and open to persuasion by the campaign and information that they access online.

## Conclusions

The emergence of a new channel for engagement in politics in the form of digital media has raised new questions about the multi-dimensional nature of political participation. Does online participation differentiate or cluster into distinctive modes in the manner of offline participation? If so, are all modes created equal in terms of their mobilizing potential or are some more likely to bring new ‘faces’ in the political process? Finally how far does each type link into engagement in offline politics and particularly its conventional forms? Is e-participation helping to revive a commitment to the representative process? In this paper we have sought to address these questions by offering a more sophisticated measurement of e-campaign participation which has then been used to test its mobilisation effects on offline involvement, here defined as voting.

Using structural equation modelling, we first re-tested a typology that classified e-campaign behaviours into different modes taking into account two characteristics – level of active engagement required and the target of the behaviour (i.e. formal or informal). Our results supported

23 Mplus does not provide probabilities. However, it is possible to translate probit coefficients into probabilities using the formula:  $\text{prob}(y=1) = f(-\text{threshold} + b_1^*x_1 + b_2^*x_2 + b_3^*x_3 \dots)$ , where  $f$  is the cumulative normal distribution function and the threshold value is taken from the final Mplus output (a negative sign is transformed into a positive sign and vice versa). The predicted probabilities were derived from the final model (Table 5).

the differentiation of e-campaign activities into three main types: e-party, which centred on involvement with official campaign actors but in more self-organized and autonomous ways; e-expressive which involved interaction in public and unofficial forums with peers and other citizens to voice one's political views, e-news consumption of online news about the election emerged as a third distinct mode of engagement.

In a second step we identified the characteristics of those engaging in each of the three modes of e-campaign activity. Our findings supported the idea that they formed distinct modes of political activity in that those engaging in them exhibited certain socio-political differences. In particular the e-expressive type of participation appealed more to the average voter i.e. those who were less engaged and positively oriented toward the political system than was the case for our other two modes. We interpreted this as signalling that e-expressive forms of activity may provide a potentially new channel to engage a wider group of citizens in the political process and thereby hold a stronger mobilising potential than the other types of online participatory engagement available to people. The e-party and e-news modes were somewhat closer to the norm of conventional participants offline, although the younger age profile of both modes, particularly the e-party showed how new media technologies may be creating a new group of younger digital party activists.

Finally, we tested the mobilising effect of these different forms of e-campaign participation on voting in the 2010 UK general election. In line with a growing number of studies and our profiling of those engaging in e-news gathering activities we found this activity to be significantly linked to an increased likelihood of voting, confirming a mobilising potential for internet use in this regard. Engagement in the e-expressive and e-party modes, however, were found to have no effect on individuals' likelihood of voting. This finding is in line with our expectations set out in H2. Those people who undertake e-party activities are already highly political motivated and thus primed to vote. The lack of a connection between e-expressive activities and voting is different however in that we know this type of engagement attracts a broader group

of non-traditional participants. As such while it may be mobilizing people to participate in the campaign it does not appear to then stimulate them to follow through and turnout to vote.

The results are significant both conceptually and methodologically. First, they confirm that e-participation is not a homogenous or uni-dimensional concept but should be disaggregated into coherent clusters of activity, as with offline participation. Second, while some of these types of e-participation attract already active citizens, others draw in the less politically engaged and while they are not necessarily increasing their interest in voting, they may be raising levels of political engagement and support for the system in other subtler and more diffuse ways. Finally, despite being undertaken largely by those who are highly interested and supportive of the political system, accessing news and information about the election does appear to increase individuals' likelihood of voting. Viewed in the light of other recent studies from the U.S. (BOULIANNE, 2011; HAMILTON; TOLBERT, 2012) that have reported significant effects of online campaign information on individuals interest in the election and turnout using panel data (thereby controlling for endogeneity), such findings give an important additional boost to the mobilizing effects of internet use in a new electoral context. Further work is needed to look into the positive spiral of involvement detected here between attention to online news and information and political interest. In particular it will be important to probe the democratizing implications of such trends. If online resources are increasing interest and turnout primarily among those who are already attentive to the political system, then a reinforcement of participatory biases may be the end result, thus countering, if not challenging claims for mobilisation.

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## Political autonomy as a communicative experience of bricolage and resistance practices in gambiarra<sup>1</sup>

### Autonomia política como experiência comunicativa de bricolagem e práticas de resistência na gambiarra

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**Abstract:** *This paper aims to reflect about a specific way of bricolage, the gambiarra, and its connections with: a) aesthetic-political processes of constitution of the self-realization and autonomy of the subjects, and b) a poetics of the knowledge that uses bricolage to expand languages, bodies and objects beyond pre-fixed scripts that limit perspectives and block questioning and resistance. Firstly, we outline the relationship between the construction of autonomy and bricolage by looking at the ways in which gambiarra defines specific knowledge and lifestyles in Cuba. Then we analyze how the bricolage created in the manifestations of the Brazilian secondary schools in 2015 led to a variation of existing discourses and allowed to reinvent their enunciation, by releasing words, images and signs from their common uses.*

**Keywords:** *bricolage; gambiarra; autonomy; resistance; literacy.*

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**Resumo:** *Este trabalho pretende refletir acerca de um modo específico de bricolagem, a gambiarra, em seus entrelaçamentos com: a) processos estético-políticos de constituição da autorrealização e autonomia dos sujeitos; b) uma poética do conhecimento que se serve da bricolagem para libertar linguagens, corpos e objetos de roteiros e scripts valorativos que engessam o olhar e impedem questionamentos e resistências. Aborda-se primeiramente a relação entre a construção da autonomia e a bricolagem através do modo como a gambiarra define modos de fazer e viver em Cuba. Em seguida, se analisa como, nas manifestações dos secundaristas em 2015, a bricolagem permitiu variar as formas dos enunciados existentes e reinventar suas coordenadas de enunciação, libertando palavras, imagens, signos de suas funcionalidades habituais.*

**Palavras-chave:** *bricolagem; gambiarra; autonomia; resistência; literaridade.*

## Introduction

There are many forms of knowledge; Some are well structured, cartesian, built on fields of technoscience, filled with certainty and proof, structured in the exhaustive experimentation and, naturally, have their value recognized. However, we know that to that we add (hybridize, derive, counterpose) other knowledges originated in the urgency of daily life structured before numberless challenges we face in our day to day life. This knowledge, less systematized, slightly without structure and very intuitive, is more out of control and, at the same time, creative and daring because it defies these configured knowledge, open space for invention, creation, appropriation, re-creation and subversions of materials, objects and symbols of our more immediate surrounding. These solutions - inventions filled with talent and a bold, subversive sophistication - populate our ways of realizing, producing and making the daily routine happen.

These two forms of knowledge were intensely discussed in books of different important thinkers of the 20th century, as the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, which put in opposition the well-articulated, methodic and systematic knowledge - engineering, for example - and a more intuitive knowledge, privileging improvisation and the collage of different materials. There arises the image of the *bricoleur*, word originated from *bricolage*, a set of activities (domestic repair, painting, handicraft, decoration, gardening, etc.) developed for your own use, without using specialized labor.

Jacques Derrida (2013), dealing with the issue of language and its radical appropriation of Lévi-Strauss text, sees in that form of knowledge built by the bricoleur an important form of singularity in the construction of discourses and the appropriation of language in the way it absorbs, rearticulates and re-signifies meanings.

Beyond the field of language and approaching our daily experience, what these authors point out, somehow, is the libertarian character of the bricoleur, that, with his creative, intuitive and affectionate knowledge, accumulated in the most direct experience with reality, inserts

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himself into the world and rearticulates powers instituted by specialized knowledge. He subverts, appropriates and makes any operation, mundane as it may be, a space for invasion.

There is political potential in the gesture of bricolage: the choice of materials, the encounter of semantics, syntax, textures and forms puts in relation heterogeneous elements capable of generating estrangement and suspension (suspicion) of familiarity. The bricoleur has knowledge and dominion of codes of perception, recognition and value of virtualities contained in different materials, signs and objects using them for an inventive and singular elaboration of new codes and objects. We can define their creative gesture through the reflection made by Agamben in *Means without an end* (2000, p. 56): “there is a gesture when we become subjects of an action, when we make them ours. It is the subjectivation of the gesture that makes the difference: the actor doesn’t act, it is authorized in gesture - he is not the author of gesture, but he becomes author through gesture”.

The agency of the bricoleur has two dimensions that we would like to reinforce in this study: (i) the construction of the political autonomy; (ii) the production of smaller forms of resistance (DELEUZE e GUATTARI, 2014) sustained by experimentation and by the invention of dissent statements and scenes of enunciation (RANCIÈRE, 2000a).

To rework codes, boards of meaning and schemes of appreciation and valorization, it implies manipulating signs, indagating language, searching for their own language, configuring a statement and, with it, another form of enunciation, assuming responsibility for it. This understanding of the gesture of bricolage considers as central the question of autonomy and capacities of self-realization of subjects in adverse conditions and through embarrassments of power and domination. In the first part of the article, we talk about the relationship between the construction of autonomy and bricolage through the way gambiarra defines forms of doing and living in Cuba.

The second part of our argument brings emphasis to the dynamic of resistance linked to bricolage. Performing an action that implies the

creation of something singular through a mix of references is to destitute objects, words, bodies of a consensual, naturalizing designation that seeks to attribute each thing a utility, a reason and a value. Bricolage varies forms of existing statements and reinvents its coordinates of enunciation. In this sense, it frees objects, words, images, signs of their traditional functionalities, giving them the opportunity to be something else and/or a part of something that did not exist before. This movement enables that the classificatory relationship “one thing, one name” give place to the excess of names and, with that, provokes a short circuit in the relationships of power and order. In this part of the text, we work with the concept of literality, present in the studies of Jacques Rancière, linking it with a brief reflection about enunciative forms used in the movement of high schoolers in São Paulo in 2015, that happened after the government announced an educational reform.

The approximation between experiences and transforming potencies of *gambiarra* in Cuba and in São Paulo tend to reveal how, in the Latin American context, the improvisation and risk taken in contexts of social, political and economic precariousness constitute the “space established between order and disorder, between contention and looseness facing the weight of norm” (MONTEIRO, 2018, p. 197). The difficult economic and political transition in Cuba and the deepening of the predatory neoliberal model in Brazil accentuate the fact that the adjectives “vulnerable” and “precarious” serve to stigmatize and regulate (with the syntax of risk and self-government/self-control) groups and people. However, if re-signified, these terms seem to attend our wider efforts of politizing state injury, suffering and violences that reduce and control transforming desires and agencies. As Monteiro reinforces (2018, p. 221-222):

Politics, in a moment like this, says about the capacity of keep producing through adversity, making something with what is most precarious, and, therefore, most precious, grabbing what is at hand. If on one hand, it is not important to reduce the future to a simple *gambiarra*, on the

other, the power of precariousness is the engine of any gesture that point towards the new.

Under this aspect, the vulnerable, precarious political subject cannot be defined as a victim, dependent, inept. Precariousness is not a concept essentially associated to suffering and destitution, neither it uniquely defines a propension of being susceptible to damage. There is potentialities and ambiguities in this notion that must be considered. Lazzarato (2006, p. 218), for example, says that the precarious subject remains in the indefinition, in the frontier between worker and unemployed, artist and bricoleur, configuring a form of life in which “relationships are not coded, because they are, in a contradictory and simultaneous way, a source of political subjectification, economic exploration and an occasion to be exploited”. According to him, the precarious has a subject not entirely coded by neoliberalism and, because of that, not institutionalized and standardized, having the chance to build multiple struggles with their identities to become. Discoded, the precarious in Cuba and in Brazil, adult and young, are “schizo-revolutionary” (PELBART, 2002), building themselves and their experimentations through insurgent gambiarras.

### **Autonomy and bricolage**

Autonomy, principle that defends the sovereignty of individuals and groups against the impositions and violences threatened upon them, is not related to individualism or to self-sufficiency that erases the particularities of social relationships that constitute subjects’ trajectories and limit their choices and preferences. It also cannot be thought separately from cultural and social aspects. Instead, its construction is intersubjective and demands that we think about: a) power relations; elements linked to value, practices and forms of subjectivation; c) communicative competences originated in interactive networks that people establish with one another; d) experiences (BIROLI, 2012, 2013). The dimension of experience that is interesting to us is closer to where we are, once we believe all subjects develop their autonomy in adverse conditions

marked by numberless embarrassments and limitations of power. However, what is going to differentiate them in terms of accomplishment of autonomy is the way they find/create exits for their struggles, and, often, producing it under the form of *gambiarra*.

The autonomous subject must be capable of producing meaning while gathering fragments of their experiences. They must also be able to see themselves as author of their own story and their identities, making decisions that are not restricted to the more socially available alternative, but evidencing a complex unfolding of social patterns and relations in which they are positioned. Autonomy involves, thus, a delicate game between identification of embarrassments of action and the definition of possibilities of action through the valorization of experiences not entirely identified by domination patterns (BIROLI, 2013). But it is also a result of an ethical process, in which our realizations are reached always in interdependence, and, because of that, always in conditions of vulnerability (exposition to the other). Reaching autonomy implies assuming responsibility derived from our connections, needs and bonds, something that requires a gaze and a care for situations, encounters, affections and practices of hearing that involves the contact with alterity (BUTLER, 2016).

In other words, autonomy refers both to the conditions in which choices are made and self-determination of subjects, revealing how they handle, in their concrete experience, with power asymmetries and barriers imposed to their emancipation. A demanding view of autonomy, disregarding vulnerabilities and precarities that cross lives differently, can erase the autonomic potential of their varied projects when neglecting opportunities and the capacity of self-realization are not the same for everyone. Even if subjects have access to the same network of goods and infrastructure, they have different lives, capacities, the possible *gambiarra*s, as well as the deprivations and repressions (COLE, 2016), which will alter their conception of injustice and the limits and possibilities of resistance.

Thus, primarily, the question would be “to know which resources, material and symbolic, are available in which the individuals are constituted as subject of their lives (BIROLI, 2016, p. 44). And, secondarily, ask about how subjects relate, mount and articulate these resources in a way to build plausible alternatives to obstacles and problems presented to them.

In this sense, autonomous identity projects are products of bricolage that combine singularities and common conditions, personal investment and contributions coming from relations, revealing a frontier between structural determinations and different forms of experience, of positionings and social locations that produce cracks in the forms of reproduction of oppression and precariousness.

### **Possibilities and embarrassments to the antagonistic action in Cuba**

The international media discourse tends to frame the Cuban Revolution as a homogeneous image of a social process that has changed a lot throughout six decades. The 60's and 70's brought structural transformations that radicalized the political project in the country. In the 80's, the decision of a socialist future under the economic protection of URSS was consolidated. It seemed that socialism became a viable option to the world. However, the dissolution of the European communist bloc, in 1989, brought a huge challenge for Cubans. The cut of soviet supplies for the Caribbean nation, the scarce development of the internal economy and financial sanctions imposed by the United States and other capitalist countries made Cuba enter a profound economic crisis in the 90's.

Although this phenomenon had been widely studied through an economic perspective, other authors point that the 90's of hardship took them to question the foundation of legitimacy of the Cuban political system and contributed for the renaissance of civil society (BOBES, 2013). The great challenge became not only defending themselves from



external attacks, but also surviving the daily life in favor of a national political project. This capacity of resistance translated into small mundane practices that, throughout the years, became a lifestyle marked by the particular presence of *gambiarra*, bricolage, innovation.

Thus, through a specific political scenario, the constant appeal to survival resources led Cubans to recognize themselves in the popular imaginary as creative, ingenious and invincible beings. It is also possible that these are intrinsic characteristics of the Cuban society that, facing a scenario of adversities, naturally emerged as a response mechanism. Below, we propose a brief analysis of some examples that illustrate how *gambiarra* was instituted as a daily tactics for Cubans to solve the most basic problems and how that relates with their exercise of building autonomy.

Most of the registers there is about “Cuban inventions” refer to basic needs: food, transportation, energy, protection against high temperatures, etc. The lack of fuel in the country created constant cuts of energy that lasted almost the entire day. The narratives around the Cuban “blackouts” gained importance in the construction of memory about that time, symbolically acting in an extraordinary capacity of resistance and assimilation of economic hardship. A Cuban blogger explains how they used to build artisanal energy centrals with car batteries: “the essential artifacts of connection for those centrals were the refrigerator and the TV set. The first, for obvious reasons; the second was necessary for watching Brazilian telenovelas, which were almost exclusively the only source of fun at that time” (ÁLVAREZ, 2015, our translation).

Another lead character of that story is known popularly as *chismosa* (gossip), metaphoric name that describes a lamp built with a glass jar, kerosene, threads of fabric and old aluminum tubes for toothpaste. The *chismosa*, always vigilant during long periods of darkness, became the most common source of light in Cuban nights in the 90's.<sup>6</sup>

6 All the images used in this study come from the same source: *Te presento 20 imágenes...* (2015).

Image 1 - Improvised lamp known as *chismosa* (gossip).

It is interesting to observe here the relevance acquired from the process of transformation, the means to reach an end, the materiality reformed by human intelligence subverting a pre-established common order, a new relationship emerging between the parts and the whole. There is a gesture of implicit subversion in the conception that “*gambiarra*, in an effort to integrate fragments, even if disparate, so that form and functions are fulfilled, performs innovative simulacra” (SEDL-MAYER, 2017, p. 65).

The notion of interaction of individuals with the world that surround us marks a political dimension of *gambiarra*. Sedlmayer (2017) retrieves the studies of Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben to indicate the presence of a recuperation that deactivates the old use of things through the creation of a new use. This restriction of common use can happen through different procedures that mark singularity of each experience, always permeated through discovery - in this case, for the attribution of new specific functionalities to objects available in the world where the subjects are developed.

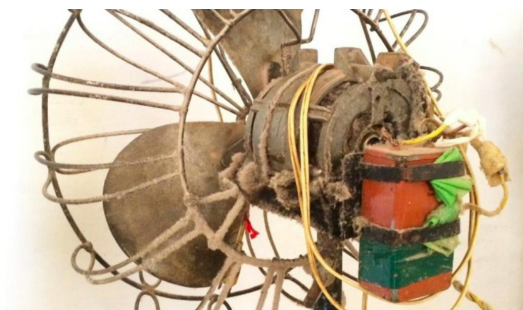
A variety of innovations was also developed around fans due to the intense heat of the island. The new class of appliances was created with helixes made of vinyl records and put on Russian fans (Image 2) or engines of Russian washing machine adapted to old metal fans (Image 3).

These and other examples have been incorporated in the discourse of contemporary artists that are thematic to recent history of the country, as it is the case of the project “Technologic disobedience”, developed by Ernesto Oroza (2016b).

Image 2 - Artisanal fans based in a Russian model.



Image 3 - Fan with Russian washing machine engine Aurika 70.



That way, the productive alliance of Cuba with soviet countries left an inheritance of Russian technology in the island that, due to its durability, was constantly reused for other purposes. The engines of the popular washing machines Aurika 70 found new uses in the structure of equipment for small businesses, such as sanders for shoe doctors, key-copying machine, lawn mower and every type of electric instrument (OROZA, 2016a). In this sense, an aesthetic proper of soviet countries

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became mundane in the island beyond the politic rupture with URSS, as memory, maybe, of a past with economic dependence that, somehow, shaped the face of crisis.

Reusing engines from washing machines makes an intent of generalizing functions of one part of the whole through the evaluation of possibilities and choice for similarity. In this reflexive exercise, the engine is dislocated from the appliance as a whole and is considered only for its primary characteristic. If Cubans learned to live with only the essential in life (something that may be unthinkable for citizens born in a capitalist system), that is due, to a great extent, to a type of learning that is necessary to differentiate the essential from the disposable.

The issue of reformulating uses, the gambiarra, also occupied the main character in the field of Cuban cuisine. The pork chop made with seasoned grapefruit skin is almost a symbol of the time (ÁLVAREZ, 2015), as well as other solutions to the lack of food and equipment for cooking. The provisional becomes permanent once this inventiveness transforms, through communicative exchanges spread throughout time, in collective learning, reconfiguring the meaning of gambiarra.

The creative gesture which represents gambiarra generally brings an intrinsic relationship not only to a state of need or limitation of options, but with the ephemeral sense of this type of solution and its impact in the construction of autonomous agencies. The agency and its protagonism of subject's lack autonomy when their preferences and choices are determined by situational, contextual, political, cultural or relationship components, that escape their control. It is important, in these cases, to always consider the contexts and asymmetries of resources and opportunities that cross subject choices. To define autonomy, we do not consider only the distinction between voluntary choices and coercive choices, as if among them there wasn't an array of issues intertwined. Choices are not made in an isolated manner, exempt from external interventions, but they constitute a trajectory linked to the constant definition and re-definition of who we are.

Image 4 - Pressure cooker keeping pressure with spoons.



Image 5 - Iron used as a stove for a coffee maker.



Choices are made in situations of restriction, coaction and embarrassment, but that doesn't mean people stop acting and taking decisions in their own terms or they don't produce resistance facing dominant codes (SCOTT, 1990). However, not always the consideration of frontiers between free decision and embarrassments reflect the complexity of elements in place when we talk about the interfaces between autonomy

and oppression. There are varied arrangements in the process of construction of autonomy (BIROLI, 2012) and all of them, to some extent, work with tactics and bricolages that take out words and objects of the position they are inserted in the consensual sensitive board defined by a dominant network of significations, making difficult to locate their position on the system of political coordinates where they usually are localized (RANCIÈRE, 2012).

Currently, many tourists visiting Cuba are surprised with the amount of vintage American cars (from 1940's and 1950's) riding the streets as a result of adaptations in their mechanic system. The construction of "buses" with parts of trucks and artisanal boats used for illegal immigration of Cubans to Florida (EUA) are also examples of singular means of transportation developed in extreme conditions.

Image 6 - Bus made with parts of a truck.





Image 7 - Artisanal boat used by Cubans in the sea migration to the United States.



The originality is certainly a distinctive trace of *gambiarra* as expression of vitality, of existential manifestation (SEDLMAYER, 2017). It carries multiple senses built in the act of doing, reading and decoding a situation of conflict present that can reach even the limits of extraordinary, of incredible. Therefore, *gambiarra* also acts as an organizational element of a specific memory and an experience, sewing singular moments that transmit the limits between reality and imagination.

In the terrain of technology, there were also innovative solutions as television antennas made out of aluminum trays (Image 8) and the replacement, in many cases, of a type of material or artifact for other similar one (Image 9). The attempts of cheating technologic limitations are still very frequent in Cuba. External cultural influences have reconfigured the way of thinking of the population and generating a crescent curiosity for technologic apparatus and their deviant functionalities.

In this case, *gambiarra* does not directly relate with a vocation for recycling or with the exotism and spectacularization that may be incorporated as interpretations of similar practices. However, the Cuban experience ends up romanticizing the socialist economic experience and fits in an interpretation of contestation in the capitalist consumption style, although it was only a collateral result.

[In the gambiarra], the logic of consumption meets the affirmation of a place on the edge, supported by the quantification, consumerism, because there you do not change a faucet, you don't buy a new umbrella, you don't get a new boot, and you don't throw away a lid that cannot close a pan anymore (SEDLMAYER, 2017, p. 61).

Image 8 - TV antenna made with aluminum trays.



Image 9 - Remote control with battery adaptation.



The gambiarra attitude of Cubans can be read in many ways. It was a supportive attitude of a people in defense of their political ideals, but maybe, after some time, it became something to conform, creating a process of accommodation that transforms the doing in suffering. In any way, the image of gambiarra in Cuba has the merit of expressing what can be spontaneous in a people that works majorly guided by state



directives. The gambiarra, in this case, embodies the image of deficiency in constant tension with autonomic processes of resistance.

But it is important to highlight that life isn't only a "resource" to be managed through the lenses of State, institutions, statistics of mortality, as described by Foucault (1980) coining the term biopower. Life must be apprehended from within, in the flesh of daily experience of subjects. Foucault, in its writings of the end of the 70's and the beginning of the 80's, interrogates the biopower in search of what, in life, resists to him the creation in forms of subjectivation that escape biopower. The ethical relationship with oneself and others is, according to him, the source of emancipation and transformative creation, implied in all power relations: However, he only tangencies this discussion around a potency of life, without having enough time to advance the insights that integrate volumes of utterations and writings.

It is in this point that the study of Hardt and Negri (2000) deserves our attention, because they base their study in the reflection of Foucault to bring a new meaning to the concepts of biopower and biopolitics: against the reproduction and government of ways of life and pre-approved consciences, they detect the biopotency of relationships of cooperation and hospitality, the creative agencies and the political and aesthetic bonds. With an argumentation very tuned to the propositions of Deleuze and Guattari (2014), Hardt and Negri say that life and the living being are the nodal points for new political fights. In this sense, beyond institutional frameworks, narratives and communicative exchange are engendered that must become object of investigation of works that have as focus unveiling flows of power that, under the pretext of empowering, emancipating and ensuring "sovereignty" to marginalized subjects end up exposing and deepening violences, moral sufferings and identity damages.

According to these authors, it is imperative to ask ourselves in what ways, within the machine of production of subjectivities, new forms of inventing valorizations and self-valorizations of forms of living can arise. What politics does to life and lives, to them, is not only a matter of

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discourse and technologies, strategies and practices. It is also a matter of a concrete way as individuals and groups are treated, under which principles and in what name of what moral, frequently implying inequalities and lack of recognition.

Gambiarra, while biopotency, is related to the permanent experimentation, with new forms of cooperation, new wishes, new beliefs and other collective subjectivities (PELBART, 2002). In the following section, we will make a brief reflection about agencies and insurgent bricolages that put in question the Foucaultian biopolitical monitoring.

### **Literality and bricolage of codes in urban manifestations and insurgences**

Gambiarra, when it interpellates us through its unsettling weirdness, takes shape in the appropriation of characteristics of discourses/objects previously existent in the creation of new symbolic productions. A creation is revealed, according to Sedlmayer (2017), double to the extent in it is emerged something re-signified, while exposing an identity of the bricoleur through the choices he makes.

Under that perspective, the notion of bricolage is closer to a poetic of knowledge (RANCIÈRE, 2000a), therefore, a re-organization and (re)creation of perceptions accepted in society, reorganized all forms of knowing and learning. In his book, *The night of the proletariat*, Rancière investigates letters and documents written by French workers in the 19th century that used to create, read, and work their own language at the time they would have to sleep. According to him, a worker reaches, through reading and writing, the capacity of connecting oneself to a community sensible partial, random and that does not necessarily link to its social status, but it allows little inventions in the act of making stories, objects and statements circulate, multiplying the possible rationalities in the gesture of giving a singular shape to the capacity of doing and saying it belongs to everyone. The poetics of knowledge consists, then, in an operation in the language and with the language that takes off

objects, narratives and bodies of a status that the social or cultural history attributed to them, allowing the emergency of an excess of names, words and uses.

The development of intellectuality of the worker and the activities of reading and writing performed during the night reveal a short-circuit in the circulation hierarchized of knowledge and statements. The gesture of writing means to have access to a communicative dynamic in which words become orphans, available to all, without being guided by the voice of a master that pretendedly knows how they should be related to things and who should have the right or not to make an appropriate use of them. Writing frees people from a relationship given between symbols and bodies, enabling the statement to everyone (RANCIÈRE, 2000b, 2006, 2009).

One of the most evident manifestations in the poetic of knowledge, according to Rancière, is literality, described by him as a form of circulation of writing based in an excess of words, a principle of disorder, a potentiality common of individual and collective experience, the power of demos to alter the distribution of words (political sharing of sensitive). The issue of politics of literality in Rancière is not linked to speech or writing, but to accessibility and availability of writing (action of writing) to everyone. The excess of words defies a system that conditions the expression and the reception of texts and images.

This excess of words, to which I call literality, interrupts the relationship between an order of speech and its social function. In other words, literality refers, at the same time, to an excess of words available in relation to the thing that was named: the excess related to the requirements for the production of life; and, finally, to the excess of words facing modes of communication that work to legitimate the adequate order itself (RANCIÈRE, 2000a, p. 115).

However, literality isn't just the excess that configures a potency that allows a recombination of signs capable of destabilizing evidences of dominant discursive registers: it is the exercise of the work with language, bricolage with signs and statements, enabling other arrangements and

other forms of learning the visible and its signification. The speakers in condition of equality (without having their status on the line), use experimentally the writing to create “a certain common space, a form of circulation of language and thinking that does not have nor a legitimate emitter nor a specific receptor, nor a regulated mode of transmission (RANCIÈRE, 2000b, p. 12).

An example of bricolage that subverts consensual meanings of circulation of words is the elaboration of handwritten posters made by high schoolers in a protest against the announcement of a educational rearrangement made by the São Paulo government in September 2015, threatening to close 94 schools and affect other 56 in all state. When taking to themselves the gesture of inventing and making circulate their own stories, they put into practice the same gesture of the workers who got her letters analyzed by Rancière; a form of circulation of the written word which belongs to the democratic sharing of sensitive.

In the protest of young high schoolers, especially those from 2015<sup>7</sup>, the poster certainly is an extremely potent minority art. It is possible to establish an interesting relationship between literality and the concept of a “smaller literature” coined by Deleuze and Guattari (2014). A smaller literature is defined by them as an “incorrect” syntaxis” (DELEUZE and GUATTARI, 2014, p. 40), de-territorialized: a syntaxis to scream and also to “give the scream a syntaxis”. Maybe a syntaxis that, at the same time, connects and disconnects words in its habitual use, which operates showing what can be said and what can't. A syntaxis that reveals the collective value of enunciation that forges the means of putting into practice a solidary and insurgent sensitivity.

7 On September 23rd, 2015, the main newspapers talked about the program of educational reform that would transfer, in the following year, over one million students so that schools could be divided by cycles. As consequence of this measure, over 150 schools would be affected, with the end of shifts and cycles (MONTEIRO, 2015).

Image 10 - News published in the website Jornalistas Livres (TATEMOTO, 2015).



Photo by: Mídia Ninja.

Made then and there, composed by different materials, handwritten, the poster (carried along with moving bodies) reveals the mode the high schoolers produced a written experience separated from the social network (which, as free as they appear, are filled by capital-controlling flows) and the traditional media. The gesture itself of making the poster and carrying it along is political, once politics of writing consists of a form of aesthetic experience based in the liberation of word from its habitual flows of production and circulation and in the equality installed when anyone can be their owner without the need of following a new script or specific formulas of enunciation. It is about a sensory and expressive equality instead of only a legal or economic equality.

The written and creative register of demands of protesters in posters can be evaluated, according to Rancière (1995), as an act associated to the insurgent body to the spoken word, liberating the statement from the legitimate modes of speaking and listening. The words written in posters can be appropriated by anyone, configured into a new scene of speech, put in display, in addition to characterizing the simultaneous indetermination of the original reference of the statement and the identity

of the author. The smaller writing shuffles any ordered relationship of doing, seeing and saying.

Posters and performances of high schoolers show how creativity, language and materiality of expression (language, poiesis, production) compose, to Rancière (2009), the central triad for emancipation and autonomy of subjects. According to him, each one has to find out for themselves, in their own language and syntaxis, the relationships and accesses to a common world. It is through the work with language (as well as with literature), bricolage and gambiarra with codes (the size of the letter and the insurgent bodies), that we perceive a poetic of creation of dissent scenes in which subjects and objects that before were not figured become visible and have their words considered valid.

The speech expressed in posters establishes an affectionate narrative of identity in which the self is established as lead character from which it will be performed the reflective appropriation of alterity and the world. This is the basic political difference between narrating and being narrated through others: the perspective of narrating, the centrality, even if momentaneous, of who writes their own history dislocate lines of forces constituent of any narrative for the narrating subject, in a condition turned eccentric in relation to dominant narratives within a society. It is because of that that, for young people, narrating their own life, telling their own story - in opposition to narrative normalizations that constitute them as an alterity in a story that is equally not theirs - seem to be an essential condition for the political life drawn in the conversational threads of daily life.

Bodies and faces majorly female appear in Image 10, as well as the words in the poster in the foreground, reveals the emergency of a collective political subject mobilized not for a social identity declared for its deficit, but for the challenge given “to the forms of police and economy power that incessantly kidnap the chances one has to have a visible life.” (BUTLER, 20016, p. 60), without settling with survival.

Because of that, the assembly and the articulations allow the arrival of youth as act of word, a minority act of sovereignty and autonomy working

against the obvious, natural disposition of bodies and forms of enunciation. The assembly, according to Butler (2016), comprises a plurality of bodies mobilized in a form of demonstration of resistance and equality in front of a crescent inequality. She speaks through a plurality of faces and bodies that configures actions and produces a people through “shared self-designation with others” (BUTLER, 2016, p. 59). A people and its formation do not need, according to Butler, an unity, but it has its emergency in a set of debates in which defines what it wants and what agencies it will use. The formation of a people is an experimentation that evidences “the potential joy of the daily recomposing of the world [...] Whenever we surrender ourselves to creation, experimentation and invention with what we have at hand, and not with something we lack” (MONTEIRO, 2018, p. 198-200).

Bodies in articulation, in alliance, take public spaces or rebel in consonance, even if in isolation, and can fight against its fixation in categories, against the reification of political frameworks that retain them in positions without agency and sovereignty. According to her, bodies gathered in assembly perform an act of sovereignty and resistance through its vulnerability, and, with that, the performativity of vulnerable bodies brings with oneself a form of acting, speaking, exposing and demanding that require another configuration of relations that make life possible, potent and valuable.

## Final considerations

The constitution of an emancipated political subject implies the search for autonomy through personal investment - working your own language and expressing yourself with authenticity, ethics and commitment (FOUCAULT, 1994, 1995) -, but also a meeting with others - a meeting that is not calm but filled with tension and violences. There is, in this conception, the idea that the agency of subjects takes shape in concrete contexts of life and experience, articulated by beam of relationships, asymmetries and potentialities that impede the consideration of subject as isolated agents, far from relational and communicative practices

that help them define and defend interests and preferences. Thus, the subjectivation requires articulation and combination between diverse elements that move the agency of subjects. It can be approximated to an exercise of constant bricolage between what happened and what is coming, between hegemony and minority, between current and virtual.

The capacity of moral autonomous agency of subjects is connected with the definition of self through the definition of lifestyle one wants to live and how the subjects seek to make it possible. However, there is numberless limits and obstacles for the relational construction of autonomy, making it difficult the concrete conditions of its effectivation. Autonomy involves the creation and invention of specific modes of being/existing/appearing in front of others despite contingencies and asymmetries producer of inequality and suffering, modes of being and living that are balanced between strategic relationships (most common form of relationship in our daily life, marked by a mixture of reception of the other and violence against the other) and relations of domination (in which the power over the other do not let relationships to be flexible to change). In this case, the political dimension of *gambiarra* is presented as an “despite of”: a resistance outlined through discovery, attempts, inventiveness and experimentation of individuals that constant re-elaborate their possibilities, languages and outcomes. Despite the different asymmetries and inequalities, tactics of *gambiarra* have an impact in the definition of possibilities, ambitions and choices effectively available for the individuals.



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## Rio favelas in musical comedy films: from cradle of samba to public problem<sup>1</sup>

### As favelas cariocas nas chanchadas: de berço do samba a problema público

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**Abstract:** *This article draws a timeline of the representation of Rio's favelas in Brazilian musical comedy films, known as chanchadas, from 30s to early 60s. With rare exceptions like the film Favela dos meus amores (1935), we point out to the most constant presence of the favela as a staged scenario in the studios in musical performances of films released until the mid-50s. Taking as a milestone the film Depois eu conto (1956), favela representation is increasingly politicized in the genre until the end of the decade. Surrounded by controversy about the removal of favelas and the social activity of Catholic Church in transforming this type of popular housing into a "public problem", we analyse Três colegas de batina (1961), in which a favela acquired great importance for its plot, but with an ideological discourse distinct from the best-known films of the Cinema Novo movement.*

**Keywords:** *chanchada; favela; church; samba; cinema.*

**Resumo:** *Este artigo traça um panorama histórico da representação das favelas cariocas nas comédias musicais cinematográficas brasileiras, conhecidas como chanchadas, dos anos 1930 ao início da década de 1960. Com raras*

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*exceções, como a do filme Favela dos meus amores (1935), apontamos a presença mais constante da favela como cenário reproduzido em estúdio em números musicais das chanchadas lançadas até meados dos anos 1950. Tomando como marco o filme Depois eu conto (1956), a representação da favela passa a ser cada vez mais politizada no gênero. Em meio às polêmicas sobre as remoções das favelas e a atuação social da Igreja católica na transformação desse tipo de habitação popular em “problema público”, analisamos Três colegas de batina (1961), em que uma favela adquire grande importância na trama, mas com um discurso ideológico distinto dos mais conhecidos filmes dos diretores do Cinema Novo.*

**Palavras-chave:** *chanchada; favela; Igreja; samba; cinema.*

## Introduction

This article draws a timeline of representation of Rio's favelas in musical comedy films, known as *chanchadas*, from the 30's to early 60's. We are aware of possible market limitations of studies of representation in film, as the risk of essentialism or the moral demand for positive images (STAM, 2003, p. 303-304). In our case, we seek to have a careful look towards cinema as an artistic creation, but also as a social practice historically localized. Avoiding an a-historicism when analyzing the different forms of portrait of the favelas in a wide set of Brazilian films released between three decades, we drive our attention towards the historic instabilities of representations and for the different voices at stake. As Robert Stam (2003, p. 305) indicates: "It is not enough to say that art is built. We have to ask: built for whom and in conjunction with which ideology and discourse?"

In this trajectory, the starting point is to point out how the favela was approached by the Brazilian cinema, in general, and by *chanchadas*, specifically, through performers that did not belong to those communities. But even in these movies, marked by an outside look, there are significant differences, even if it is possible to point patterns and tendencies. Thus, with rare exceptions, as the film *Favela dos meus amores* (1935), we point towards the most constant presence of the favela as a staged scenario in musical performances in films released until mid-50's. Taking as a milestone the film *Depois eu conto* (1956), we indicate the alteration in the favela representation, which becomes increasingly politicized in the genre. Surrounded by controversy about the removal of favelas and the social action of the catholic church in the transformation of this type of popular housing into a "public problem", we analyze in detail *Três colegas de batina* (1961). In this *chanchada*, a favela acquires great importance in the story, but with a different ideologic discourse from the most known movies from directors of the Cinema Novo movement.<sup>4</sup>

4 Confronting the favela representation in contemporary Brazilian cinema and films from the 1950's and 1960's, the researcher Ivana Bentes (2007, p. 203) practically restricts her comparison to films of the Cinema Novo movement and the French production *Orfeu no Carnaval* (Marcel Camus, 1959), saying that "chanchadas explored the wealthiest parts of Rio de Janeiro:

## Favela as a cradle of samba

In the 30's, with the consolidation of sound film, the Brazilian fictional cinematographic production was, to a great extent, confined within cinema studios, concentrated in Rio de Janeiro for technical, aesthetic and economic reasons, drastically decreasing the number of scenes shot in external locations (FREIRE, 2016). In addition to that, the novelty of voice, sound and music synchronized to images took the popularization of *Carnaval* musical films - later known as *chanchadas* -, which explored the increasing commercial success of popular music throughout the vigorous development of the music and radio industry.

Musical films produced by Rio's main studios at the time prioritized filming in interiors recreated in studio, but a production in particular seek to film scenes in real locations in a favela. Although it was portrayed in a more realistic way in *Favela dos meus amores* (Humberto Mauro, 1935), like other movies at the time, favelas were basically associated to samba, music genre with increasing commercial success.

*Favela dos meus amores* unfortunately integrates the group of disappeared Brazilian movies, being mythicized by historians like Alex Vianny as a pioneer in critical realism through idealizations about filming in real locations of favela of Providência, in the central area of the city, and its story, which defended Rio's favelas as authentic cradle of samba (its provisional name was *Alma do Samba - Soul of Samba*).<sup>5</sup> However, analyzing documents of the movie in attention to the cinematographic context of the time, we can say that *Favela dos meus amores* was a musical romance that was not that different from contemporary movies that, fortunately, survived, such as *Bonequinha de Seda* (Oduvaldo Viana,

Copacabana Palace, Quitandinha, nightclubs and places considered chic, places of social chronicles". This study wants to evidence that this is a simplistic view about the genre.

- 5 Hernani Heffner (2007) pointed out how Alex Vianny highlighted the supposed power and authenticity in the use of the place in sequences of films like *Favela dos meus amores*, perceiving this practice as a deviation in relation to the dominant tendency to the studio. In the path of Vianny, Napolitano (2009) questioned whether *Favela dos meus amores* was a part of a possible tradition within *chanchada* - aborted tradition, in his opinion - marked by a critic realism and a certain discourse about social issues that would bring us to Nelson Pereira dos Santos films in the 1950's.

1936) or *Maridinho de Luxo* (Luiz de Barros, 1938), with their luxurious scenarios, mise-en-scène of studio and pretention of super-production (Image 1).

Image 1 - Mayer and Costa in *Favela dos meus amores*.



Source: Arquivo Geral da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro (AGCRJ - General Archive of Rio de Janeiro).

The plot of Humberto Mauro's movie was about two "bon-vivant" friends played by Jayme Costa and Rodolfo Mayer. Recently arrived from Paris, but without any money on their pocket, the duo decided to open a nightclub in the favela, appealing to the exotic as a compensation for the absence of luxury. In the picturesque scenario of the favela, Rodolfo Mayer's character would fall in love for Rosinha, a naïve teacher played by the star and producer of the movie Carmen Santos.

Through scenic photos of *Favela dos meus amores*, we can perceive that Rosinha's "house" in the favela was reproduced in studio and, as the outside as it is inside, looks very different from the usual wooden houses of the favelas at the time, being modest much more by comparison with other luxurious spaces of the film where the characters walked by (Images 2 and 3). As scenario for dialogued scenes, naturally, the



character's house would hardly be filmed in a location for technical reasons. In addition to that, it wasn't Carmen Santos's style, as an actress and a producer, to bring poverty as a theme in her movies. The actress would be criticized because her character Rosinha would use, in an implausible way, "sophisticated dresses and expensive jewelry" when she is only "a teacher in the favela" (NAPOLITANO, 2009, p. 149-150; FREIRE, 2011, p. 269-270).

Image 2 - *Favela dos meus amores*.



Source: AGCRJ.

Image 3 - *Favela dos meus amores*.

Source: ACCRJ.

According to the criticism at the time, the singularity of *Favela dos meus amores* would lie specially in their aesthetic and poetic approach of a scenario unexplored by the Brazilian cinema and, despite going through a process of cultural valorization due to the popularization of samba, it was still strongly socially stigmatized. Despite this stigmatization, it is also by the 1920's that samba became popular in favelas, attracting a new look to what was produced there (OLIVEIRA and MARCIER, 1998). In the referred movie, characters would build a cabaret in the favela precisely to attend tourists and residents of Rio “looking for new sensations” (FREIRE, 2011, p. 269).

A lot of journalists highlighted Mauro's talent as a director, pointing as a highlight of the film the final scene, when they announce the death of Samba musician Nonô (Armando Louzada), inspired in the popular songwriter Sinhô. For a more distanced view, however, it is important to quote a posterior critic, signed by Jonald, pseudonym of Oswaldo Marques de Oliveira, about the 10-year anniversary of the release. The critic highlighted Mauro's talent for the “plastic cinema” but was clear that the biggest highlight was the scene of Nonô's funeral, while the film in

itself was more of a “mixture of musical and comedy” (JONALD, 1947). According to the critic, the acting of this final scene was similar to the “Russian film style”, referring not only to the more elaborate use of editing, but the probable filming in authentic locations marked by the real poverty of scenery and the black population filmed in loco. The own style of text seems to imitate the supposed style of the film sequence, with descriptive shots articulated with its combination: “The series of colored individuals in Nonô’s funeral were put in different shots. The exit of the coffin. The steps outside on the street. The shadow movement. The coffin, exposed in the edge of the slum, beside the little church (JONALD, 1947). On the other hand, the same church nearby the hill where Nonô’s funeral happened was also the background for Mayer and Carmen’s character love. In addition, the film advertisement, as the title gives away, highlighted the favela mainly as an exotic and uncommon scenario for a romance between two white characters, original from the middle class, whose destinies crossed in the slum by coincidence.

Despite being only one scene, the famous scene of Nonô’s funeral became an iconic scene in the representation of favela in Brazilian cinema in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to the extent we perceive the evident quotation made in the scene of the musical “Lata d’água” in the film *Tudo azul* (Moacyr Fenelon, 1951), partially filmed in real locations of the Providência hill. In both movies, we see the same church beside the hill with very similar framing (Images 4 and 5).<sup>6</sup>

6 Napolitano (2009) locates the scene of *Favela dos meus amores* in the Providência hill, while Melo (2017) transcribes criticism indicating that the sequence of *Tudo azul* was shot on Pinto hill. The proximity of these favelas, both on the port region, would explain the confusion. According to Valladares (2005), the occupation of Providência hill, which happened in 1897, would have concentrated all attention after the violent campaign against tenements, commonly evoked as the first favela in the city.

Image 4 - Favela dos meus amores.



Source: AGCRJ.

Image 5 - Frame of the film *Tudo azul*.



Source: Reproduction.

However, we can say that a more realistic image of the favela as scenario, putting in display the poverty of the houses and the black population that majorly inhabited these places, happened shortly in *Favela dos meus amores*, even then constituting an exception in the cinematographic context of the 30's. The rule was the romanticized, stylized representation of favela as a type of "cradle of samba", in reference not to the origin of the musical genre, but to spaces where it grew and spread. As Hermano Vianna (1995) and Carlos Sandroni (2001) showed us, Rio's urban samba went through, precisely in this period, a process of transformation in symbol of national identity, in an effort of legitimacy that implied negotiation and, eventually, idealization or appropriation of its popular characteristics and origins.

Thus, the main tendency in Brazilian musical films is the presence of favela as a staged scenario for samba musical performances played, mostly, by white singers to white audiences. We can quote numerous examples of films that fortunately have preserved copies. It is what we see in the musical performance "Molha o pano", lyrics by Getúlio Marinho and Cândido Vasconcellos sang by Aurora Miranda in *Alô, alô carnaval* (Adhemar Gonzaga e Wallace Downey, 1936). As in the rest of the film, the background of the favela is also insinuated through drawings filling the background of the stage - signed by the elegant trace of J. Carlos -, creating the imaginary space for the samba sang by a white singer (Carmen Miranda's sister), despite being dressed as a person of the favela. And in numbers presented for white, rich audiences, dressing properly, as it was the casino Mosca Azul from *Alô, Alô, Carnaval*, created resembling the popular Cassino of Urca. Under the same practice given in the favela reproduced in the shooting set of musical number "Luar do morro" (Walfrido Silva e Sinval Silva), played by Odete Amaral as part of the film within the film of *O Samba da Vida* (Luiz de Barros, 1937). In this studio favela, all supposedly representative iconography about Rio's favela, with the samba choir, malandros wearing striped shirts, *baianas* selling candies and bars serving cachaça.

Beyond these two productions of Cinédia, if we progress to the following decades, we can quote the first *chanchada* in the Atlântida studios, *Tristezas não pagam dívidas* (Ruy Costa, 1944). In this film, we also have the decoration of wooden houses and the moon in the sky framing Silvio Caldas' performance for "Laura" (Ataulfo Alves) in the stage of the luxurious nightclub where Ítala Ferreira, Jayme Costa and Oscarito's characters go, wanting to spend all their inheritance money on a *Carnaval* party. We can go until another production of Atlântida, but already under Luiz Severiano Ribeiro's control: *Vamos com calma* (Carlos Manga, 1956), in which a group of musicians of a samba school play "Fala, mulato" (Alcebíades Nogueira e Ataulfo Alves) surrounded by scenic sheds and banana trees as an attraction for guests of a rich people's party.

In all of these movies, favela was imagined as the place for samba, and, therefore, an appropriate scenario for musical performances, maybe because it already was, in that period, a recurring theme in a big part of samba lyrics (OLIVEIRA e MARCIER, 1998). However, favela was a mere decoration in stages of elegant nightclubs or luxurious restaurants where sambas were sung amidst fake favela houses, scenic banana trees and an artificial moon. Favela residents, also considered decorative elements of this scenario, appeared only as a choir to follow singers and dancers dressed as *malandros*, *cabrochas* or *lavadeiras* to present for an exclusive white audience wearing smoking and long dresses, as it probably happened in real stages of the city. Scenes filmed in authentic locations in Rio's favelas occurred only occasionally, as in *Berlim na Batucada* (Luiz de Barros, 1944) or in *Tudo Azul* - and always, equally, associated with samba.

### **Favela and class warfare**

The film we consider a landmark in the change of favela representation in Brazilian *chanchadas* is *Depois eu conto* (José Carlos Burle, 1956). In this musical comedy, favela enters the story, without being an occasional scenario for musical performances and being invoked as a symbolic territory that evidences Rio de Janeiro as a city radically socially divided.



The film tells the story of Zé da Bomba (Anselmo Duarte), a man that, during the day, works in a gas station in the neighborhood of Engenho de Dentro with Veludo (Grande Otelo), dating Sônia Canabrava (Eliana Macedo) and fighting her aunt, Ofélia Canabrava (Dercy Gonçalves), a suburban spinster. During the night, however, Zé da Bomba takes off his uniform and dresses a suit to be disguised as the rich man José Pires e Camargo. The con artist goes to the luxurious nightclub Astral, in Copacabana, showing off cars of clients of the gas station and dating the socialite Marilu Biscainha (Ilka Soares).

While Zé da Bomba is discovered and, still, gets some advantage, Ofélia tries to pursue the artistic career. When she discovers that her old and poor fiancée, Armindo (Zé Trindade), now is an artistic director of the nightclub, she gets to be hired to star a musical performance. But Ofélia is sabotaged by the directors of Astral and her dramatic interpretation is mocked by the rich audience.

It is in that moment where we have a turning point in the movie, when the old enemies Zé da Bomba and Ofélia decide to unite. In a reconciliation based in class solidarity (and in a shared opposition to the rich people who despise them), Zé finds Ofélia in the backstage after she leaves the stage humiliated and praises her performance as an actress. They have a dialogue that deserve to be analyzed in detail:

Zé: Your mistake is to think you're a dramatic actress, you are one of the most overreacting actresses I've ever seen.

Ofélia: The clown Bofélia, isn't it?

Zé: Another mistake. Artists can make someone cry or laugh. And you can make people laugh! What you need is a place to do it. [...] Here, the only people that matters are celebrities or foreign.

The dialogue of *Depois eu conto* clearly echoes another discourse present in the previous film of the same director, the famous *Carnaval Atlântida* (José Carlos Burle, 1952). In this manifesto, according to the classic analysis of João Luiz Vieira (1987), an opposition is articulated between popular culture and elite culture, represented in the

confrontation between joy and vivaciousness of an authentically national popular expression and the pretension of a heavy, imported culture, with a fake seriousness, by a supposedly colonized intellectual elite. In both films, therefore, we perceive the influence of a popular national ideology, generally associated to the so called independent cinema from the 50's.<sup>7</sup> If in *Carnaval Atlântida*, bringing cinema as an object, the national content would be based in the defense of a Rio *chanchada* before super productions of São Paulo's industrial cinema, in *Depois eu conto*, through music and performance, they express the opposition, localized in Rio, between suburban workers and the wealth of Zona Sul.

Continuing the dialogue, Sônia is still skeptical about the regeneration of Zé, but Ofélia, apparently convinced she also has value, questions her niece's old boyfriend about what she could do:

Zé: React! Fight! Let's create our own nightclub, with our personality, 100% ours.

Ofélia: But to do that we need a lot of money [...].

Zé: We don't need to spend too much. Instead of luxury, originality. Have you ever thought about taking these rich people to a nightclub at the favela, in a shed furnished with stools, barrels, tins and boxes? [...] Let's show them what is a *batucada* with *agogôs*, *cuícas*, *pandeiros*, *tamborins*... Let's bring to stage that simple people from the favela, who sings from the soul because they have samba in their hearts.

Zé assures Ofélia they can bring rich people to their nightclub with the help of Reneé Dorê (Teófilo de Vasconcelos), famous social columnist that, in fact, is Pinga-fogo, his childhood friend of the suburbs, when they studied together in a public school and played with other children from the favela. In other words, it would be possible to use the same circuits of production (nightclub performance) and communication

7 Galvão e Bernardet (1983, p. 70) analisaram as características desse nacional popular em textos de cineastas ligados ao Partido Comunista Brasileiro do início dos anos 1950: "O filme nacional e popular que se opõe ao filme cosmopolita de uma burguesia aliada ao imperialismo não é apenas diferente, não é apenas popular, mas, para Nelson [Pereira dos Santos], ele é antiburguês".



(social column) they already had, but to stage and show another cultural production, truly national and authentic.

The following scene is a shoot made in a location, showing Zé da Bomba in a window of a modest apartment beside the hill overlooking a favela (probably, Providência) - the first shown in *Depois eu conto* (Image 6). This image clearly translates the strategy drafted in the previous dialogue, in which Zé da Bomba and Ofélia play the role of middle-men between authentic popular culture (“a batucada de agogôs, cuícas”) and the economic elite represented by the rich people of Zona Sul. These people - symbols of a possible middle-class - would be the ones capable of creating the conditions for the expression of a popular culture and truly national culture.

In the last scene of *Depois eu conto*, we see the success of the nightclub *Favela é grande*, but the owners of Astral, infuriated with the competition, hire some men to make a mess. Seeing the possible problem, Zé goes out to ask for the help of black samba musicians, his childhood friends, to defend him. Going beyond *Carnaval Atlântida*, the film shows an almost literal representation of class warfare: mobilized by these “middle-class intellectuals”, black workers and favela residents fight against white professional rioters working for the elite. But everything is solved with humor, and, above all, with music. In the happy ending, we have, at Favela nightclub, a musical apotheosis with a very nationalist character: the song played by Eliana, dressed as a baiana, says: “I sang in São Paulo/I sang in Pará/I drank chimarrão, I ate vatapá”.

Image 6 - *Depois eu conto*.

Source: Reproduction.

Amongst the critics at the time, the one from José Sanz, at O Globo, was what best perceived, for displeasure of the critic himself, the ideologic discourse present in *Depois eu conto*: “There is, still, in this film, a great subversion of moral values, making it related to social communist concepts consubstantiated with the tape *Rio 40 Graus*, whose director was awarded in a festival behind the iron curtain.” (SANZ, 1956).<sup>8</sup>

Pointing in *Depois eu conto* the evident Manicheism between characters of different social status, as we see in the film of Nelson Pereira dos Santos, the critic denounced: “It is the communist thesis in its wide signification: we can never forgive the bourgeoisie, while everything is allowed to the proletariat as self-defense against the class that historically oppresses them” (SANZ, 1956).

We see that, under the protection of the popular nationalism, the class warfare invaded *chanchadas* with *Depois eu conto*, although with adaptations of genre conventions, as the climax of the generalized fight,

8 The filmmaker Nelson Pereira dos Santos had traveled to Czechoslovakia to join the Karlovy-Vary festival in 1956, with *Rio 40 graus*.

the white stars like Hollywood and a conciliatory ending based in cultural nationalism. The evaluation made from Anselmo Duarte himself (actor, screenwriter and producer) also considers *depois eu conto* as a conventional *chanchada* with the pretension of something new: “This film gave us the experience that it was possible to coexist a critical plot with a popular story” (SINGH JR., 1993, p. 61). What especially interests us to highlight is how the favelas appear, in *Depois eu conto*, again as an authentic birthplace of samba, but in a movement that is not to take the scenic favela to rich nightclubs, but to bring the rich audience to a supposedly authentic performance at a favela. *Zé da Bomba* fills the same role that Nelson Pereira dos Santos would give to the white middle-class musician Moacyr (Paulo Goulart) in his second film *Rio Zona Norte* (Nelson Pereira dos Santos, 1958): the person who shows the real popular culture. In both movies, the structure of cultural industry is not really questioned: the racial issue is recovered by the national issue and paternalistic posture of the intellectual is naturalized (AUTRAN, 2010).

*Depois eu conto*, therefore, represents the introduction of the favela as a symbol of an authentic popular culture oppressed in the *chanchadas*, marking the beginning of a new phase of the genre. Ceasing to be an occasional scenario for musical performances, the favela begins to be invoked as symbolic territory that evidences the opposition between the national and the foreign, the authentic and the imported, the people and the elite. Since then, under different ideologic spectrums, the *chanchadas*, as other Brazilian movies that does not inscribe in the genre, are going to increasingly incorporate the favela, real or scenic, to their narratives, following their consolidation, in the 1950's as a “public problem” (FREIRE, GONÇALVES e SIMÕES, 2010).<sup>9</sup>

9 Like these authors, we consider “public problem” in the sense attributed by the sociologist Joseph Gusfield (1981), therefore, a social situation that becomes a theme for debate, controversy or conflict in the public space, requiring to be treated by the action of public powers, institutions and/or social movements.

## Favelas and the catholic church

Present in Rio's landscape since late 19th century, the favelas soon were considered as a problem to be solved, initially uniting voices of journalists, doctors and engineers, worried about the future of the city and its population (VALLADARES, 2005). After World War Two, the return of economic growth accelerated the urbanization in Brazil and in Latin America, and the flow of rural migrants towards the cities also intensified the growth of the favelas, escalating the issue of housing for popular classes. On the other hand, in its developmental and modernizing project, Rio de Janeiro - Federal District at the time - needed to fight against favelas to the extent that it represented the delay and the past they wanted to overcome.

Before the development of great public policies geared toward this issue, the catholic Church was already present in the favelas since the 1940's, almost monopolizing the actions in these locations in the 1950's (FREIRE, GONÇALVES e SIMÕES, 2010).<sup>10</sup> Despite developing different forms of intervention, these catholic initiatives expressed the urgency of acting on these spaces and its populations, even if morally, creating a terrain so that the State could take over, in the next decade, the action and control over the problem, implanting a radical policy of favela removal. Only between 1962 and 1974, throughout the administration of the governors Carlos Lacerda, Negrão de Lima and Chagas Freitas, 80 favelas were extinct from the city, mainly in the South area, dislocating approximately 140 thousand people over to the peripheral areas (MELLO et al., 2012).

Among the different *chanchadas* that have favelas as a scenario in the second half of the 1950's, the film *Vai que é mole* (J. B. Tanko, 1960) deals precisely with the controversy of the removals, in addition to highlighting the strong presence of the catholic church. The story begins with

10 Even though the 1937's Código de Obras would condemn favelas, attributing the responsibility of extinguishing them to the city council, replacing them for "minimum housing nucleus" not much happened in fact until mayor Henrique Dodsworth releases the program Provisional Proletariat Parks in 1942. The only three proletariat parks built in this period - at Gávea, Leblon/praias do Pinto and Caju - ended up becoming permanente housing, and the residents were never relocated to their old favelas (VALLADARES, 2005).

the liberation of Mácio (Ankito), Brancura (Grande Otelo) and Bolinha (Jô Soares), which returned to their shed after serving time in jail. “Good hearted thieves”, they have the vigilance of the vicar to stay on a good path. Played by Renato Restier, actor that alternated dramatic and comedic roles in numberless *chanchadas*, the neighborhood vicar of the favela is represented as a sympathetic, and above all, modern religious man, that does not reject the invitation of playing football with the kids of the favela or stealing a bike in an emergency situation. In a scene of *Vai que é mole*, the vicar visits the mansion of commander Ferreira (Armando Ferreira) to ask a donation for the church, having the following dialogue:

Commander: I have my principles. I think that first we should end the favelas.

Vicar: Yeah, you are right. These people really need...

Commander: (Interrupting) Mainly because of the tourists. Yeah, because with that mess of sheds...

Vicar: Why? Only because of that?

Commander: When the horse race happens, the cars of more sophisticated people have to go through the Lagoa. It even gives me a headache.

Vicar: And what do you contribute to end this situation?

Commander: We can't do everything! Everything is so expensive nowadays. Sir, the price of the whisky is over 250 cruzeiros!

It is interesting to see in the film the dialogue about the favelas, a current and controversial theme (at that time), working to reinforce the nature of the characters. After all, the scene confirmed the commander as a stingy and arrogant character, following the frequent stereotype of egotistical and cold millionaires. With his strong Portuguese accent, the character played by Armando Ferreira aligned more specifically to the *chanchada* tradition of the negative caricature of the rich and cheap Portuguese man, usually working in trade, in the lineage of type routinely played in the theater and the cinema by actors like Oscar Soares and

Manoel Pêra. On the other hand, the scene also reinforced the good judgement of Restier's vicar, whose comments were counterposed to the elitist and reactionary view of the commander about the issue of favela removal. The perception about this social issue as a mere "aesthetic leper", to be hidden away from the tourists and rich people's gaze, would become reason for mockery in the film.

This association between a sympathetic and modern religious character and a more humanist view over the "problem of favelas" would not be a unique case, gaining center stage in a later *chanchada*, *Três colegas de batina* (Darcy Evangelista, 1961), which deserve a more detailed analysis.

### **"A chanchada with religious touches"**

Since its first images, the film *Três colegas de batina* visually builds the idea of a city divided between the bourgeoisie in the South area and the favelas. Still in the opening credits, the camera frames, in a general frame, the tower of a church with a beach in the background. Then, in a panoramic movement of almost 180°, it reveals, in the extreme opposite, the favela of Cantagalo. In the soundtrack, we listen to the theme song, written by Ary Barroso specially for the film, "Assim na terra como no céu", which also gives the tone of the story with its sacred content (with a choir and organ) and humanist lyrics.

*Três colegas de batina* is starred by Eliana, playing Celina, a religious lady member of the church Nossa Senhora da Paz, in Ipanema, where the priests Matheus, Jeremias and Rafael (Gilvan, Edinho e João, Musicians of the Trio Irakitan), coming from Bahia, do their internship. Celina acts on social charities in the favela of Cantagalo led by the charitable friar Martinho (Edmundo Maia), which, for his good intentions, wins the immediate collaboration of three young friars.

In the first part of *Três colegas de batina*, friar Martinho tries to raise resources for his project of urbanization of the favela (including the construction of a hospital and a school), which the religious himself defines as a "social revolution, in a good way". This sentence is said when friar Martinho, along with Celina, asks for donations to Mr. Machado (the

same Armando Ferreira from *Vai que é mole*). He tries to get a donation of the millionaire arguing that his social works will improve the conditions of life of the poor, warning that it will not imply in any structural change in the division of social class. Unlike *Depois eu conto*, the film seems to assume this posture without any trace of irony, once this sentence goes out of the good old fella that is friar Martinho.

Beyond being the owner of the terrain where the sheds are, Mr. Machado is father of Aluísio (Herval Rossano), bon vivant who flirts with Celina. But like *Vai que é mole*, the millionaire of *Três colegas de batina* is not sensitive for the situation of the favela residents, and, thus, the three priests decide to help friar Martinho to collect funds for his social work. Going door to door, they find businessmen and bureaucrats who also refuse to help, showing again the lack of sensitivity of the elites and the government. One of these visits, however, is especially interesting as an example of how some *chanchadas* also approached social themes with a different discourse of contemporary films aligned with a leftist ideology. In *Três colegas de batina*, the priest Jeremias (Edinho) knocks on a door of an apartment and is received by an Italian Brazilian character (Zeloni), to whom he asks for contribution for the constructions in the favela of Cantagalo. The man shows no interest - "I don't live in the favela, I don't have children" - and asks if the religious man have already visited the Vatican and asked money to the pope, who was richer than him, or even to the United States.

It is necessary some attention to perceive, in the background of the apartment, a symbol of hammer and sickle in the wall, which evidences even more the critic to the communists (Image 7). Putting the guilt of all evil of the world in the hateful "North American imperialism", the ridiculed communist character, as the other people received by the friars, also does nothing for the poor, showing his hypocrisy and egotism. Different situation of the catholic religious people, that are shown literally getting their hands dirty on social works at the favela (teaching in school, building a wall of bricks, etc.), in scenes shot in the hill of Cantagalo, even though it has a paternalistic and moralizing tone towards the favela residents, seen as "needing help, understanding and love" (Image 8).

Image 7 - Três colegas de batina.



Source: Reproduction.

Image 8 - Três colegas de batina.



Source: Reproduction.



It is interesting to think that one of the reasons for the catholic church actions in the favelas in the 50, particularly the Fundação Leão XIII, was to impede the growth of the influence of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) in these spaces. It is worth mentioning that PCB was the fourth most voted party in the 1945 elections and that many councilmen acted in favelas until this party was considered illegal, in 1947, the same year of creation of the Fundação Leão XIII. Not fortuitously, the motto behind the actions of this catholic association was: "It is necessary to go up the hill before the Communists descend from there" (SAGMACS, 1960).

This preoccupation was justified if we think about, for instance, in movies where the cast, integrated by young leftist intellectuals, including members of PCB, go to the favela to show a critical portrayal of the Brazilian social reality, such as *Rio 40 graus* (Nelson Pereira dos Santos, 1955) or *Cinco vezes favela* (Carlos Diegues, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, Leon Hirszman, Miguel Borges e Marcos Farias, 1962). They are films that defend structural changes in society as a solution for the social and economic inequality. Out of these movies, an ideal of future is based in the solidarity of class by workers and in the opposition between elite and proletariat. *Três colegas de batina*, in turn, would propose paternalistic solutions for the problems of the poor through the perspective of a humanitarian Christianity sustained by charity and voluntary contribution - in other words, by individual alternatives based in moral choices. That gets clear through the final redemption of Aluísio's character, son of a capitalist, which happens through the cliché of love bringing redemption - in this case, love for Celina. Without forgetting its anti-communist tone, we perceive that, in *Três colegas de batina*, the final union of the two characters - the white, young, well-educated couple - celebrates a possibility of a future project, uniting the catholic church and a more humanitarian nationalist bourgeoisie.

Still, after we see these differences, in common among the most known movies identified with Cinema novo and *chanchadas* like *Depois eu conto* or *Três colegas de batina*, we see the presence of favela as an icon of an unjust society and revealing the social abyss present in Rio de Janeiro.

## Final Considerations

In this article, we approach the representation of Rio favelas in *chanchadas* in the 1930 to 1950's, highlighting the constant staged reproduction of favela in studio as scenario for musical performances in luxurious nightclubs. Being an exception or not, the film *Favela dos meus amores* certainly confirmed the rule.

We identify a change in this tradition of representation after the movie *Depois eu conto*, in which the favela is shown as one of the most important urban and political problems of the capital, gaining relevance in the story as a symbol of social inequality in Rio de Janeiro. We highlight how *chanchadas* turned to directly dialogue with the context of crescent politization and polarization of the time, emphasizing how some movies of the genre deal particularly with the relationship between the Catholic church and favelas in a moment of crescent and heated discussions about the policies of removal of these popular neighborhoods by the State.

In this sense, we analyzed in detail the film *Três colegas de batina*, in which the favela is highlighted as theme and scenario. In this *chanchada*, in which characters linked to the catholic church assume the role of lead characters, we notice a radically different discourse about the favelas than that adopted by contemporary movies identified with Cinema Novo. Discussing *chanchadas*, we evidenced how the treatment of favelas by the Brazilian cinema has a variety of discourses, including discourses with an anti-communist and conservative bias. We conclude, therefore, that the favelas were such a heated issue in the 60's that not even the Brazilian musical comedies - considered by the critics at the time as a mere alienated and alienating entertainment - failed to address and discuss it.

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## Death on a postcard: one company, two newspapers, three victims

### Morte no cartão postal: uma empresa, dois jornais e três vítimas

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Lara Nasi<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** *In this essay, we analyze the narrative configuration of urban violence in two newspapers of the same editorial group (O Globo e Extra, both from Infoglobo), from the covers and stories published about an armed robbery that had a strong mass media repercussion. We study how the characters of victim and aggressor compose each narrative, linking them to the notions of politics of pity and virtual victim. We conclude that victims of different orders are in question: fatal, social and virtual. The study highlights how, beyond the “raw fact”, journalistic narratives can configure an event in different ways, since the newspapers need to individualize themselves in the editorial market and, therefore, give several readings for the social experience of violence, according to different dramatic projects.*

**Keywords:** *journalism; narrative; violence; crime.*

**Resumo:** *Analisamos as configurações da violência urbana nas narrativas jornalísticas de dois jornais da Infoglobo (O Globo e Extra) a partir da análise de capas e matérias sobre um caso de latrocínio de grande repercussão midiática. Investigamos como os personagens de vítima e de agressor compõem cada narrativa, relacionando-os às noções de “política da piedade” e “vítima virtual”. Concluímos que estão em jogo nesse enredo vítimas de várias ordens: fatais, sociais e*

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*virtuais. O estudo evidencia como, para além do “fato em bruto”, as narrativas jornalísticas podem configurar um acontecimento de maneiras diferentes, já que os jornais precisam se individualizar no mercado editorial e, portanto, oferecem leituras diversas para a experiência social da violência de acordo com projetos dramáticos diferentes.*

**Palavras-chave:** *jornalismo; narrativa; violência; criminalidade.*

## Introduction

May 19th, 2015. In the middle of the discussion of reduction of the penal age in Brazil by the National Congress, a doctor is approached and stabbed by two teenagers in Rio de Janeiro while he was riding a bike around lagoa Rodrigo de Freitas. His bike and wallet were stolen. Taken to a hospital nearby, the doctor dies in the morning of May 20th, when the newspapers that day already were circulating around town. That same day, one of the suspects is identified by the police. He is a resident of the slum of Manguinhos and is 16 years old.

The event takes an important place on the news in different media and is the leading thread to a discussion that involves, beyond the doctor's death, the reduction of the penal age, the prohibition of possession of knives, the raise of the penalty in case of robbery or theft of bicycle, the vulnerability of those who walk on the streets and the previous lives of teenage offenders.

While O Globo publishes the headline "In the lagoa, another stabbing incident" (O Globo, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015, p. 1), Extra, newspaper of the same editorial group, brings the headline: "Barbarian crime in the Lagoa shocks Rio", with the text: "Don't forget about Gilson and Vanderson" (Extra, May 21st, 2015, p. 1). The case talks about a teenager and a young adult killed by police in a police operation in the Dendê hill. The first page also presents the discussion: "As in any place in the world, crimes in tourist spots have a bigger repercussion. However, at Dendê, mothers cry the death of their children in action of the police and wait that it doesn't get forgotten" (Extra, May 21st, 2015, p. 1). The next day, 22nd, Extra approaches the assassination of the doctor with the headline "Two tragedies before the tragedy. Without family, without school" (Extra, May 22nd, 2015, p. 1) referring to the previous life of the defendant.

Our goal is to reflect about the different possibilities of configuration of this type of event by the journalistic narrative, especially regarding the construction of the crime and the characters involved. We took as base a research performed by Vaz and researchers (2005 and 2006) about O Globo newspaper that investigated the ways in which journalism

narrates crime and builds the idea of suffering between the years 1983 and 2001.<sup>3</sup> We analyzed how this type of narrative<sup>4</sup> is configured years later, motivated both by the debate on the reduction of the penal age surrounding the discussion on the crime in question and the controversy that this event and its coverage by two newspaper of Grupo Globo had also generated on social media.

We dedicate the analysis to the first two days of coverage (20 news report and four newspaper covers from May 21st and 22nd 2015) of *O Globo* and *Extra*. Methodologically, we created a protocol of analysis that highlights the narrative sequences related to the description of the crime, of the victim and the aggressors to make a clipping amongst narratives. The goal is to perceive how the newspapers build the victim-aggressor-reader relationship and what are the forms of identification that the publications offer their readers based on different configurations of the event.

### **Forms of narrating the crime, the aggressors and the victims**

From our point of view, the narrative is a “device of argumentation in the relation among subjects” (MOTTA, 2005, p. 4) and the narrator “invests in the narrative organization of their discourse and requires a certain interpretation of the recipient” (MOTTA, 2005, p. 3). One of the important movements of analysis in the study of narratives is to understand the “dramatic project” of the narrator: “The narrator has always a purpose: *no narrative is naïve, neutral, impartial; all narrative is argumentative*. It wants to attract, seduce, involve, convince, provoke effects of meaning” (MOTTA, 2013, p. 196).

To show how the forms of narrating urban violence are modified throughout history, we base ourselves in Vaz, Carvalho and Pombo (2006), which analyzed the changes in image of the criminal in the

3 We deem important to bring up previous researches in view of scientific production having a cumulative and collective character and the problems presented in that study can be clearer if perceived not only in configuration with this case, but also throughout time.

4 Even though Vaz and researchers (2005, 2006) did not use the perspective of narrative, taken as a base for this study, they bring important support for the theme of urban violence coverage.



news of a crime on *O Globo* between 1983 and 2001. In the 80's, on news about crimes of proximity committed from people in the family, friends or boyfriends, the authors observe that the journalistic text was conducted from the point of view of the aggressor, which ended up having a voice in news reports: “[...] There is a common humanity between the criminal and the audience” (VAZ, CARVALHO and POMBO, 2006, p. 77). The authors say that there was “a primary identification with the criminal, not on the affectionate level, but for thinking that, if they were in their shoes, they would do the same”. In other words, “the crime gains political dimension and the form to avoid it is to create better social conditions [...]” (VAZ, CARVALHO e POMBO, 2006, p. 77). In the 2000's, however, crime begins to be narrated from another point of view: the newspaper begins to bring the declarations of the victims and relatives and the pain and revolt “begin to be representative of the experience of all readers” (VAZ, CARVALHO e POMBO, 2006, p. 78). There is a growing disinterest for crimes of proximity and a bigger visibility of crimes committed by strangers in a public setting with random victims, or “crimes that generalize the possibility of victimization” (VAZ, CARVALHO e POMBO, 2006, p. 75). In this process, there is no more possible identification between audience and criminal, choosing to privilege the point of view of the victim:

Through this form of appearance of suffering and crime in the media, what is solidified is the avoidable suffering as it is conceived by the conservative populism: if there was more surveillance, if laws were stricter and if prisons had their prisoners captive, the suffering would be avoided (VAZ, CARVALHO and POMBO, 2006, p. 75).

From this study, many studies (VAZ, CARVALHO and POMBO, 2005, 2006; VAZ and RONY, 2011; VAZ, CARDOSO and FELIX, 2012; VAZ, 2014) reflect about how suffering has visibility on media and seek to systematize their configurations on, at least, two perspectives, of the “politics of pity” and the “virtual victim”, which we will talk about in the next title, studying *O Globo* and *Extra* in this 2015 coverage.

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It is in Arendt (1988) and Boltanski (2004) that Vaz and his researchers (2006) seek support to work with the politics of pity, idea that arise with the French Revolution. To define what would be pity, Arendt (1988) differentiates it from compassion. Pity would be “feeling without being touched in the flesh” and compassion would be “being struck with the other’s suffering, as if it were contagious” (ARENDR, 1988, p. 67). Compassion, as the author explains, cannot go beyond what is suffered for a person and extended to a class, a people or humanity as a whole; that would be “co-suffering”, therefore, its strength would be in the private, moved by passion (ARENDR, 1988, p. 67). In pity, in turn, the sufferers are de-personalized, encompassing it, in a way of speaking of “suffering masses”, for example. “Pity, for not being struck in the flesh, and conserving its sentimental distance, can be successful where the compassion seems to fail; it can reach a crowd and, consequently, as solidarity, coming in a public square” (ARENDR, 1988, p. 71). Pity, the author explains, only exists in presence of misfortune, needing the existence of unhappy people and, therefore, is different from solidarity.

Boltanski (2004), from reading Arendt, characterizes the politics of pity in distinction between those who suffer and those who don’t and for having a focus on what is seen, in the “spectacle of suffering”. The author understands that, in the formulation of Arendt, this suffering is not centered in action, in the power of the strong over the weak, but in the observation of misfortune for those who don’t share their suffering, do not feel it directly and, because of that, can be considered fortunate (BOLTANSKI, 2004, p. 3). With that, the politics of pity is distanced from the idea of justice: “For a politics of pity, the urgency of the action needing to be taken to bring an end to the suffering invoked always prevails over considerations of justice. From such a perspective it is only in a world from which suffering has been banished that justice could enforce its rights”. (BOLTANSKI, 2004, p. 4).

In this reading of Vaz and researchers (2006), the politics of pity defines a basic structure of solidarity in a complex society when putting in relation, at distance, unknown observer and sufferer. This reading can

be done for what we've seen on newspapers, for example, in the 80's. "The sufferer is not known, nor the help can be local; it must unfold in the form of a public world addressed to other non-sufferers, inviting them to mobilize to avoid or reduce suffering" (VAZ et al., 2006, p. 114). That way, news about a crime could also be a way of generating rage against the system" (VAZ et al., 2006, p. 114)

Authors observe that when there was this dislocation and association of crime to social context, the criminal rates were low. However, as the rates come up, the criminal acts gain an increasingly random and violent character. (VAZ et al., 2006)

Then, there is a passage of pity that the authors name as politics of the virtual victim, referring to a contemporary politics of fear. While in the politics of pity the "audience is built as the happy, unlike the sufferer, and responsible for his/her suffering, even for being a bystander" (VAZ, CARDOSO e FELIX, 2012, p. 29), in the politics of the virtual victim, "the audience is stimulated to conceive themselves in the same condition from the one who suffers, dislocating the search for responsibility for the suffering for another character" (VAZ, CARDOSO e FELIX, 2012 p. 29). This passage is concretized "by the emergency of the virtual victim as a subjective and political figure characteristic of our reality, as well as for the predominance of a new ideal of social justice: the right of a safe and happy routine" (VAZ, CARDOSO e FELIX, 2012, p. 29)

In the politics of the virtual victim, we highlight the singular narratives: "no more events linked to social structure, but events that happen on a public setting with a random selection of victims: natural catastrophes, epidemics and accidents" (VAZ, CARDOSO and FELIX, 2012, p. 35). In addition, sufferers are no longer de-personalized: now, there is an interest in the singularity of their stories, in their happiness up until that moment. However, the "individualization [...] is a form of generalization" (VAZ, CARDOSO and FELIX, 2012, p. 36).

## One crime, two newspapers and many victims

We start the analysis of the robbery case that involved the doctor Jaime Gold to mobilize the reflections brought by the quoted studies.

### The description of the coverage

The first news report of Jaime Gold did not name the doctor. At *O Globo*, the news was published in the May 20th, 2015 edition with the headline “Another stabbing incident at Lagoa”. The news report, on page 13, shows the photo of the unidentified victim, with helmet and cycling suit, bleeding, being rescued. Throughout that day, family and friends published concerned posts on social media, leading authorities such as the Secretary of Security of Rio, José Mariano Beltrame, to also come forward about the subject on social media.

The following day, 21<sup>st</sup>, the reader finds at *O Globo* newspaper six pages dedicated to the theme. In the first page (Image 1), the headline: “Tragedy shocks Rio” (*O Globo*, May 21st, 2015, p. 1). The edition presents a full-page story with the profile of the doctor, mourning his death. The text brings back the indignation of social media, repercuting the change of routine of people who usually cycled around Lagoa to avoid robbery, reinforces the insecurity in a postcard of the city and observes that, in this region, the number of young people detained is bigger than the adults.

At the 22<sup>nd</sup>, the subject remains on the newspaper’s agenda. This time, highlighting the fact that one of the suspects was found and arrested by the police. There are four news reports and one editorial column. The news report announced on the first page (Image 2) observes the detention of a boy with a long history of crime; in the same edition, the division of opinion regarding the reduction of the penal age is approached under the title “mourning at Lagoa”, which still talks about the funeral of the murdered doctor, the commotion of family and friends and the announcement made by the Military Police talking about the implantation of a special patrol in leisure areas. The editorial column,

titled “Crime reinforces the pressure for a new penal age”, harshly criticizes the fact that the penalty for homicides caused by teenagers is so soft, quoting the case of the Lagoa.

Image 1 - Clipping of the first page of O Globo in May 21st, 2015.



Image 2 - Clipping of the first page of O Globo in May 22nd, 2015.



On the 22nd, the Extra brings the first page with the headline: “Two tragedies before the tragedy. No family, no school” (Image 3). The photograph is the same used by O Globo when they show that the suspect “is 16 years old and has 15 crimes under his belt”, but the narrative construction of Extra, while informing the infractions committed by the suspect, take another direction. After the headline, the text follows:

The reporter Carolina Heringer reconstituted the life of the minor suspect of killing the doctor Jaime Gold, at the Lagoa. With 16 years old, he has 15 crimes under his belt, the first one when he was only 11. He has only seen his father twice. His mother, a garbage picker, was indicted for abandoning him on the streets. The other barrier of protection of the minor had also failed: he quit school on the 6th year. And it was reciprocal: the school had also quit him. On Tuesday, an innocent paid with his life for the succession of tragedies (Extra, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015, p. 1)

Image 3 - Clipping of the first page of Extra from May 22nd, 2015.



The differences in approach for both newspapers, which belong to the same editorial group, are visible. In the following excerpt, we take as base the narrative sequences that talk about the crime, the place, the victim and the criminals on both newspapers.

#### Description of the crime scene

Newspapers do not differentiate themselves in the way of describing the strict crime. However, *O Globo* adds some judgement: “Cruelty spiral - 16-year-old suspect of killing doctor has 15 registered crimes for robbery” (*O Globo*, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015, p. 8)

The description of places and crimes is also similar between the two publications. Both characterize the Lagoa as a “postcard”. However, through a source *O Globo* publishes a criticism that relates homeless people to the violence spiral: “Near the heliport, homeless people wash clothes, bathe and barbecue - says the president of the Jardim Botânico Residents Association (*O Globo*, May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015, p. 11).

Extra, in turn, warns that the crimes in tourist attractions gain more journalistic highlight, but reinforces that this cannot make us forget crimes that occur, for example, in the slums, as the text of the first page of the May 21<sup>st</sup> edition says (Image 4).

### **The description of the victim and the aggressors**

To describe the victims in the journalistic narratives, the first reflection to be made is about who the newspapers choose to fill this role. According to Vaz (2014), in order to get compassion, it is necessary to have some beliefs about who is the victim. First, we have to recognize that the other’s suffering is important, which is only possible when we believe the one who suffers is equal to us. When we attribute inferiority or moral difference over the one who suffers, he will hardly be worthy of compassion. The second belief brought by the author the “judgement over the sufferer’s innocence” (VAZ, 2014, p.86), is related to the notion that



Image 4 - Clipping of the first page of Extra of May 21st, 2015.



The suffering is not deserved. In the case we are analyzing, the doctor Jaime Gold is demonstrably innocent and details over his moral virtues are praised throughout O Globo's coverage. The teenager who killed him, on the other hand, is not a sufferer according to O Globo, because he is not innocent and, therefore, not worthy of compassion.

Extra's coverage also recognizes the innocence of the victim (the doctor), although it does shortly: "a doctor" (Extra, May 21st, 2015, p. 12) an "innocent who paid with his life for the succession of tragedies" (Extra, May 22nd, 2015, p. 1). In the last sentence, we highlight the expression "succession of tragedies". Therefore, they open a space to also consider the teenager as a victim, even though he is a social victim. In the case of the news about the teenagers Gilson and Vanderson, killed by the police, Extra picks as victims also the poor young men killed at the same



day as the doctor and publishes a sentence said by one of their mothers: “My son was not a bad person, [...] He was a student - said Eliane, showing his school report [...]” (Extra, May 21st, 2015, p. 13).

At O Globo, the first news report out of the eight who compose the series of news under the title “Mourning at the Lagoa”, on the first day of coverage, the profile picture of the doctor gains a cutout with the outlines of his body, with him smiling. There were interviews with declarations about the doctor by the doorman of his building, his ex-wife and a television actor. The beginning of the text sets the tone of how the narrative will be conducted:

As some might say, he wasn't from this world. A renowned cardiologist, he gave up his practice to dedicate himself to public health at the Hospital do Fundão. Divorced, he became a mother and a father to his two children, now adults. He was an athlete by passion and, when he used to pass by the lobby of his building, he would also say hi to the doorman and start a little conversation. The doctor Jaime Gold, 55 years old, said goodbye to his life in a way that didn't do him justice (O Globo, May 21st, 2015, p. 8).

Then, other excerpts would show how the doctor's innocence was exhaustingly praised by O Globo: “Goodbye, doctor”, “a good man”, “spartan discipline and athletic figure”, “dedicated person”, “24-hour doctor”, “would distribute candy to cheer up people on call” (O Globo, May 21st, 2015, p. 8), “peaceful personality”, “we've lost one of the good ones”, “he was a golden man” (O Globo, May 22nd, 2015, p. 10).

The third belief pointed by Vaz (2014, p. 86) is that, in order to have compassion, the person has to have “judgement of similar possibilities”. According to the author, the post-modern compassion is about the “maximum distance between the sufferer and the audience” (VAZ, 2014, p. 94). The reader must put oneself in the sufferer's shoes. Similar events can happen to anyone in any moment and the risk is generalized. This “judgement of similar possibilities” is exhaustively used by O Globo, which recurrently quotes the urgency of prevention and intensification of laws. The crime is seen as incomprehensible. There is the highlight of innocence and the raise of indignation. We build

a community imagined by virtual victims, according to the following example: “[...] Walking or riding a bike around Lagoa has brought another feeling to Rio residents: fear” (O Globo, May 21st, 2015, p. 11). In the journalistic text, there are strangers that are sympathize with the victim: “Despite not knowing the doctor, the cyclist Mário Luiz Vides [...] Came from São Gonçalo to pay his condolences to the family [...]” (O Globo, May 22nd, 2015, p. 10). “Psychology student and a rider, Alexandre Rodrigues [...] Brought a poster as a protest: ‘I don’t deserve to be stabbed’” (O Globo, May 21st, p. 10). Some groups are named as potential victims: “The death of the doctor [...] Caused commotion, fear and a feeling of helplessness between friends, family and many people who frequent the area - one of the most valued leisure spaces in the city and scenario of different events at the Olympic games in 2016 (O Globo, May 21st, 2015, p. 10).

In this politics of virtual victim, the necessity of punishment is highlighted. For the newspaper, the teenagers involved are not victims and should be punished more harshly. O Globo publishes a story, on May 21st, titled “In the region, number of teenagers arrested is higher than the adults”. In the same page, another news receives the title “Penal age in discussion”. Below, two articles compose the page, one pro and one con the reduction of the penal age. In the first page of the next day, we read: “The crime rekindled the debate about the reduction of the penal age, whose project is still ongoing in the Congress” (O Globo, May 22nd, 2015, p. 1). Inside the newspaper, that same day, an infographic with a map indicates the different places where the teenager would have approached people at Lagoa. At O Globo, many news reinforces the fact the aggressor is a teenager, important designation at that moment of the debate, as in the following examples: “[...] Three teenagers were arrested yesterday at Lagoa” (O Globo, May 21st, 2015, p. 10). Crime rates are associated to the age group: “The number of teenagers arrested in April at the area of 23rd BPM Leblon, which comprises Lagoa, was higher than the adults arrested” (O Globo, May 22nd, 2015, p. 14) and “In a month, 40 teenagers were arrested in the region for crimes of

robbery and drug trafficking, against 30 adults arrested. Therefore, they represented 57% over the total of 70 cases” (O Globo, May 22nd, 2015, p. 14). The relation between the numbers and the poll of reduction of penal age gets explicit in Rio’s governor speech, Luiz Fernando Pezão, source heard by O Globo:

I don’t want us to make unfruitful actions. Most arrests we make is with minors. It is unacceptable. The place of a minor is the school - he says. - I just want a discussion to be made at the National Congress. The police broke a record of minor’s arrests and it is not enough (O Globo May, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015, p. 8)

At Extra, the fact the aggressor is a teenager appear only on two excerpts: “[...] “A 16-year-old minor with 15 reported crimes, took part in the doctor’s death” (Extra, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015, p. 4) and “We are certain that the teenager effectively participated in the death” (Extra May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015, p. 4).

What Vaz (2014) calls politics of pity, there is an articulation between suffering and politics, in other words, there is the inclusion of the system, making the criminal a victim as well. This perspective is based on the idea that every human being is born equal and it is unfair that some suffer. The aggressors are victims of poverty and the audience, “superior”, should act politically against this situation. O Globo mentions only one sentence in this sense, in the last lines of a news report, through a source, the ex-wife of the murdered doctor: “They are generations of victims of our system, our lack of education, of health” (O Globo, May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015, p. 8). On Extra, on the other hand, this notion goes through different stories about the case in question, as in the first page of May 22<sup>nd</sup>: “16-year-old minor suspect in the death at Lagoa left school at 14 years old, has only seen his father twice and was neglected by his mother” (Extra, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015, p. 1). Within the edition, this perspective remains being worked:

Since 2010, there were 15 reported crimes - including robbery, theft, contempt and traffic - and nine by the Department of Socio-Educational

Actions (Degase). Other three times, X went through 14<sup>th</sup> DP, but as a victim. [...] Policemen reported the incidents as material neglect (twice) and child abandonment. In one of these reports, on October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2010, policemen say that X and the other minor were starving, without any money to come back home (Extra, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015, p. 3).

Therefore, the aggressor's description is very different in both newspapers. At O Globo, a news report describes each one of the thefts committed by the teenager with the use of a knife and emphasizes that was shortly on closed regimen. The newspaper briefly quotes that he was tortured by agents in a crime denounced by the Public Ministry, but the emphasis was in the cold blood of the killer in the case in question, as in the following excerpt, credited by the newspaper to the deputy that took care of the case: "The coldness of the teenage offender and the coward way in which he acted called my attention. He doesn't show any resentment for another human being" (O Globo, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015, p. 8). The journalistic text also assumes this perspective:

[...] Even before announcing the robbery, he brutally struck him on the back. Seeing the victim on the floor, the suspect, still according to the witness, kept striking him, ripping his abdomen open in a long and vertical deep cut, which reached four organs and took any possibility of Jaime to survive the attack [...] (O Globo, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015, p. 8).

In that same news report, a source is invited to explain what would lead the author to commit this infraction: "According to the psychologist Luiz Alberto Py, the author of the stabbing has symptoms of psychopathy: [...] 'I don't know this young man [...], But he gives me the impression that there was a desire to stab someone prior to the contact with the victim, there was an enjoyment in the act'". (O Globo, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015, p. 8).

At Extra, however, the aggressor gains characteristics that allow him to also be treated as a victim; there are many details about his life. This logic is visible in the headline "Two tragedies before the tragedy. No family, no school", on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, as well as in the following excerpts:

“Teenager suspect of killing doctor had a history of hunger, school evasion and abandonment” (Extra, May 22nd, 2015, p. 3) and “He confessed the robberies, but not the participation in the doctor’s death” (Extra, May 22nd, 2015, p. 4).

The different constructions of these characters indicate different dramatic projects that seek to create different effects of meaning in each group of readers. Although one cannot be certain that the newspapers strategies in fact were successful, it is necessary to say that they are organizing strategies of discourses that invite the reader to fill different positions and understand the crime in different configurations.

### **The criminal, the victim and the reader: possible triangulations**

The two newspapers belong in the same editorial group, the Organizações Globo, in its part dedicated to printed journalistic publications, Infoglobo. O Globo, the first informative media of the group, is published since 1925; Extra, on the other hand, begins to be published in 1998. The proposal was to produce a newspaper to an audience that did not consider using O Globo: lower classes (SILVA, 2012). Probably due to Extra had been more popular in middle class, the company created, in 2006, a newspaper geared towards lower classes, Expresso (SILVA, 2012).

The Globo group has a document of “Editorial Principles” available on the internet.<sup>5</sup> The orientation of the document is that the opinions expressed by the different vehicles of the group are common: “The texts can and must diverge in style, in focus, in emphasis on this or that argument, but the essence is the same”.

In its presentation on Infoglobo’s website, Extra is called “the most popular newspaper in Brazil” and Globo is considered the “preferred newspaper of people who are forming their opinion”. There are different audiences for both newspapers, specified through a type of social status and school level. While O Globo characterizes its audiences as B class

5 Available at: <http://g1.globo.com/principios-editoriais-do-grupo-globo.html#principios-editoriais>.

(50%), C (28%), A (15%) and DE (6%), Extra presents the following class configuration: C (58%), B (25%), DE (15%) and A (2%). In terms of school level, 56% of Extra readers have completed high school, 21% have completed elementary school and 17% have graduated university. Among *O globo* readers, however, most readers have graduated university (39%), following by high school (22%) and elementary school (14%).

Even though these differences of direction would correspond different narrative strategies to configure events, in case of Extra, there seem to correspond not only to market strategies in the sense of appealing to the reader. In July 2015, the same year of the crime at Lagoa, Extra published a first page that won the ExxonMobil prize (former Esso prize) of journalism in the category “First page”. The story, titled “From the whip to the lamp post”, approaching the death of a young man at São Luís, Maranhão, that, while tied to a post, was lynched after trying to steal a bar. Extra compared the photo of the scene to a painting of Debret from the 19th century, portraying a slave being whipped on a square. The story would describe the 29-year-old victim as black, young and resident of a slum. “If in 1815 the crowd would watch, powerless, to the barbarity, in 2015 the vast majority would applaud the savagery. Literally - in São Luis neighborhood - or through the internet. Out of the 1,817 comments on Extra’s Facebook, 71% supported the contemporary overseers” (Extra, July 8th, 2015, p. 1).

The approach of the Lagoa’s crime also had a negative repercussion on the Facebook comments. We have to consider that not every audience commenting the social media profile of Extra subscribes the newspaper. The editorial director, Octavio Guedes, said that, out of the 642 thousand fans the newspaper had on Facebook on May 2015, only 192 thousand were identified as living in Rio de Janeiro (MORETZSOHN, 2015).

Extra kept searching, in the next years, a different element in the coverage of urban violence. On August 16th, 2017, they announced the creation of a war editorial office. The insertion of this editorial office was not explained as “a simple change in the way of writing, but, mainly, in

the way of looking, interpreting and telling what is going on around us” (Extra, August 16th, 2017, p. 1).

We can infer that Extra’s trajectory in this and other similar cases can be related to the necessity of standing out in the market, the intention of making a different journalism and/or seeking identification with a simpler audience (target audience from lower classes with lower school status), which sees urban violence differently. A possible hypothesis is that the newspaper, a little bit more popular, are open to different forms of address in the sense of captivating the audience by the identification of pity with the criminal. The construction of characters allows the reader to also feel as a victim of a system or a social structure that, at some point, can also leave him/her in a state of social vulnerability. Extra does not narrate the crime in the aggressor’s point of view, but it opens up to multiple argumentative dispositions.

We systematized these characteristics below:

Table 1 - The criminal, the victim and the reader at O Globo and Extra.

Newspaper	O Globo	Extra
The criminal	The criminal is incomprehensible	The criminal is a victim of a social structure
The victim	Reinforcement of the victim’s innocence and evidence of details in its individual story	The real victim is de-personalized
The reader	The reader is invited as a virtual victim (alterity by risk)	The reader is invited in its pity (alterity by social exclusion)

Source: own elaboration.

In the analyzed coverage, we perceive two movements of event configuration: one that, in the first moment, add victims to the tragedy, relating different cases to affirm that teenagers that live in the slum are not only cause of violence, but victim of it; and in a second moment, talking about the past, especially a past of injustice and abandonment in the life of a teenager that will commit the act that becomes the journalistic event in question; and other projecting the future and the measures that must be adopted to avoid other crimes like this one. When someone

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seek explanations for a crime, in this case, the return is not to the past, but to a construction of bad men that do not value life, psychopaths. The own concept of virtual victim is based on a supposed future in which others will suffer as the first victim did.

Vaz and researchers (2006) say that the address to the middle class in the politics of virtual victim goes through the de-contextualization: Becoming a Virtual Victim does not imply any responsibility for the other's suffering. The individual identification of a subject with the victim is a mere trigger of concern to their future and their loved ones" (VAZ et al., 2006, p. 125).

On the other hand, authors claim a journalism that would reconnect the demand for security to the social context. In order to do that, they say, it is not necessary to re-edit the politics of pity: "We simply need a minimal sense of equality before the law or even before the possibility of being a victim" (VAZ et al., 2006, p. 126), highlighting that hardly the slum residents, that are the main victims of violence, appear as such in the news.

The different construction of victim and aggressor in the newspapers analyzed show us that this is a theme that can only be treated in view of a game of mirrors in which there are specific argumentative strategies. Either the reader must identify with the victim, or the reader must also identify with the social situation of the aggressor. The journalistic narratives are configured, thus, as argumentative devices (MOTTA, 2005, 2013) that use, among other resources, characters to create an identification with their readers through different projects in the journalistic market.

Thus, they are two different dramatic projects that institute crime, their characters and also position readers in different forms of experimentation of reality. In the analyzed case, the politics of pity and virtual victim are historic steps of the coverage of violence, but they are ways that co-exist in the same temporality. One configures the alterity in the risk and the other, in poverty, as shown by the authors that inspired this study (VAZ, CARVALHO and POMBO, 2006, p. 117)



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## Between contractual and polemical: value and representation in marketing narratives

## Entre o contratual e o polêmico: valor e representatividade nas narrativas mercadológicas

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**Abstract:** *In the contemporary network media configuration, discourses previously consolidated by authorized voices, which were built by unidirectional relations, change to a horizontal dimension, among the proliferation of subjects, which position themselves in the narrative dispute. Ordinary individuals and organized social groups, whose visibility used to be low, have had their competence of enunciation extended. Therefore, it increases the incidence of opposite discourses. Facing this risk, important brands get back their authority position in advertisement, adopting the strategy of assuming polemical values in their narratives as a way to achieve visibility. Some examples of this power structure are analyzed from the perspective of social semiotics, based on Greimas' semiotics.*

**Keywords:** *sociosemiotics; strategy; polemics; networks; brands.*

**Resumo:** *Na configuração midiática contemporânea em rede, discursos antes consolidados por vozes autorizadas que eram construídas a partir de relações unidirecionais são alterados para uma dimensão horizontal em meio à proliferação de sujeitos que passam a se posicionar na disputa de narrativas. Indivíduos comuns e grupos sociais organizados que costumavam desfrutar de baixa visibilidade têm sua competência de enunciação estendida. Aumenta, assim, a incidência de discursos opostos. Diante desse risco, importantes marcas retomam sua posição de*

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*autoridade na publicidade, adotando a estratégia de assumir valores polêmicos em suas narrativas como modo de atingir visibilidade. Exemplos dessa estrutura de poder são analisados sob a perspectiva da sociosemiótica, baseada na teoria semiótica de Greimas.*

**Palavras-chave:** *sociosemiótica; estratégia; polêmica; redes; marcas.*

## Narrative, value and interaction

As an instrument of building meanings and circulating values in social environments, the creation of a narrative plays an important role in the field of communication studies, especially in the advertisement and media discourse. Among many possibilities of entering the fabric of meaning, there is the semiotics of action, studied by A. J. Greimas. Creating a canonic scheme, the intellectual proposes a narrative grammar which examines the syntactic and semantic positions between subject and valued object, created in paths of research, permeated by states of soul and mind, as well as processes of convincing and persuasion. In this path of exchanges, passages and transformations called narrative of junction, Greimas deals with the human subject as the one looking for value that becomes in relation with the other and with the significant objects in the world, projecting the idea of interaction, that we see develop recently in the works of Eric Landowski (2005).

Concentrating in the studies of social practices, in the field of social semiotics, Landowski dedicates himself to the treatment of semiotics of action in the field of “inter-action”, creating a theoretic formulation in which he creates regimen of interaction that go through filling a determining role in the composition of meaning. We go towards the conditions of production of meaning, surpassing the first notion of semiotics of text and reaching the ideas of situation and act, in which the meaning is treated in and by the experience and the immediate dimension of sensitivity. In this perspective, the notion of value, central as pre-set element of mediation in narratives of *junction*, surpasses the outlines of exchange relationships and starts considering the relationships of reciprocity and reflexivity, in which no value is given beforehand, but whose meaning (and value is meaning) arrives in the moment of interaction, in situation or in act.

By proposing the observation of these different types of interaction, Landowski widens the classical model of Greimas’ narrative, developing,

in complementarity and opposition to this model, what he called regimen of unity. By proposing the expansion of the initial model, the author puts in perspective the different “degrees of risk” that the subjects take on their own action of building meaning.

Thus, it considers in the regimen of interaction and meaning of scheduling, oriented by the principle of regularity, routine, manifestation of controlled risk. In opposition to this regimen, he postulates the regimen of accident or assent, guided by the principle of unpredictability or pure risk. These two regimens, contrary among themselves, are built in the passages through sub contrary axes, in which we localize the regimen of interaction of adjustment, founded by the principle of sensitivity and the regimen of interaction of manipulation or strategy, guided by intentionality. Both manipulation and adjustment follow open models of interaction, in which things cannot go exactly as planned, coexisting, therefore, with uncertainty and comprising a certain amount of risk observed in modalizations and modulations that involve different competences of subjects in interaction. In the strategy, it is about cognitive competences that can be modalized; in the adjustment, esthetic competences come in, competences that the subject already has and that do not depend on external mediation. Two types of interaction are established: the contractual and the contact.

In advertisement narratives, manipulation or strategy and scheduling constitute regimens of interaction and meaning that fill centrality, once they are based in an economy of exchanged founded in the mediation of a valuable object. Despite they work in a dynamic relationship of complementarity with other regimens, often propelled by them, these two regimens occupy the place of orchestrator of meanings, fitting a digression about their ways of structuring, coming from manipulation.

Regarding the implication with programming, in which values that lead interaction are regular, inscribed within a physical or symbolic causality, manipulation foresees the transformation of the subject of state,

considering as a subject that has a project, that knows what he wants and interacts with the destinator through negotiation and contracts.

The contractual and affective dimension in which base the advertisement narratives in their task of creating a subject in relation with values established in circulation develops within consensual and polemical relationships.

Inside these relationships, the motivations of subject are highlighted in its interpretative path, that can have two types: critical motivation and consensual motivation (CIACO, 2013, p. 149-150).

The critical motivation is founded in a type of interaction in which the subject is called to make decisions, make choices, resetting the meanings that involve his daily actions, acting, thus, in the re-signification of the world around him. It is this type of motivation that orients the transformations of instituted habits, creating new forms, forms of being, feeling in social, going through values inscribed in objects. It is here that especially accentuates the path of destinators, that play with the offer of products and services that are presented as “innovative”, as well as the edification or alteration of costumes in social. The critical motivation moves, in its essence, the volitive character of the subject in the relationship with identity or economic values. Therefore, in the complex overdetermination of a “wanting to do” to “be” are localized in the strategic mechanism of seduction; from wanting to do to have, it is the strategic mechanism of temptation.

Otherwise, the consensual motivation is based in the recurrence of narrative paths, in which we only update a fiduciary relationship already experimented, very common, for instance, in cases of reiteration of beliefs crystalized that commonly orient actions. This process corresponds to fixation and strengthening of established thematic roles, acting in paths of loyalty of consumption in which brands usually benefit. The consensual motivation orients the subject in relation with value through the modality of “should”, articulated in a “should do” to “be/have”. In the board of reiteration in which support the stereotypical discourses, the

deontic modality of “should-be” operates in a way of emptying meaning of everything that is different.

Concentrating in dynamics of strategy and motivation, following the subjectivating perspective of Landowski, what matters to us is to deal with mechanisms of opening manipulation, putting in perspective the communication of values that only gain meaning in and by interaction. That implies approaching contractual relationships and, overall, polemical relationships that are in the basis of this meaning regime.

As a textual manifestation that explores values linked to beliefs, habits and tastes that circulate in the social, advertisement shows itself as a fertile terrain for the approach of the main issues that orient this work. In which way advertisement strategies, based mainly in relationships of exchange and mediation, are being structured (or re-structured) in a scenario of network communication that is increasingly counting with the participation of different subjects in complex processes of enunciation; how these enunciative subjects interact in environments of visibility, operating in the problematization and/or recognition of different discourses endowed with specific power structures.

In order to get deep into this discussion, we chose as object of analysis a set of commercial narratives that gained a wide repercussion from the polemical dimension, dealing with themes referring to values and representation in social, as the imposition of body standards and sexual diversity. The main objective is to understand how these mechanisms of enunciation come about in tensions between the contractual and polemical structures that orient these narratives and how their subjects have been acting in the relationships of interaction and meaning.

### **Polemic in visibility**

The economic, political and social transformations in the last decades, in addition to the advances in social network communication and its effects on participative potentiality, have been pointing towards reflections



around the creation of meanings around issues of identity and subjective representation in different social groups in public spaces and in visibility. In this direction, discourses consolidated by authorized voices in different social fields which were edified from unidirectional relations, predominant until then, began to face the perspective of horizontality through the proliferation of voices that began positioning themselves in the dispute for narratives.

In this action, the competence of enunciation extended to common subjects and organized social groups gains perspective, as collectives, NGOs, unions, that used to have few or no visibility. Invested in the visibility that, in a discursive level, validates discourses in the social level, these subjects begin to occupy roles in the most diverse enunciative scenes, acting as actors-destinators - or even co-authors - in the messages in circulation.

Moving values in a form of interaction that seeks to speak directly with the receiver, in the molds of a me-you relationship, the advertisement discourse is shown as an important place of manifestation of these paths. As we know, such discourse tends to play with the construction and consolidation of stereotypes, betting on symbolic model constructions that act in relation with what the subject has with himself and with the social. However, such models, as well as the concepts and notions instituted around them, do not correspond necessarily to absolute truths, but to structures that act in the reduction and neutralization of differences. The massive reiteration of these images in the level of visibility tends to make us see them as the only truth to be followed, putting aside other forms of perception.

If, on one hand, the advertisement discourse operates with hegemonic models that are fed in continuity, on the other, the possibility of proliferation of opposed discourses has gained strength through the increasing presence of subjects that assume their enunciative capacity in the occupation of spaces recognized of visibility in paths of promotion of wider discourses given in the axis of negation through contrary and

contradictory categories. While making different values visible, these subjects begin to act in the re-signification of these values, de-constructing them through decisional criticism.

In the manifestation of what we can call counter-discourses, it is important to reinforce the forms of expression used, that call attention in the figurative level to the tour de force created in the field of enunciation. Among these modes of expression are the tradition performatic actions of protesting, individually or collectively, graffiti and parodies, even the so-called internet memes, which, as a way of communication and interaction nowadays, quickly spread on the net, reaching a wider audience.

Through the different occurrences that we see being added nowadays, in a way of forming a discursive referential chain, we highlight the ad of a product in the cosmetic industry for the body (Image 1) that had a strong repercussion in the polemic dimension.

Image 1 - Billboard of the advertisement campaign Protein World (2016) in the London underground.



Source: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-3386576/Protein-World-s-New-Year-New-advert-slim-women-bikinis-sparks-fury.html>.

Image 2 - Performance in front of the Protein World ad.



Source: <http://www.stylist.co.uk/life/the-best-and-funniest-takedowns-beach-body-ready-adverts-campaigns-bikini-photos>.

Image 3 - Manifestation in the social network.



Source: <http://www.thehippocollective.com/2015/05/25/billboard-beauties-sky-high-sexist-advertising-and-why-big-business-just-dont-get-it>.

It is Protein World's advertisement campaign, which, by spreading posters on the London subway with messages about a stereotypical body standard, suffered rough criticism from the passerby's, who manifested

in loco with direct interference in the posters, later shared on the internet in social media, blogs and different posts, resulting even in a protest on Hyde Park.

The advertisement piece that caused such reaction had its narrative structured around a questioning enunciation: “Are you beach body ready?”. The sentence was followed by the picture of a model in a bikini, showing a tanned body and a defined waist, pointing standards nearly unattainable for most people, posing beside the advertised product: a supplement for losing weight presented as the solution to get the beach body.

By glorifying an idealized model of body, not fortuitously female, the advertisement piece was target of criticism from users, which, in its majority, did not see themselves represented and felt embarrassed facing the harassment of the narrative, which named as apt to go to European beaches in the upcoming summer only the bodies who fit the standard. Accusing the company of body shaming<sup>3</sup>, many users manifested themselves directly in the same enunciative space of the brand, rewriting the proposed sentence with other sentences as: “Every body’s ready”, “you are wonderful as you are”, “your body is not merchandise”, etc. The movement of response did not take long to spread around the internet, with great adhesion, occupying platforms of petition requesting the company to immediately take down the posters - and overall, the main social media, as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, where users built exclusive pages to give voice to their critical positions.

Using different resources and forms of expression - artistic interventions in the posters, performances in loco or on the internet, parodies (Images 2 and 3), exploring humor as element of double isotopy, and protests - the recipient begins, then, to exert their interpretative path in the field of visibility. Manifesting other values in the sphere of validation of discourses through their critical motivation, the recipient begins to act as destination in the re-operation of the meanings built, and, thus, in its re-signification.

3 Name given to the practices that people are led to be ashamed or embarrassed about their bodies.

Even though the institutions of advertisement regulation defended that the ad did not contain grave offenses towards the general target audience, counting with other representative entities, which named the group of critics to the ad as “extreme”, and even in the feminist movement, which positioned against the critics saying that the woman is not as vulnerable, the controversy resulted in the prohibition, on behalf of the London city hall, of the exposition in public spaces as the subway, of advertisements that promote stereotypical images considered harmful to the public health, such as that ad from Protein World.

Throughout all this movement of proliferation of voices in the public space and visibility, it is important to reinforce the occurrence of an expressive raise in sales of the advertised product. What would be considered by some a contradiction unveils, in fact, a phenomenon that is not strange to the market, enabling us to reach the field of strategies.

### **Strategic actions in the re-signification of values**

The accentuation of the phenomenon of participation, observed in the taking of voice from enunciation instances on behalf of recipients, takes us to reflections about the ways of presenting the regimen of interaction and the meaning of manipulation. With the advance of the digital network of communication, the issue that arises surpasses the standard of a centralized, unidirectional manipulation, putting in perspective the possibility of effective action of each interactor, which also fills the position of manipulator in the negotiation of meanings.

In this scenario, which orients the structure of a new market economy, the strategy of many brands to keep active has been bringing their narratives towards the point of view of diversity, going towards visibility instead of denying it.

A symbolic example of companies that walk towards this direction is the beer industry, as we can observe in a news report published on *Folha de São Paulo* on October, 23th, 2016 in the market section, having as headline the following sentence: “Beer brands distance themselves from the stereotype of the woman in a bikini” (MENA, 2016). The text of the

news report puts in discussion the process of transformation in the way of interaction of the brands with the customer in the current scenario, highlighting the case of beer brands that, for many years, explored the stereotype of the objectification of the female body. It highlights as re-orientation of this narrative Itaipava's advertisement campaign, brand from the Petropolis group, that, after suffering harsh criticism from sectors of society in general, and, more specifically, feminist groups, felt obligated to re-direction its narrative under the risk of losing market. The same challenge was taken by another big brand of the field, Skol: after the 2015's carnival campaign, with the title "leave the NO at home", the brand suffered a massive amount of criticism regarding their posture, considered sexist, manifested by many memes, parodies, etc. and they've decided to re-orient their narrative. In Itaipava's case, the campaign in question tries to abandon the model of exploring the female body, taken as a consumption object in association with the product, adopted in many previous campaigns led by a female character called Verão (Summer), known for her physical attributes (Image 4). Without abandoning the character - which, according to company statistics, significantly contributed for the leverage in sales -, the new narrative of the brand brings her fully dressed, leading an enunciative scene beside a popular rapper, who sings the qualities of the drink (Image 5).

Instead of focusing on gross comparisons between the female body and the drink, having as main resource the emphasis on erotic parts of the body, the advertisement piece formulates a fantastic narrative in which the lead character Verão casually shares the scene with the popular rapper and other secondary characters (Image 6), who act in the "histórias de Verão" (Summer stories), filled with lots of beer.

Image 4 - Advertisement poster. Campaign “Verão é nosso” (Summer is ours), from the group Petrópolis.



Source: <http://adnews.com.br/public/img/noticias/ck/images/ita.JPG>.

Images 5 and 6 of the advertisement piece (Tribo)Verão sempre vence - Summer always wins (2016), from the Petrópolis group.



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wj6l0iZTUDI>.

In the action of re-directing the brand, occurs, in fact, as the news report says, a distance from the stereotype of the objectified woman, so exhaustingly explored by the beer industry in other occasions and that



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seems to not have popularity anymore, to give way to a diverse mode of female presence, which allow us to say that a step was taken towards the re-signification of values. However, it is important to reinforce the fact that, in this case, even without the appeal of the bikini, reinforced by sexualized poses, there is still an association to the product with the woman figure. More than that, the persistence of the objectified body becomes clear in the final scene of the advertisement - therefore, very impactful - when the character herself makes a gesture mentioning her gluts, directing the gaze towards them (Image 6). Throughout the film, other women in bikini were shown in a wide frame, since the scenario, not fortuitously, is a beach.

Adhering to the strategy of re-directing value, a set of narratives developed through actions of communication of traditional brands can be observed. It is the case of Natura, a strong representation in the cosmetic sector that, in 2015, put their products in daily scenes reproduced in the soap opera *Babilônia*, broadcasted by Rede Globo de Televisão. The action of *merchandising* or *product placement* would not have anything different if the story did not present, amongst their lead characters, a homosexual elderly couple, played by two of the most acclaimed Brazilian actresses, Fernando Montenegro and Natália Timberg.

Since the initial scenes, receiving an impact due to the first episode, the channel showed a public display of affection among them, including a kiss on the lips. The scene caused a great repercussion, especially on social media, creating a stir on blogs, newspapers and magazines from different segments of the market. In this case, we highlight *Exame* magazine, a business magazine, with the headline: "Congressman Marco Feliciano (PSC-SP) is mobilizing a boycott to Natura" In a message in his personal Facebook page (Image 7), the politician, who belongs to the religious group in congress, ask people to stop buying and selling products of the brand until they withdrew the official sponsorship to Rede Globo's soap opera.

On the same day, the newspaper specialized in the communication and marketing department called *Meio e Mensagem* said: "Natura



responds to Babilônia's controversy: Sponsor of the soap opera, brand says they accept plurality and values tolerance". Days before, congressmen from the religious group already published a note rejecting the soap opera, inviting people to boycott the channel.

Image 7 - Marco Feliciano's post inviting people to boycott the brand Natura.



Source: [www.facebook.com/PastorMarcoFeliciano/photos](http://www.facebook.com/PastorMarcoFeliciano/photos).

Shortly after, still in 2015, on Valentine's day, Boticário, Natura's competitor and a giant company in the cosmetic sector in Brazil, invested on an advertisement campaign whose main theme was the celebration of diversity in the ways of loving. In the advertisement film, published on network TV and on YouTube, the discursive strategy seeks to promote the adhesion of the recipient from a narrative created in two sequential steps: in the first 30 seconds, the actors appear on scenes buying gifts on Boticário stores. The editing of the video alternates the characters, with different characteristics: first, a young man, then, a young woman, later an older woman and an older man, suggesting that these duos would become couples. In the second part of the video, the actors come to their partners house to meet them on Valentine's day, when they reveal gay and straight couples with age differences between the two (Image 8). Operating with actions of the expected and the unexpected, the

narrative leads the viewer to believe that the end of the story would be a gift exchange between the conventional couples, presented beforehand, to, in a second moment, explore the surprise of diversity and then, call attention to the message lead by their products. The whole film is supported by the instrumental version of the popular song “Toda forma de amor”, by Lulu Santos and Ronaldo Bastos, highlighting the excerpt “E a gente vai à luta/E conhece a dor/Consideramos justa toda forma de amor”, acting as reinforcement in the credibility and validation of the narrative.

Image 8 - Frames of the film by Boticário's brand, when couples in diverse formations meet to celebrate Valentine's day (2015).



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4b8BMnolDI>.

In this action, the brand makes a strategic use of the context of debate over homosexuality, since the advertisement had the background of the approval of a law allowing the civil union between same sex couples in the United States, with big repercussion on media, especially digital networks, with the viralization of a filter with rainbow colors applied on profile pictures.

Such action can be seen, however, as a strategy of positioning the brand in the market of narratives, once one of their main competitors, Natura, had started this conversation when sponsoring the soap opera Babilônia.

As it often happens when minority segments gain visibility in positive social spaces, the piece gained a reaction from groups wanting to assure the status quo. In addition to internet quotations and complaints at Conar, gaining less visibility, the reactions included, once again, invitations from the religious group at Congress through the minister Silas Malafaia, who, acting strongly on social media, was in charge, this time, of the call to action to boycott the brand.

However, according to many posts, there were some adhesions to the boycott, but later the results in sales for the brand were positive, in this case, propelled precisely due to the controversy.

Seeking to equally build positions in the market, other big brands of the sector, such as Avon, for example, have been following the strategy of building more diverse narratives regarding representation, trying to assert their place - or non-place, since this strategy of positioning, as all massive action, runs the risk of, instead of setting them apart, acting leveling the speeches, going back to the initial point, of reiteration and consensus.

## **Strategy and risk**

Following the recent social transformation, within the dialogic perspective in which are localized the volitive subjects of manipulation, observed, then, adding a set of advertisement narratives that, instead of focusing essentially in crystalized stereotypical discourses, began to create wider narratives as social representation, betting in a bigger diversity in the promotion of alterities. In this perspective, they seek to approach forms of expression and lifestyles that are out of the standard, commonly configured by the exhaustive reiteration promoted by this own speech.

This action, that implies a re-structure of narratives in question, it can be more well analyzed through a deepening of the characteristic

of discontinuity of manipulation in the formation of regimens of interaction and meaning. It is precisely in the discontinuum, in which strategies and negotiations of contracts are established, the risk is localized, conducting the principle of opening the manipulation in the creation of senses. Incorporating models of subjectivity and representativity that weren't viable until then can, in a context of social-cultural transformations, add value to brands, but such action is not linked to the path of adhesion or not to the recipient, which implies assuming degrees of risk in the interaction.

In this perspective, the main task of the recipients in the creation of meanings is acting in the mediation of risk, used not as a vector of transformation, but as a business strategy that aims the assurance and expansion of the commercial action, promoting its continuity.

Everything given around the circulation of values that were not created by the recipients in question, nor presented in an injunctive way to the recipients, both acting in relation of the presupposition. Before, they are values of the social absorbed by these recipients, that begin to play with values of the recipient, which, in turn, is a subject that acts through a "want to do", as we've previously mentioned.

Landowski (2005, p. 12) says that the main orientation of interaction for manipulation consists in "[...] Firstly attribute, or recognize in the other a desire and, then, look for their motivations and reasons for acting". In this perspective, the destinator shows knowledge of values of the recipient and begins to negotiate with them. However, recognizing the other as a volitive subject does not necessarily mean attributing autonomy. What is at stake in this relationship are principles of intentionality, in the strategic field. In this direction, the academic concludes: "[...] "If the strategy proposes to recognize the desire of the other [...] It is only to find the best way of manipulation, of taking possession over their actions, motivations and reasons, eventually the most secret ones".<sup>4</sup>

4 The original: "[...] en premier lieu attribuer, ou reconnaître à l'autre une 'volonté' et, à part de là, chercher à peser sur ses motivations et ses raisons d'agir". "[...] si le stratège s'astreint à reconnaître le vouloir d'autrui [...] c'est uniquement en vue de mieux pouvoir le manipuler,

## Final considerations

According to Greimas, each and every narrative structure lay in a controversial structure that, in turn, fills the role of an anti-subject widely present in the collective imaginary and acting in the construction of meaning. In discursive configurations, subject and anti-subject can manifest themselves through presence and absence relations. These relations are figurativized through structuring visibility games in power relations that move speeches that are effective in the social, especially in advertisement narratives. In this tour de force, the action of making contrary speeches invisible in an environment commonly oriented by the reiteration of unique models of perception, can certainly get the expected success, the same way giving them visibility can call attention to the narrative in an unusual way, configuring, then, different strategies for promotion of consumption. The phenomenon is not new; in fact, it is very recurring in history of advertisement: alluding to other's qualities to call attention to oneself.

As we can see, everything happens in the field of interaction by strategy, in which we develop contractual and controversial relations, fundamented in relations of veridiction and fiducia that sustain the narratives in circulation socially.

Aiming to attend market values, the narrative program of every advertisement action follows the dynamic of security, oriented by a series of auxiliary programs focused on risk evaluation and control. Distancing or reducing any risk that may threaten the multiplication or even the conservation of investments constitutes, thus, the attribution of a so-called strategic doing. Within this scope, there are studies of prognostic, analysis and market tendencies, developed through behavioral studies that seek to anticipate necessities and desires of customers inserted there. In this path of analysis of values in circulation, consumer profiles are drafted, molding the path of images in the world that gain

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de prendre plus sûrement prise sur lui en agissant sur ses motivations et ses raisons, éventuellement les plus secrètes.”

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representation in the ways of being and feeling, celebrated in the advertisement discourse.

In this direction, we verified, in the highlighted narratives, a movement of incorporation of small alterations in the models of subjectivity previously standardized and reiterated, pointing towards actions of re-signification of values. Walking between the expected and the unexpected, we see a movement not of great rupture, but of gradual adaptations in the figurative lines of carved lifestyles, revealing the strategic action of destinators in question, as shown in the case of Itaipava brewery and O Boticário.

The issue that seems to be relevant to us in these cases points towards the action of destinators in the space-time axis of enunciation, in the level of discursive manifestation. More than following the social time, of socio-economic and cultural transformations inherent to the advertisement discourse, it is about a concentrated effort in the understanding of the timing of movement of the images at stake in the enunciative scene. Therefore, the temporality acted in convocation of figurative coating of values. If, on one hand, the delay of this action creates room not only for competitors, but also for the recipient, that, invested in its interpretative path, launched in visibility, can manifest contrary positions - often, in a hostile manner, shared mainly through digital media - on the other, getting ahead of oneself can distance consumers that did not reach or do not recognize the path of re-structuration of unilateral discourses, offering bigger risks to brands. In this perspective, it seems to us that the stronger destinators, brands with solid action power, tend to bet on bigger risks in the path of incorporation of diverse values, while others put themselves as tolerant subjects, admitting any difference, neutralizing the debate. In the big picture, all of them seem to unite in the path of adhesion of the polemic discourses with the - if we can't say, for now, only - main goal of reverting themselves in their favor, therefore, generating income. That does not exclude, however, the occurrence of eventual profound change, not only superficial, in their ways of presence as for a real engagement regarding diversity. Through transformations in social

that we've talked about, that seems to be, in fact, the way to follow in the constellation of prudence, through which the market narratives seem to orient themselves. That would be reflected in the structural conception of each brand, figurativized in its action practices in the market that go beyond sales in itself. For example, in its politics of access and handling sustainable resources and human resources, which directly reflects in the issue of employability geared towards the diversity that the brand wants to represent.

The investigation about the contractual and controversial dimension around the issue of values and representativity in the advertisement discourse puts this research in extension, given that not only their recipients are interlocutors in their discourses, but the weave of network space creates a series of connections with other destinators and recipients, potentializing significant and re-significant conflicts and/or encounters. What implies saying that it is not only about clarifying the way media or the advertisement discourse interact through manipulation or strategy, but who are the actors of this manipulation in this path of presupposition that have been assuming defined outlines of showing itself increasingly through the image of the recipient, invested in means and resources of expression to exercise the interpretative path in mediatic and social visibility that makes the discourse *be*.

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## Uses of the “Smart Faith”: IURD’s entrepreneurial hermeneutics

### Usos da “fé inteligente”: a hermenêutica empreendedora da Iurd

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Leandro De Paula Santos<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** *This paper discusses the praise of the entrepreneurial subjectivity among the Brazilian Neo-Pentecostal movement and analyzes how the Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (IURD) construes certain biblical narratives. We deal with the transformation of the concept of “entrepreneur” and the context of its current massive diffusion, by arguing that one of the key tasks of the neoliberal rationality has been to shift the idea of the subject-worker towards the notion of the enterprising self. This outlook may be connected to the Prosperity Gospel’s dynamics in Brazil, such as the progressive constitution of the entrepreneurial subjectivity inspired by the Bible.*

**Keywords:** *entrepreneurship; neo-pentecostalism; neoliberalism; prosperity gospel.*

**Resumo:** *O artigo discute a exaltação da subjetividade empreendedora entre o público neopentecostal, tendo como referência empírica interpretações de histórias bíblicas difundidas pela Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus. Tematizamos a noção do “empreendedor”, sua transformação histórica e sua massiva popularização hoje, argumentando que uma das tarefas primordiais da racionalidade neoliberal consiste na substituição da ideia do sujeito-trabalhador pela do sujeito-empresa. Esse ideário parece dialogar com dinâmicas atuais da teologia*

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*da prosperidade no Brasil, analisadas a partir da construção da subjetividade empreendedora sob inspiração bíblica.*

**Palavras-chave:** *empreendedorismo; neopentecostalismo; neoliberalismo; teologia da prosperidade.*

## Introduction

“The bible is rich in stories and episodes that teach us and illustrate very well how the entrepreneur should proceed to reach success” (PRESTES, 2014a). This motto took Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (Iurd) to promote, in its website, a series of editorials associating biblical characters to the entrepreneurial subjectivity and praxis. Using educational and inspirational approaches, these contents mention stories in the Bible and point towards models of conduct to be followed by those who seek success in their own businesses.

Presenting these characters as paradigms for entrepreneurs, Iurd seems to do more than contribute for the promotion of entrepreneurship as a more adequate way of being in the world today: it neutralizes this subjectivity as a a-historic data. If the conversion of the subject-worker into enterprising-self rises as the first task of neoliberal rationality, the attribution of entrepreneurial characteristics to ancient creatures lead us to believe that the entrepreneurial conduct does not result from specific social and political injunctions, but it is a natural propension - if it is stimulated for men and women destined to success.

Methodologically inspired in the Foucauldian discourse analysis (FOUCAULT, 1996), this study is based in a punctual investigation of Iurd’s efforts in the field of communication responsible for establishing the interface between a properly religious ethos of their temples and the secular public sphere. We are interested in showing - in the path of researches such as Cunha’s (2012), Aires and researchers (2017), and Patriota, Casaqui and Rodrigues (2017) - that the idea proposed by the church transcends their temples, also spreading in different media platforms owned by Iurd. In order to do that, we’ve selected texts shared in the official website of the church which exhort the entrepreneurial attitude, seeking to highlight the hermeneutical bet present in readings of biblical characters such as David, Solomon and Joseph from Egypt.

In the first section of the article, we make a route that shares the emergency and the historical turns of the concept of entrepreneurship, contextualizing the demand for the massive popularization of

this model of subjectivity today. Based on recent sociological insights that point towards the conjugation between entrepreneurship and the neo-Pentecostal imaginary of the country (ALMEIDA, 2017; GUTIERREZ, 2017; DUTRA, 2015), the second section takes the texts shared by Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus as examples of an increasing religious sensitivity that promote standards of citizenship adjusted to the rarity of a state of social welfare. We begin this effort interpellating the omnipresence of the image of the entrepreneur nowadays in order to situate the historical appearance of this notion as a moral regulator of our relationship with work.

### **History of an idea, path of a practice**

The term entrepreneur was mentioned for the first time in 1283, according to the French National Center of Textual and Lexical Resources.<sup>3</sup> Even though the word was created in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the appearance and nomination of individuals as being “entrepreneurs” would only happen in the following centuries. Richard Cantillon is one of the first thinkers to problematize this image, saying that the inhabitants of a country, with the exception of the prince and the land owners, must be divided into two groups: entrepreneurs and wage workers.

Entrepreneurs live with an uncertain income, and everyone else has income during the time they work, although their functions and categories are very different among themselves. The army general has a wage, the courtier has a pension and the servant has a wage, all of them are included into the last group. Everyone else are entrepreneurs, either establishing themselves with a capital to develop their own business, or being entrepreneurs in their own work, without any type of fund, can be considered as living in an uncertain way; homeless people and even thieves are “entrepreneurs” in their fields (CANTILLON, 1950, p. 43).

The wideness of identities associated to the entrepreneur activity result in a wide definition of entrepreneur as “entrepreneur of their own

3 Definition and etymology available at: <http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/entrepreneur>. Accessed in: March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

work”. The uncertainty and the lack of bonds of subordination - what we now call “autonomy” - would be the distinctive characteristic of the entrepreneur in this first definition.

With the beginning of the Industrial Revolution around the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the successive process of accumulation of the means of production by few individuals, the notion of entrepreneur as autonomous worker loses strength, gradually giving margin to the characterization that would mark this image during almost two centuries: the entrepreneur starts to be understood as a “individual macro entrepreneur” that person that obtains means of production, hires wage workers and is concerned with the insertion of their products (or services) in the market. If before, according to Cantillon’s definition, a big part of the population could be considered entrepreneurs, the gears of the industrial capitalism demanded a social re-order in the field of work: entrepreneurs of their own work became wage workers, and the notion of entrepreneur being restricted to few “big capitalists”.

According to the German sociologist Werner Sombart, entrepreneurs become “the only organizers of the economic process”, agents capable of “unifying capital and work, determining the direction and the volume of production, establishing the relationship between production and consumption” (SOMBART, 1902 apud COSTA, 2010, p. 24). In opposition to Max Weber, that saw moral and religious justifications for the accumulation of capital, to Sombart, “the love for the business” would be the motivation of an entrepreneur. Even though they diverge in this issue, both sociologists agreed about the presence of a practical, instrumental rationality, necessary for the adequation of the subject to the logics of the political-economical emerging system. Big capitalists of the time gathered aspects as disposition for risk and uncertainties; analytical judgement capable of reducing all processes to “cost/benefit” rationalization; and, mainly, desire for profit. Such gathering of attributes made the entrepreneur a rare individual, a “tycoon” identity possible to few people, a type of “conduct that is accessible in an unequal measure and

to relatively few people, in a way that it constitutes a highlighted characteristic” (SCHUMPETER, 1997, p. 89).

The restriction of entrepreneurial identity is followed by the width of identity of the industrial employee. The notion of job can be thought as a historic construct that arises with the concept of “right to work, inscribed in the relationship of work over time and makes it a bond of subordination between an individual and a collective identity, the company (GAUTIÉ, 1998, p. 74). Adequate to the political and economic context of the time, the idea of a group of individuals that was, at the same time, worker and consumer was maintained for many decades in an conjoint effort of the emerging states and the big capitalist companies.

However, the business model funded under Fordist concepts (hierarchization, division and specialization of work) would begin to fall in late 1960’s, and the understanding about the image of the entrepreneur would transform throughout the following decades. Two “events” constitute important keys for understanding these transformations: the first is the elaboration, in the 60’s, of the theory of human capital; the second is the self-criticism of the business world regarding the claims directed by social movements at that period.

The theory of the human capital, developed by researchers of the School of Chicago led by Theodore Schultz, transform the understanding about the “work factor”. Understood as the provision of physical strength (that, little by little, is replaced by modern machinery), the contribution of the workers begins to be increasingly associated to their knowledge and their abilities, resulted

[...] From an investment of capital made in education, in its general skills of communication and calculus required to participate in the productive process and in specific skills required by their work in particular, a capital investment variably financed by the State, by the employee or by the employer. Thus, the employee is a produced means of production, an item of capital equipment (JOHNSON, 1960 apud LÓPES-RUIZ, 2004, p. 201).

Making the distinction between inherited and acquired skills, one argues that, although the inherited skills are similar in every population, the acquired skills “have been deeply altered in countries where a modern economy was developed” (SCHULTZ, 1968 apud LÓPEZ-RUIZ, 2004, p. 208). The reason for that would be the investments of these countries in terms of school and training programs inside the job. Foucault (2008, p. 315-316), however, observes that acquired skills contain “much wider elements, more numerous than the simple school learning or simple professional learning”, such as the “set of cultural stimuli received by a child”; the ‘medical care’ and the ‘health related activities’; “the capability of an individual to dislocate oneself, and particularly, migration.”

In summary, an “acquired knowledge living in the daily transit, belonging to the mundane culture” (GORZ, 2005, p. 9) and that cannot be formalized in a specific mold of knowing. “the form of performing tasks”, the author says, “cannot be formalized, neither be prescribed. What is prescribed is subjectivity, precisely that that only the operator can produce when “giving oneself” to the task (GORZ, 2005, p. 18). This subjective prescription, as we will see, “allow us to analyze all these behaviors [skill acquisition] in terms of individual entrepreneurship, of self-entrepreneurship with investments and income” (FOUCAULT, 2008, p. 317).

The attention of this new theory would lie over the necessity of the worker to invest increasingly and continuously in their acquired capabilities, since such investment would be reverted into an increase of market value for their services, therefore increasing their income. Here, the notion of “self-investment” is created, which will affect not only the attitude of the subject towards his work, but, more profoundly, his perception of self. The understanding of men as capital passible of investment opens a margin for comparison with a small company, a “company unit” (FOUCAULT, 2008, p. 310), since it also needs applications to create future profit.

The theory of human capital interfered in the conception that the entrepreneur started to have, from the 70's onwards, to the extent that it took from the entrepreneurial identity the exclusivist character it once had - specially throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: it was popularized, becoming gradually possible and desired for the most diverse subjects in western societies. The entrepreneur began to be a form of being in the world, an increasingly required subjectivity by any activity within neoliberal rationality. In this approach, the entrepreneur becomes the ideal man of the end of the millennium. Contrary to the wage worker from the previous century, who depended on the State and the company to survive, the entrepreneur is conceived as the one who assumes, in an autonomous way, his responsibility for his own destiny, not depending on collective networks of security, but performing a construction of self that prioritizes ideals associated to neoliberalism: efficiency, performance, productivity. According to Leite and Melo (2008, p. 45), this image is fitting to the “ideology of current capitalism, which arrives to ensure the adhesion and legitimacy to the activities that were previously devalued”, such as competitiveness and unrestricted individualism.

On the other hand, youth manifestations in the late 60's, which claimed for more authenticity and freedom of relations, are, little by little, incorporated by the liberal rationality, which renews its “spirit” metamorphosing the ideals that inspired these critics:

Thus, for example, qualities that, in this new spirit, are pawns for success - autonomy, spontaneity, mobility, rhizomatic capability, polyvalence (in opposition to the strict specialization of the old division of work), communicability, opening for others and for the new, availability, creativity, visionary intuition, sensitivity for the differences, capability of giving attention to others' experiences, acceptance of multiple experiences, attraction for the informality and search for interpersonal connections - are directly extracted from the repertoire of May, 68 (BOLTANSKI e CHIAPPELLO, 2009, p. 130).



Boltanski and Chiapello explain how a radical criticism to capitalism is put in service of the own system through a “literature of the new business management”, which transforms the claims in private objectives, rejecting a deeper criticism - about exploitation. Flexibility, autonomy, polyvalence, availability, creativity, visionary intuition... The pawns of professional success in late 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> are confused with the new skills acquired by the image of the entrepreneur, that does not assume the only profile of the “big entrepreneur”, assuming different identities and practices.

The diversification in motivations and forms of entrepreneurial activity gives margin to more and more people to embrace entrepreneurship as a way of life. In contemporary Brazil, such phenomenon can be easily perceived through different examples: kids and young adults adventuring themselves in the online world and being named “digital entrepreneurs”, aligning profit to social well-being to their purpose; the “mompreneurs”, that say they find in entrepreneurship more time to spend with their kids; and even the Individual Small Entrepreneur (MEI - Microempreendedor Individual), legal figure created by the federal government in 2009 with the objective of formalizing 10 million Brazilians working as autonomous entrepreneur.

As we will see next, such entrepreneur ideal, praised by public opinion<sup>4</sup> and shared among the Brazilian population, still aligns to one of the most visible social phenomena in Brazil nowadays: the advance of the neo-Pentecostal religious segment.

## Faith enterprise

Did you know that every 27 minutes a Brazilian enters the millionaires club? There is no doubt that anyone wants to be in this number. But desire is not enough, you have to earn it. Many people already made

4 See, for example: “Os heróis do capitalismo” (Veja, Jan 23<sup>rd</sup>. 2008); “Ganhei 1 milhão na internet” (Época, Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup>. 2010); “Eike Xiaoping. The new group of Brazilian millionaires has Eike Batista as an idol, he works a lot, competes with honesty, is proud of generating jobs and is not embarrassed of being wealthy” (Veja, 18 jan. 2012); “It is time to engage. The moment was never as favorable for new businesses. Know how to use it” (Exame PME, mar. 2012).

the decision to change their financial life, reach success and, mainly, be happy. Do your part and begin to fight today towards this goal too.<sup>5</sup>

That is how the Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus presents the Congress for Success, performed every Monday at the Templo de Salomão, in São Paulo. According to Iurd, over 10 thousand people go to the weekly meeting with the goal of “achieving victories in the financial life”<sup>6</sup>, since the recipe to become a millionaire would not be “taught in the economy courses, but rather acquired by using smart faith”.<sup>7</sup>

The invitation for the Congress for Success gives the explicit quality of statements proposing a change of lifestyle in the context of Iurd, the most known expression of Prosperity Gospel in the country.<sup>8</sup> With American origin, this theological discourse was created around the 20<sup>th</sup> century, combining elements of different religious and esoterica traditions, being popularized by the preaching of televangelists.

In synthesis, we can say that the Prosperity Gospel establishes a torsion in the puritan moral that Max Weber (2005) characterized as the root of the capitalist spirit. Instead of a methodical form of conduct, which conceives work as an ascetic duty to be rewarded by God in the other world, in the theology of prosperity, the relation with the divine brings benefits for the religious person right here right now: “through the vicar sacrifice of his son, God already did what he could for humanity, forgiving the original sin and leaving His grace of health, prosperity and victory available to men in this life” (MARIANO, 1996, p. 29-30).

The Calvinist logic analyzed by Weber would define that the attainment of wealth would be a type of God’s grace for His elected people, whose disciplined conduct at work would walk along an austere relationship with money. For the Prosperity Gospel, in turn, financial success

5 Prosperity Meeting, available at: [www.universal.org/reunioes/prosperidade](http://www.universal.org/reunioes/prosperidade). Accessed in: Feb. 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

6 Prosperity Meeting, available at: [www.universal.org/reunioes/prosperidade](http://www.universal.org/reunioes/prosperidade). Accessed in: Feb. 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

7 Prosperity Meeting, available at: [www.universal.org/reunioes/prosperidade](http://www.universal.org/reunioes/prosperidade). Accessed in: Feb. 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

8 For a description of the historic rise of the Church, see Almeida (2009) and Oro (2005).

would be presented as the fair object of search of the one who believes, aligned with an exaltation of mundane consumerism as individual right, authenticated by the heavens. Christ's sacrifice would've given a certain ontological dignity to the human creature, giving an outline to a specific logic of relationship with the divine: there would be a consortium made with God in the mode how chance is managed, form of control to which would converge the spiritual attention of each individual.

This idea of a "management of contingency" originated, in the beginning of theology of prosperity, a set of practices and beliefs of a magical character inspired on the new thought, popular cultural movement in 19<sup>th</sup> century USA that would propose certain parity between the notions of faith and positive thinking. As we will see ahead, new models of configuration of this spirituality seem to get in the current Brazilian context, among which we highlight for analysis the idea of "smart faith" promoted by Iurd.

In "Learn a faith that works" (CRUZ, 2015), the church says that "smart faith is practical and rational, and because of that it is not easily shaken. [...] It is very important that you develop in your rational life and faith, so that through that it would be possible to reach from God the wonders that He has reserved for His children". Such form of faith would prescribe a relationship with the transcendent that does not appeal for emotions, but for a search for concrete and visible effects in the life of the believer.

This uncommon way of uniting faith and reason would be applicable in the most diverse fields of life, even in marital relationships. It is what Patriota, Casaqui and Rodrigues (2017) show in a study that analyses therapeutic narratives present in The Love School, brand associated to Iurd that counts with many products such as TV programs, books, magazines, DVDs and even cruises. In them, it sets apart the "way how one processes the relationship between religion, entrepreneurship and affection in autobiographic therapeutic narratives, promoting an ideal of happiness based in a theology of results" (PATRIOTA, CASAQUI and

RODRIGUES, 2017, p. 81), in which “armored marriages” would be those where you use reason - not emotion - to solve marital problems.

Along with initiatives such as the advertisement campaign “I am Universal”,<sup>9</sup> the contents to which we resort<sup>10</sup> are an example of how the entrepreneurial spirit have been promoted by Iurd through a hermeneutical choice. We know that biblical narratives are characterized by a polysemy that, historically, was used for the most diverse theological currents. That said, it is interesting to bring to light the elements that are imposed in the exegesis proposed by Iurd of stories of the Old Testament, reinforcing the relationships between the religious imaginary and the secular demand for a specific type of subjection.

Smart faith is manifested, for example, in the interpretation given by the church to David’s story. King of Israel on the 10<sup>th</sup> century b. C., David is described as a shepherd that becomes a brave warrior, in addition to owning a poetic and musical sensitivity. Even though he is a sinner like any mortal, David would be transformed into a symbol of virtue due to his capacity of recognizing his own mistakes and sincerely seeking divine guidance: “For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. [...] Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”, sings the king in psalm 51.<sup>11</sup>

Central chapter in the character’s story is the unification of the Hebrew people under the form of a nation. In order to do that, it would be essential the conquest of the city of Jerusalem, whose location would allow the control over the different tribes of Israel. This event is narrated in the historical book of II Samuel, that comments the details of taking the city and David’s conscience that creates a plan traced from the

9 Since March, 2013, Iurd has a campaign titled “I am Universal”, composed by diferente vídeos shown in their channels on the internet and at Rede Record. The pieces are organized as first person interviews of supposed members of the church, telling their experiences of overcoming hardship and financial success.

10 We used texts posted between 2014 and 2015 with the tag “empreededor” on Iurd’s official website. Content available at: [www.universal.org/tags/empreededor](http://www.universal.org/tags/empreededor).

11 Psalm 51, verse 3 to 10. Bible Gateway, available at: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalm+51&version=NIV>

heavens: “Who am I, O god, so you brought me here?” [...] Because of your word, and according to your heart, you made all this greatness”.<sup>12</sup>

In “Know how to be an entrepreneur like David” (PRESTES, 2014c), Iurd says that

David acted like an entrepreneur to build his empire. He was a leader, as any entrepreneur must be. [...] Nowadays, the entrepreneur can re-do David steps to initiate his business and achieve his conquest. As Jerusalem was for David, the location has a strategic importance for the businessman. An ideal commercial spot brings up big clientele for the company and it is a form of free and constant disclosure of the business.

Tracing a parallel between the story of the king of Israel and the process of opening a company, Iurd naturalizes the entrepreneurial spirit as an attribute of David’s personality. To reach the goal of transforming dispersed tribes into a nation, the character would have employed that specific form of relationship with the divine: “David used his smart faith”. Such reading of the Biblical narrative, however, reserves the heavens a diffused role: smart faith corresponds properly here to the rationality that would conduct the action of the character and not a destination that would be fulfilled because it was written by God, as the book of II Samuel suggests.

That same rhetoric operation rules Iurd’s reading about other biblical characters whose entrepreneurial praxis as causing the reality, positioning divine intervention as a type of moral appraiser of chance. After uniting the Hebrew people, David would leave the kingdom of Israel for his heir, Solomon. If the father was known for his bravery, the son would be known for other trait: “He was the wisest of all men”, says the book of Kings.<sup>13</sup> His vast knowledge would be conceived by God as a response

12 2 Samuel 7, verse 18 to 22. *Bible Gateway* available at: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=II+Samuel+7&version=NIV>

13 1 Kings 4, verse 29-31. *Bible Gateway* available at: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Kings+4&version=NIV>

to Solomon’s order for the capacity of conducting fairly the people of Israel.<sup>14</sup>

With a 40-year-old kingdom, Solomon embodies one of the most known Biblical stories about the temptations of power. The wise king was tormented by lust and vanity, a man given to self-confidence and the passions of the flesh. Solomon was the author attributed for the Biblical book of Ecclesiastes, which consists in a philosophical approach about the lack of meaning in life, injustice, boredom and pride. The character seems to be a fierce critic of human condition, seeing himself subject to distress even if he enjoys different privileges: “To Solomon, the world is a never-ending process of boring repetitions, without variations that would attract our interest” (KIVITZ, 2009, p. 36). Facing the dilemma of existing, Solomon concludes, in his elder days, that “the end is to fear God, and keep his commandments; this is the duty of every man”.<sup>15</sup>

In “Solomon, the wise entrepreneur” (PRESTES, 2014d), Iurd builds a version of the character that does not contemplate the vicissitudes of his behavior, which take him to act many times against Divine will. Before, it is important to highlight Solomon’s spirit of leadership, responsible for making Israel a prosperous nation:

Solomon had the characteristics that a leader needs to have to win. When he took over the command of the kingdom, he eliminated conspirators. The entrepreneur must have the vision of who are his enemies, so he can face them in the best way. And Solomon knew who they were. The entrepreneur must be articulated, making alliances that can be beneficial for his businesses. Solomon established a commerce with neighboring cities and maintained diplomatic relationships with other kingdoms, which generated the progress of Israeli towns. In addition, when he married Naamah, he won a town of his father, the Pharaoh, raising his kingdom.

The king would act in a rational search for results: the achievements of the character would denote not a plan of God fulfilled through

14 1 Kings 3, verse 9-11. Bible gateway available at: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Kings+3&version=NIV>

15 Ecclesiastes 12, verse 11. Bible gateway available at: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ecclesiastes+12&version=NIV>

Solomon, despite his failed humanity, but an author strategy for success. Thus, the wise man aware of his own weaknesses arrives as an example of statesman with clear objectives and efficient tactics, marks of an entrepreneur: “Solomon had an empire, which, in a certain way, facilitated the application of his ideas, but in the small structures it is possible to execute basic actions, mirrored in the conduct of a king, that may help the enterprise to prosper” (PRESTES, 2014d). As it happens in the reading about David, therefore, smart faith of Solomon corresponds to the attitude of a disciplined strategist, that finds in God the moral source of his success.

Another story counted by Iurd is about the character Joseph, son of Jacob, descendent of Abraham. According to the book of Genesis<sup>16</sup>, Joseph would be his father’s favorite son, creating jealousy amongst his other children. When he was 17 years old, Joseph was surprised by a trap and sold by his brothers as a merchandise in a caravan of Egyptians. After years working as a slave and being unfairly isolated in a prison, Joseph reaches freedom and the protection of the pharaoh due to his gift of interpreting dreams. The character becomes a powerful man and, in the moment in which Canaan, his original land, starves, he has the opportunity to meet with his brothers again.

In the biblical narrative, the character has the chance to avenge his brothers, but is compelled to forgive them when he understands that the suffering he went through was part of a divine plan: “*não vos entristeçais, nem vos pese aos vossos olhos por me haverdes vendido para cá; não fostes vós que me enviastes para cá, senão Deus*”.<sup>17</sup> Filled with symbolism, the story inspired Thomas Mann to write the tetralogy “Joseph and his brothers”, book centered in the mythology of forgiveness: for Mann, Joseph is foreshadowing Christ himself, that would sacrifice himself in favor of his traitors (SCAFF, 1998).

16 Genesis 37. Bible Gateway, available at: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=genesis+37&version=NIV>

17 Genesis, 45. Bible Gateway, available at: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=genesis+45&version=NIV>.

A R T I C L E

In his presentation of the story, Iurd defines that “the example of the biblical hero must be brought for our present days, where the entrepreneur must have similar characteristics of Joseph: be persistent and committed; know to listen to learn; plan; calculate risks; establish goals; and systematically monitoring his operations” (PRESTES, 2014e). To Universal, when he stops being a servant to occupy an important position for the pharaoh, Joseph of Egypt would correspond to the contemporary figure of the entrepreneur. We highlight there the correct “usage” made by the character of the gifts given by the gods: “The entrepreneur cannot have the talent to interpret dreams like Joseph, however, he must have other abilities given by god and must enjoy them. Another important detail is to seek for divine inspiration” (PRESTES, 2014e). The transcendent puts himself, thus, in the condition of detail, when he remembers that “it is *also* necessary that the entrepreneur has a pact with Jesus” (PRESTES, 2014e, our highlight).

Examples like that suggest a possible disenchantment of the neo-Pentecostal sensitivity: instead of a “abracadabra” spirituality of the first story (MARIANO, 1996, p. 30), which claimed blessings of the heavens through magic statements and positive thinking, the theology of prosperity seems to instigate an imaginary based in the exercise of ethics in tune with the demands of the current labor economy.

### **Final considerations**

The discourse analyzed illustrate the argument of our debate: the orientation of the moral scope of biblical narratives towards the presentation of subjectivity and entrepreneurial praxis as a-historic data. This fact is verified in the way Iurd frames the behavior of characters in contemporary principles of conduct: in “Saul, David and Solomon used the management of performance” (PRESTES, 2014b), for example, it is said that “biblical stories brings lessons that prove that Christian leaders already used ways of solving their difficulties even before these means were quoted in manuals of business procedures”. Such anticipatory



capability is what would make the Bible a “sacred manual”, in which teachings would ask revivals for the vocabulary used on our time.

This hermeneutic proposed by Iurd seem to be a typically Brazilian phenomenon, resulting from the meeting between our Christian cultural matrix and the commodification of faith from the age of spectacle. However, we suggest that the success of prosperity theology in Brazil is not exceptional to our social reality, but a response to a certain political and economic rationality that demands the constant invention of subjective technologies. We talk about what Michel Foucault (2008) named “governmentality” which proposes, in the scenario of our liberal democracies, a renewed encounter between religious sensitivities and praxis of the market.

As Rudnyckyj (2011) shows us in an extended ethnography performed in Indonesia, a similar imperative is installed in the Islam. Rudnyckyj analyses a human resources program called Spiritual and Emotional Quotient, used in a steel company in the moment where the company in the country had more flexible models of production and governance. Debating about how this ascending reality in the world of work also requires a new type of worker, the anthropologist indicates the existence of a process of “spiritual reform”, that repays the practices and beliefs of Islam to make them compatible with the premises of self-help manuals and Western coaching. Presenting Muhammad as an example of CEO, Emotional and Spiritual Quotient materializes the convergence between capitalism and Islamic tradition:

In the contemporary Indonesia, Islam is called to produce subjects committed with standards of efficiency, productivity and transparency. [...] Islam works as a mean through which this spiritual reform evoke subjects responsible for themselves, their families, their job and their nation (RUDNYCKYJ, 2011, p. 139).

The premise of individualization of responsibility which marks neoliberal governmentality seems to seek, amongst the most diverse religious imaginaries, a certain symbolic source to justify the types of subjects they intend to produce. As a form of being in the world possible

for everyone, entrepreneurship appears as a bow in this process, and the crescent naturalization of this conduct as an a-historic data in the context of Iurd points toward the reach of this outlook in contemporary Brazil.

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## Creating intimacy, receiving visibility: new practices of persuasion in the economy of fame

### Criando intimidade, recebendo visibilidade: novas práticas de persuasão na economia da fama

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**Abstract:** *This article aims to analyze some forms of negotiating intimacy and affection between idols and their admirers, within actions that aim at the promotion of the celebrity. In these dynamics, the celebrity develops a kind of intimacy with its fans that motivates them to participate in real crusades in the social media, which aspire to the production of more media attention for their idol. The discussions presented in this piece are based on the examination of case studies investigating strategies of persuasion adopted by two celebrities: the funk singer Valesca Popozuda and youtuber Kéfera Buchmann.*

**Keywords:** *celebrity; fan; intimacy; visibility.*

**Resumo:** *Este artigo analisa formas de negociação de intimidade e afeto entre ídolos e seus admiradores dentro de ações que visam à promoção da celebridade. Nessas dinâmicas, a celebridade desenvolve um tipo de intimidade com seus fãs que os motiva a participar de verdadeiras cruzadas nas mídias sociais que objetivam a produção de maior atenção midiática para seu ídolo. As discussões apresentadas são baseadas no exame de estudos de caso envolvendo duas*

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*celebridades que adotam esse tipo de estratégia de persuasão: a cantora Valesca Popozuda e a youtuber Kéfera Buchmann.*

**Palavras-chave:** *celebridade; fã; intimidade; visibilidade.*

## Introduction

The idea that celebrities depend on strategies to establish themselves and maintain themselves in evidence is already very consolidated. Rein, Kotler and Stoller (1997), for example, propose different historic stages in the celebrity industry.<sup>4</sup> According to the authors, it is possible to identify relatively artisanal tactics for the production of fame of “common” individuals since pre-industrial periods in the 18th century. Throughout time, however, especially in the 20th century, such actions were sophisticated, creating a real industry that involves many professionals and big media companies. Consultants, photographers, agents, coaches and specialists in public relations are presented as fundamental elements of a dynamic responsible for the construction of careers that, in some cases, are structured in the capacity of an individual to maintain in evidence in the media. Writing at the end of the 90's, Rein, Kotler and Stoller (1997, p. 40) also suggest that the most recent stage of development of this phenomenon would be marked by its geographic de-centralization. In other words, they argue that the celebrity industry no longer solely exists on big urban centers as New York or Los Angeles, but they can equally be found in peripheral cities and regions.

The current popularization of social media websites, however, helped build a new movement of de-centralization of this industry, that occurs through fan participation and other “non-professional” agents that become even more important in the production of fame. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat, for instance, have enabled a more direct relation between followers and celebrities. The connection between them started to come before the mediation of labels, television networks, news portals or movie studios.

This de-centralization in the relationship between celebrities and their followers allows a bigger autonomy to artists and those aspiring fame in the hard task of raising the capital of visibility (HEINICH, 2012) in a society characterized by an increasing dispute for attention

4 The four stages are: stage of artisanal industry, stage of precocious industrialization, late industrialization and de-centralization.

(STERNHEIMER, 2011). If, traditionally, a soap opera actor would depend on the network to maintain his status and build a relationship with his fans (COELHO, 1999; TURNER, BONNER e MARSHALL, 2000), now he can fulfill these tasks without any type of institutional mediation - he only has to have an active presence on social media.

In Brazil, a significant symptom of this process of de-centralization was the closure, on April 2017, of the news portal about celebrities named Ego, from Grupo Globo. According to a company statement, the end of the website is associated with the expansion of interactional practices between idols and fans on social media (GLOBO EMITE COMUNICADO..., 2017). In this context, websites dedicated to talking about the life of celebrities started reproducing images and information collected directly from the celebrity's profile in platforms as Instagram or Facebook, presenting themselves, often, as mere replicators of content.

Despite these transformations, the simple adhesion of celebrities to media with more open structures is not enough a condition to propel the degree of public exposure of these people. As we've seen in the presented case studies, some celebrities use their profiles in a way of attracting followers that not only are interested by their posts, but also are willing to engage in the propagation and popularization of that profile.

There are studies analyzing different aspects of the dynamic between celebrities and followers/fans on social media. Baym (2007, 2013), for example, researches about new media practices<sup>5</sup> responsible for the re-organization of frontiers that traditionally maintained fans far from the personal lives of famous musicians, allowing the creation of a friendly and affectionate relationship with them. Marwick and Boyd (2011) also reflect about the recent transformations associated to the relationship between artists and fans, however with emphasis in practices of Twitter of celebrities that seek to create a perception of authenticity and intimacy amongst their followers. Baym and Burnett (2009), in turn, analyze the

5 About the concept of media practices, see Kramp and researchers (2014) and Bräuchler and Postill (2010).



implications of new work relationships resulting from the fans action in the propagation of their favorite bands on social media.

Within this context, the present study proposes to investigate some of the motivations responsible for the creation of practices established between celebrities and followers. More specifically, we seek to analyze logics behind the effort spent by celebrities who try to cultivate a fan base and faithful admirers on social media and, mainly, understand some of the reasons that take these followers to engage in such behavior.

On certain dynamics, it is possible to perceive the arrival of an economy of recognition and visibility between celebrity and fan. In this process, the celebrity develops a type of intimacy with his/her followers, which motivates them to participate of real crusades on social media with the intention of producing a bigger media attention to their idol. Celebrity and follower are, thus, within a circular process, characterized by the mutual production of visibility with different implications for both of them.

In order to reflect about these issues, this study analyzes dynamics involving Valesca Popozuda and Kéfera Buchmann, outstanding celebrities in different fields of the entertainment industry. The choice of this research corpus is due to the active involvement of both in practices that have as objective persuading fans and followers to product visibility capital<sup>6</sup> for them (HEINICH, 2012). Kéfera and Valesca promote initiatives that establish a direct relationship with their followers as a way of motivating and recognizing their effort. Thus, it is possible to see how the dynamics of production of recognition and visibility are articulated in a way of bringing symbolic gains - and material, in case of celebrities - for the parts involved.

### **The process of production of a celebrity**

Frequently, reflections about the construction process of celebrities are usually connected to market strategies of different groups of the

6 Heinich (2012) defines visibility capital as a type of social capital linked to the idea of asymmetry of visibility between famous and “common” people. According to the author, visibility capital can be converted into economic capital.

entertainment industry, either cinema (MORIN, 1989, 1997; DYER, 1998), music (MARSHALL, 1997) or television (CAMPANELLA, 2012; LANGER, 2006; TOLSON, 2015; TURNER, 2004). Even authors that seek to think about the celebrity phenomenon as an evidence of wider transformations occurred in the 18th and 19th century, some connected to their own moral sources of the modern individual (MOLE, 2007), or its performance in certain social contexts (VAN KRIEKEN, 2012) recognize the importance of sectors of the capitalist economy for the consolidation of a generalized interest for the life of these celebrities, seen as not belonging the sphere of the “common”.

Leo Löwenthal was one of the first intellectuals to articulate the popularization of celebrities - or «mass idols” - within a capitalist ideological matrix. Integrated to the Frankfurt School, Löwenthal analyzed the publication of biographies of public figures in variety magazines from 1901 to 1941.<sup>7</sup> Their studies show that the vast majority of biographies published on the first years of the 20th century, three quarters of them were about politicians, businessmen and successful professionals, so called “idols of production” (LÖWENTHAL, 2006). A few decades later, however, the situation drastically changed. Approximately the same proportion of publications, between 67 and 78% of biographies, depending on the magazine analyzed, were about actors, sportsmen and other personalities - mainly from the entertainment industry - that had details of their private lives exposed on interviews. Hobbies, trips and parties were the favorite themes of these biographies of these “idols of consumption”, that replaced the old uplifting narrative that portrayed the professional (and public) stories of the “idols of production” from previous decades. To Löwenthal, this change indicates the crescent valorization of a grammar linked to lifestyle consumption that becomes central in the formation of aspirations and desires of the common individual.

A little over a decade after the publication of the job of the German sociologist, Daniel Boorstin also publishes an analysis of the celebrity phenomenon, but with a different focus. Instead of examining the

7 Löwenthal analyzed The Saturday Evening Post and Collier magazine.

influence of the cultural industry in the popularization of the “consumption idols”, Boorstin reflects about the growth of celebrities within a perspective of moral decay of society. According to the author, we would be entering an age dominated by pseudo-events in which the image of an individual would be more important than their accomplishments (BOORSTIN, 1992, p. 46). The author defends that contemporary celebrities would be antithesis of the traditional heroes, those admired by their bravery, nobility or for extraordinary accomplishments. Within this thesis, the effort of creating and propagating an image of celebrities is seen as a symptom of a crescent moral decay of modern society, that would be entering a phase of self-illusion.

The contributions of Löwenthal and Boorstin bring important reflections about the transformations that happened on the 20th century, especially referring to the expansion of consumption and the change in the statute of image in the western culture. However, they reflect dichotomic perspective of a world that establish fixed frontiers between “serious” and “uplifting” events and those purely “futile” and “consumerist” events; “genuine” and “fake” experiences. Such vision does not help us think about ambiguities and contradictions existing in the production process of fame.

Van Krieken (2012, p. 5-8), for example, avoids thinking about the celebrity phenomenon through oppositions such as “authentic heroes” and “artificial celebrities”, arguing that famous characters of different times, whether they are noble, politicians or artists, have always needed to communicate their accomplishments the best way possible to become revered. “There cannot be a hero or heroism without a shareable narrative capable of building the heroic”, says Strate (1994, p. 15) according to the same line of Van Krieken. Benjamin Franklin, queen Victoria and even Alexander, the Great, which ordered the impression of his face on coins used on territories occupied by his army in Europe and Asia in the 4th century B. C., spent considerable effort on the task of becoming knowledgeable (BRAUDY, 1986).

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It is undeniable, however, that the expansion of the cultural industry and the mass media helped build an institutionalized system of creation of fame (GAMSON, 1994) that began in the origins of the cinema (MORIN, 1989, 1997; DYER, 1998) and hits an unprecedented level in the end of the 20th century.

Reality shows, which gained popularity in the 90's, are frequently considered the main responsible for the extraordinary expansion of the celebrity market (COLLINS, 2008; GRINDSTAFF and MURRAY, 2015; HOLMES and JERMYN, 2004; TURNER, 2006). In addition to the rapid popularization of this genre, practically omnipresent nowadays, the television market went through significant transformations in the last years. Its deregulation in the 90's in different parts of the world, the relatively recent entering of new channels - due to the raise in demand of a market that, in Brazil alone, grew 4 times the number of subscribers in the last seven years (ESTATÍSTICAS DE TV..., [s. d.]) And the preference of TV producers for factual programs made locally with low relative costs opened space for an expressive number of aspirants to fame. Beyond the traditional highlighted personalities, such as musicians, actors, sportspeople and politicians, the class of "media famous" began to include now former participants of reality shows, models and other individuals without any particular talent, named by Rojek (2001, p. 20-21) as "celetoids", populating the most different television programs about "reality" and daily varieties.

Turner (2004, p. 33-34) suggests that celebrities acquire, in the last decades, a crucial role in the entertainment industry. They would be fundamental for the movement of "vertical integration" of content. According to the author, celebrities have, as a product, the capacity of connecting different media and platforms within a process that has as focus the valorization of an individual personality. Analyzing the binomial art and business, Weinstein (1999, p. 65) presents a similar argument when he says that music labels try to direct the consumer's attention towards the attitudes and lifestyles of the band members, so they can sell

books, posters, T-shirts, DVDs and other products instead of only selling music.

However, despite the great number of media personalities created daily, few can stabilize in the entertainment industry, and, with that, sustain a long career. In the study made about celebrity production in Australia, Turner, Bonner and Marshall (2000, p. 88) show how some young telenovela actors of that country would depend of a great exposure brought by magazines and variety shows to maintain themselves in evidence. When the show they worked on would finish and the promotional structure that put them in the spotlight would change focus, these actors would experiment great difficulty to maintain the degree of interest of fans. After some time of ostracism, many simply abandoned the artistic career.

With the development of digital technologies and web 2.0, however, new practices were created, bringing change in the construction and maintenance of fame, weakening the control of big mediatic corporations. That way, “common” people could gain notoriety and celebrity status - or web-celebrity status - due to their success on different social media without necessarily going through traditional media. Within this context, youtubers and digital influencers gained notoriety in the “famous world” (KHAMIS, ANG e WELLING, 2016) and the audience began to talk daily with their idols and follow their lives “in real time”.

However, sustaining a big number of followers in the virtual environment is not that simple. Even celebrities with an experienced career would face difficulties, since, in order to maintain the celebrity status on platforms as Instagram, Twitter or Facebook, it is necessary to have an active participation that link strategies capable of attracting followers and fans. In the following cases, Valesca and Kéfera show great capacity of managing their online profiles. Both participate of an economy of sharing visibility with their fans, that are impelled to produce media exposure for them in exchange of a type of public recognition of their efforts.

## Valesca and popofans: “beijinho no ombro” for media invisibility

Very active on social media, with profiles on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, Valesca Popozuda constantly interacts with her fans - called “popofans”. It is common to see on her profile photos with her admirers, as well as direct references to meetings with them. “Popofans” have an important role in actions to raise Valesca’s projection in and out of social media, propelling, thus, her visibility capital (HEINICH, 2012). When the funk singer participates of television or radio shows, for example, her most devoted followers seem to dedicate a considerable effort in widening the repercussion of those events. Hashtags such as #Valescano-vaquecola<sup>8</sup>, #ValescaNoRaulGil<sup>9</sup>, and #Valescapopozudanoestrelas<sup>10</sup> already were on the trending topics of Twitter Brazil - and in some cases, worldwide. When that occurs, the artist seems to thank the fans, publishing on her profile images of the position reached by the hashtag on the ranking of trending topics.

Aware of the benefits for her career due to the voluntary work of her fans, Valesca shares, with some frequency, moments of intimacy with her admirers. On June 2013, when she released her first song solo, “Beijinho no ombro”, Valesca invited “popofans” to join a promotion in which they should post a video on YouTube singing the full song and a picture on Instagram that made reference to the song. She shared on her Facebook profile detailed instructions of the rules of the competition, stipulating that the winners would be those with the biggest number of views and likes on their posts.<sup>11</sup> The winners would get, in addition to cellphones, the right to spend a whole day with the singer. Thus,

8 Available at: <http://www.instagram.com/p/ttiSrTD3XJ/?taken-by=valescapopozudaoficial>. Accessed in: June 6th, 2017.

9 Available at: <http://www.instagram.com/p/uLV1sSD3fd/?tagged=valescanoraulgil>. Accessed in: June 6th, 2017.

10 Available at: <http://www.instagram.com/p/qW2I5DD3Un/?tagged=valescapopozudanoestrelas>. Accessed in: June 6th, 2017.

11 Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/293341817377806/photos/a.296748000370521.76967.293341817377806/588348727877112/?type=3&theater>. Accessed in: June 6th, 2017.

through this promotion, Valesca motivated them to share her song on social media using videos and images; on the other hand, she would give the opportunity of sharing a little bit of her daily routine.

Also, in the end of 2013, Valesca gave a gift to Gabriel, the fan who called the radio station O dia the most asking for her song “Beijinho no ombro”. The singer took him traveling in retribution of the demonstrations of “dedication” and “love”, materialized in the insistent calls of the fan for different radios pleading them to play her song. As part of her strategies to conquer her followers’ loyalty, Valesca posted a picture with Gabriel on her Instagram profile, creating visibility and esteem to the dedicated fan.<sup>12</sup> The public recognition of the celebrity positively reflected among her followers: generating comments like: “I get entranced to see how well you treat your fans! You are wonderful”. Among the fans, being “recognized” by their idol can bring a high status amongst the fandom (MARWICK e BOYD, 2011), propelling similar acts of active engagement seeking this distinction.

In addition to individual meetings, Valesca also promotes moments of intimacy with groups of admirers. Meet-ups with friends already happened at shopping malls<sup>13</sup>, before concerts or even during cook-outs. The “popofan barbecue”, at times called “popofan cookout”, performed in different cities of the country<sup>14</sup>, became a tradition. Organized by Valesca herself as a gesture of retribution for the numberless campaigns on social media promoted by her followers, the event offers a singular opportunity for her most dedicated fans to share moments of intimacy with their idol.<sup>15</sup> The “popofan cookout” is celebrated by fans, that feel “special” while maintaining direct contact with the singer, feeling reinforced by the photos shared on the internet in which they pose beside their admired celebrity. Celebrity news websites, in turn, use photos of

12 Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/f2kLwQD3cT/>. Accessed in: June 6th, 2017.

13 Available at: <http://ego.globo.com/famosos/noticia/2012/04/de-roupa-comportada-valesca-popozuda-e-carregada-por-fas.html>. Accessed in: June 6th, 2017.

14 Available at: <http://www.folhavoria.com.br/entretenimento/blogs/na-balada/2015/06/valesca-popozuda-esta-em-vila-velha-fazendo-churrasco-com-fas/>. Accessed in: January 6th, 2017.

15 Available at <http://ego.globo.com/famosos/noticia/2013/04/valesca-popozuda-faz-churrasco-com-fas-amo-muito-tudo-isso.html>. Accessed in: June, 6th, 2017.

these events, abundantly found on Valesca's profile, to create content celebrating the affectionate relationship shared between idol and fan. With the publication of these photos and news, everyone can propel even more the visibility capital they have; not only the celebrity, but the fans as well.

Through the analysis of the singer action on social media, we perceive that the direct strategies to motivate fans' actions decreased by 2014, year which coincides with the singer's signature with the label Universal Music. In the last years, Valesca keeps creating posts referring to her fans, but she no longer creates promotions offering prizes in exchange of sharing her work. The posts regarding meetings, trips and parties with her fans have also decreased. If, between 2012 and 2013, the posts with "popofans" were frequent, tagging each of their profiles or quoting their names, in the last years, they appear mainly on concert images, followed by the hashtag #popofas.<sup>16</sup> Possibly, working in a more professional advertisement structure offered by the label in which she signed a contract, as well as her new commitments in this new professional moment is the reason for the decrease of engagement of the singer in this kind of dynamics.

### **Much more than 5inco minutos (Five minutes): Kélovers and the culture of promotion**

The youtuber Kéfera Buchmann, creator of the variety channel 5inco Minutos, which has over 10 million followers<sup>17</sup>, also notorious for the strategies adopted to engage with her fans, known as "Kélovers". Her most faithful followers also follow her in other projects, helping her build a career that transcended social media and gained a considerable financial return and visibility over the last few years.

16 Available at: [https://www.instagram.com/p/BRoJ\\_UyLL14/?taken-by=valescapopozudaoficial](https://www.instagram.com/p/BRoJ_UyLL14/?taken-by=valescapopozudaoficial). Accessed in: June 6th, 2017.

17 Number of access in June 2017. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/5incominutos>. Accessed in: June 6th, 2017.



Just like Valesca, Kéfera retributes the fundamental effort of her fans with live streaming sessions dedicated to her followers, direct interaction on social media, face-to-face meetings, among other actions. We highlight, in this study, the dynamics of the following events involving the Youtuber and the “kélovers”: filming a video celebrating the 8 million subscriber mark on *5inco minutos* on April, 2016; the release, that same year, of the movie *É fada!*, starred by Kéfera; and the Kids Choice Awards, of Nickelodeon, in which the youtuber ran on the category “Favorite Brazilian personality”.<sup>18</sup>

Beyond being a youtuber and best-selling author, Kéfera has a jewelry collection<sup>19</sup>, a cosmetic collection<sup>20</sup>, a clothing collection<sup>21</sup> as well as food<sup>22</sup> and other products, in addition of having worked as a theater and movie actress, activity considered as her biggest vocation. In order to maximize her projects’ exposure, the youtuber usually calls her fans so they can help her reach goals she considers important. An example of that are the marks linked to the number of followers of her channel on YouTube. Each time *5ive Minutos* approaches a new million subscriber mark, the celebrity recruits fans and followers, through their online public profiles, so they can help bring more subscribers in, accelerating, thus, the extrapolation of the mark. Kéfera’s call usually spread quickly, generating retweets multiplying like a snowball effect.<sup>23</sup>

When she reaches her goals, the actress and youtuber usually celebrates in private parties or through celebratory videos posted on her channel, thanking the support and engagement of her fans. However,

18 Kéfera competed for the award with snapchatther ThaynaraOG and youtuber Luba, who won the award. Available at: <http://kca.mundonick.com.br/video/kca-personalidade-brasileira/pj8c64>. Accessed in: June 5th, 2017.

19 Available at: <http://www.keferaonline.com/2016/02/kefera-lanca-linha-de-joias-junto-com.html>. Accessed in: June 21st, 2017.

20 Available at: <https://studio35cosmeticos.lojaintegrada.com.br/batom-liquido-matteme-studio-35-by-kefera-buchmann>. Accessed in: June 21st, 2017.

21 Available at: <http://roupas.mercadolivre.com.br/calçados-roupas/camisetas-dos-5inco-minutos-da-kefera>. Accessed in: June 21st, 2017.

22 Available at: <https://twitter.com/keferaon/status/691807696908128256>. Accessed in: June 21st, 2017.

23 To get more subscriptions on *5inco Minutos*, fans do campaigns on social media websites, as we can see in this post. Available at: <https://twitter.com/hashtag/SeInscrevaNo5incoMinutos?s=rc=hash>. Accessed in: July 5th, 2017.

when she reached the mark of eight million subscribers on 5inco minutos, Kéfera retributed the work of her followers by opening a space for a more close and personal contact with them. The youtuber informed on Twitter that she would be online on a chat platform<sup>24</sup> and she would talk live and in video with her fans through a search engine of the social network itself.<sup>25</sup>

In that occasion, Kéfera created a hashtag<sup>26</sup>, #5INCOMINUTOS8MILHOES, and began talking with people who were live at that moment. In the short exchanges, her followers were surprised by the uncommon attitude of the youtuber. During the informal chat, fans professed their love to Kéfera, told stories of personal overcoming involving contents produced by her and reinforced promises of fidelity. This type of dynamic, in which fans help the youtuber reach visibility and, in exchange, receive some type of special access to her intimacy, repeated in numberless occasions. These practices seem to indicate the existence of a process of rationalization of affections that mix the public and the private sphere (ILLOUZ, 2012) which is marked by Kéfera's aspiration to professional accomplishment.

As a last example, it is possible to mention the youtuber's indication as finalist of the Kids Choice Awards on the category "Favorite Brazilian personality 2017", promoted by Nickelodeon. When they announced the award, Kéfera began a campaign with her fans asking emphatically for them to vote on Nickelodeon's website and sharing hashtags of her indication to the award on social media websites, so that she could get a bigger number of mentions and popular votes. That same week, the youtuber posted a video on her channel not only explaining the rules of the competition, but also announcing that, if she won the competition,

24 No site omegle.com é possível conversar por meio de transmissão de vídeo simultânea com outros usuários on-line através da busca de hashtags ou termos que estejam sendo compartilhados no momento.

25 O vídeo de comemoração dos oito milhões de inscritos. Disponível em: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E\\_icNE825hw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_icNE825hw). Acesso em: 1 maio 2017.

26 Postagens da youtuber informando sua ação e convidando seus fãs a participarem. Disponível em: <https://twitter.com/Kefera/status/716785910931726337> e <https://twitter.com/Kefera/status/716803984057626624>. Accessed in: July 5th, 2017.

she would throw a party for her fandom: “kélovers party”.<sup>27</sup> The party announcement had the objective of motivating her fans to work harder to vote to achieve her goal.

During the voting period, Kéfera performed many challenges and pranks with her followers on Twitter as a way of propelling her visibility on social media and getting more votes. As one of the forms of counting votes were through posting or (reposting) the hashtags #KCAPersonal-idaddeBR #Kefera, the youtuber proposed, on different occasions, the exchange of retweets for phone calls for her most dedicated fans.<sup>28</sup> In other words, these followers that would publish the hashtag giving votes to Kéfera would have the opportunity of being chosen to establish an exclusive contact with her through phone. The response was astonishing. In addition to publishing thousands of hashtags, as requested by the celebrity, many followers pleaded through Twitter for a direct contact with Kéfera, even openly publishing their cellphone numbers, even without her asking.

It is not difficult to see the fascination that celebrities like Kéfera and Valesca have over their fans and how it can be used in a productive way by the own celebrity to leverage their careers. Even without winning the prize, Kéfera's strategies of persuasion, based on a type of recognition and intimacy in exchange of their work of raising visibility for her on social media was a major success. In this sense, as Baym and Burnett (2009) reinforced while analyzing the relationship between bands and fans, it is necessary to look at this perspective in a dialective way: fans are not exploited but are also not the heroes of the new culture of convergence.

27 Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yji5Oi0Kobs&t=430s>. Accessed in: March 16th, 2017.

28 Examples of posts of Kéfera inviting fans for calls in exchange of retweets. Available at: <https://twitter.com/Kefera/status/828871523683467264> and <https://twitter.com/Kefera/status/838179338377887745>. Accessed in: July 7th, 2017.

## Final considerations

It is not the scope of this article to discuss what Valesca and Kéfera represent to their fans, not even making any type of moral judgement over the practices both of them use to convince their followers to help them in the accumulation of visibility capital (HEINICH, 2012). The possibility of access to some form of intimacy or obtaining recognition by celebrities is a naturalized value on today's media society, which transcends the culture of celebrity in particular. In other words, fans also gain a symbolic profit with those dynamics.

Certainly, the idea that the media has a dispersed type of power structured on the myth that represents a bridge for the "social center" is a valuable contribution for this debate (COULDRY, 2012). According to that perspective, what is linked to the categories of the world of media, such as "live", "reality", "media personality", is considered more relevant than what is not. In other words, media is seen as a hierarchic force that divides the world; it incorporates the social. Belonging to this world, even if through a brief contact with a celebrity, is valued by a significant part of the society.

At the same time, personal and professional relationships nowadays are increasingly more crossed by affection; a type of affection that, according to Illouz (2012), is rationalized and commodified. Within this context, we argue that the possibility of closeness between idols and fans has become increasingly bigger, especially in the last decade. In many cases, such proximity is crossed by a rationalized administration of affections inserted in a logic of creation of forms of capital economically convertible linked to the industry of entertainment. In this sense, Turke (2014) calls attention to the crescent importance of the fan as a labor force within a "gift economy".

According to Morin (1989, 1997), in the 20th century, the mass culture reinforced the divine character of big stars, while at the same trying to humanize them through showing their private lives. Thus, magazine covers brought news of the daily lives of the neo-Olympians seeking to enable an identification of the audience with those who seem so out of

reach. In the current context of social media, however, we observe a new configuration in which the approximation of celebrities with fans is not necessarily mediated by the action of professionals in the entertainment industry. If, in the past, there wasn't a concrete expectation, for the fan, of a direct contact with movie stars, rock stars or even telenovela stars, currently, there is almost a demand for this type of access, indicated by the considerable growth of web-celebrities (KHAMIS, ANG and WELLING, 2016; SENFT, 2012). At the same time, the possibility of establishing this type of affectionate relationship opens new opportunities for the celebrity to widen her visibility capital and so that the fans gain some type of "recognition" linked to the media world.

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## Will they live happily ever after? (In) visibilities of LGBTs characters in Disney productions as a driving force of cyberevents

### E elxs viverão felizes para sempre? (In)visibilidades de personagens LGBT em produções da Disney como força propulsora de ciberacontecimentos

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**Abstract:** *Through meanings emerged on Twitter around the possibility of Queen Elsa, from Frozen (2013) be a lesbian, through kisses between characters of the same gender in Star vs. the Forces of Evil(2015) and the insertion of a gay character in the film Beauty and the Beast (2017), we ask what the visibility of these subjects in Disney productions points towards the articulations among pop culture, cyber events and issues of gender and sexuality. The methodology used is the analysis of the construction of meanings in digital networks (HENN, 2014) and, at the end of it, it was possible to understand, in general terms, that the insertion of these characters produced intense reverberation, between users and news portals and movements of support and disgust of the initiative.*

**Keywords:** *Disney; gender and sexuality; cyber events; Twitter; pop culture.*

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**Resumo:** *A partir dos sentidos que emergiram no Twitter em torno da possibilidade de a rainha Elsa, da animação Frozen (2013), ser lésbica, dos beijos entre personagens do mesmo gênero no desenho Star contra as Forças do Mal (2015) e da inserção de uma personagem gay no filme A Bela e a Fera (2017), tensiona-se o que a visibilidade dessas questões em produções da Disney aponta em relação às articulações entre cultura pop, cibercontecimentos e questões de gênero e de sexualidade. A metodologia empreendida é a de análise de construção de sentidos em redes digitais (HENN, 2014) e, ao seu final, é possível constatar, em linhas gerais, que a inserção dessas personagens produziu intensa reverberação entre usuários e portais noticiosos e, ainda, movimentos de apoio e de ojeriza à iniciativa.*

**Palavras-chave:** *Disney; gênero e sexualidade; cibercontecimento; Twitter; cultura pop.*

## Introduction

Pioneer in the animation industry, Walt Disney Pictures was founded in 1923 and is, currently, among the five biggest companies in media and entertainment in the world (SANTOS, 2015). With headquarters located in California, United States, Disney comprises TV channels, has control over their studios and still manages and licenses 14 theme parks in different countries. In 2016, the company profit, only referring to their movies (animation and non-animation), surpassed 7 billion dollars (DISNEY DEVE FECHAR O ANO..., 2016). As we perceive from different researches approaching gender and sexuality issues in their extensive audiovisual production (TOWBIN et al., 2003; SANTOS and PIASSI, 2014; CARDOSO, OLIVEIRA, DIAS, 2015; SANTOS, 2015; MACHIDA, 2017), we see a consolidation of a more plural approach referring to these themes. Although it is inserted into a heteronormative logic (WARNER, 1991) that does not produce an effective rupture with binary or even essentialist perspectives (BUTLER, 2012), Disney has corroborated so that certain ruptures may exist, and, through them, other meanings can materialize.

Pop culture, place where we locate Disney's productions, is understood here in dialogue with Kellner's perceptions (2001) about media culture. Even if it is produced with market interests and developed based on advertisement rules, while taking part of the process of apprehension/knowledge of reality (FISCHER, 2002), she would consist in an "important forum of power and social struggle" (KELLNER, 2001, p. 54) and, still, in view of its high visibility, it would be potentially capable of unlocking affections, meanings and relationships that integrate and compose social discussions (SOARES, 2014, 2015).

Pop, under this wider view, brings modes of inhabiting and uninhabiting this world, enabling scenes of self that comprise issues of economic, political, aesthetic and social character. Pop culture, then, establishes, when observed under this prism, forms of consumption that surrounds senses of community, belonging and/or sharing affections that potentialize the insertion of the individual in a transnational scenario.

It also allows the audience to interpret, negotiate and appropriate media production to re-signify their experiences (SOARES, 2015).

Social media websites, while potentializing and reconfiguring social and cultural practices, constitute, thus, possible screens of perceiving controversies around themes that impact the public sphere. Around Twitter, specifically, it is valid to reinforce that it consists in an American social network that operates through sending and receiving short messages among users, with over 320 million users around the world (USO DO TWITTER, [s. d.]).

Henn (2014, 2015), through a theoretical review around the notion of event and journalistic event, suggests that, in the social network scenario, cyber events would be considered those that, engendered in this place and articulated through these logics, gain an agenda that surpasses these spaces, getting to, for example, journalism. In order to comprise an array of events that are processed that way, Henn (2015) proposes the drawing of six categories: global mobilizations, virtual protests, citizenship exercises, cultural affirmations, entertainment and subjectivity. Each one of them, it's important to highlight, have singularities, but all of them, at the same time, are convergent.

Therefore, in the research presented here, through reflections on Twitter around the possibility of Elsa, character from *Frozen* (2013) being a lesbian, through kisses of same gender characters in *Star vs. the Forces of Evil* (2015) and the insertion of an openly gay character in *Beauty and the Beast* (2017), we analyze what the visibility, or invisibility, of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bi, transsexual) characters on Disney points towards regarding the articulation among pop culture, cyber events and gender and sexuality issues.

### **About gender and sexuality and LGBT issues at Disney**

Paul B. Preciado (2014) suggests that sex can be thought as a technology of heterosexual domination, which would act to reduce the body to certain and convenient erogenous zones in view of an asymmetry of power among male and female genders. Monique Wittig (2010, p. 26),

beyond that, says that sex in itself would not exist, since it is a product of oppression, only materializing in the presence of an oppressor and an oppressed.

While postulating gender as a continuum, as an ongoing activity, Judith Butler (2012, p. 48), then, says that gender is “performative within the inherited speech from the metaphysics of substance - therefore, constituting an identity that supposedly is”, consisting in a repetition given in the body, within a regulated and controlled board, and that, throughout time, would acquire the appearance of naturality. As the gender internal truth is something made and, thus, being gender a fantasy replicated on bodies, it cannot be real or fake, but produced as an “effect of truth in a discourse about the primary, stable identity” (BUTLER, 2012, p. 195).

Sexuality, in turn, according to Foucault (2011), can be perceived as a device - which would comprise history - which would objectivate saying (some) truth about sex, linking the Christian pastoral confession to a clinical hearing, which would comprise the device of wedding ring (which would refer to the matrimony system and the transmission of names and goods) which would have in the body a fundamental piece to be used.

The device of sexuality has, as reason of being, not reproduction, but proliferation, innovation, annexation, invention, penetration in bodies in a more detailed manner and controlling population in an increasingly global way (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 118).

In a more specific way around homosexuality, as Weeks (2000) reminds us, the terms heterosexual and homosexual would be conceived by the austro-hungarian writer Karl Kertbeny and used publically for the first time in 1869, in an attempt of creating, in Germany, a sexual reform, specifically the revocation of anti-sodomy rules. According to Weeks (2000), it would be a campaign that, after being assumed by the subject of sexology (medical/scientific speech), it would culminate in the definition of sexual activities between equals as an escape to normal sexuality and specific to a determined type of individual. In 1870,

Carl Westphal, analyzing different cases of patients, men and women, who would have postures and/or desires opposed to those that would be expected, he would point sexuality as a specific medical category, perceiving it as a contrary sexual sensation (WESTPHAL, 1870). From sodomy, therefore, corresponding to an interdicted action and his author, a legal subject, would become a homosexual of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an individual with his own identity, “a past, a history, an infancy, a character, a form of life; it is also morphology, with an indiscrete anatomy and maybe a mysterious physiology” (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 50).

Regarding LGBT characters on Disney productions, it is important to remember previous researches. Towbin and researchers (2003), while analyzing gender, ethnicity, generation and sexuality representations in 26 Disney animated movies, produced and released between 1937 and 2000, they perceived, mostly, the maintenance of stereotyped images, and, still, a reinforcement of negative visions towards social minorities.

Regarding the analyzed products, Towbin and researchers (2003) highlight, on one hand, that there never was any affectionate/sexual relationship between same-gender characters, but on the other they point towards the presence of characters with performances closer to what we can conceive as camp, expressions filled with exaggeration (LOPES, 2002). One example would be the extremely effeminate gay, with erased sexuality, operating only in a comedic place.

According to Towbin and researchers (2003), five films would bring negative representation of male characters with behavior traditionally read as feminine: *Peter Pan* (1953), *Robin Hood* (1973), *Aladdin* (1992), *The Lion King* (1994) and *Pocahontas* (1995). In three other films, affection between male characters is considered disgusting or ridiculous: *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Mulan* (1998) e *The Emperor's New Groove* (2000). Only in *The Lion King* (1994) we see an ‘affectionate’ relationship between male characters as being acceptable: Timon and Pumbaa, which even raise little Simba. In other two films - *Mulan* (1998) and *Tarzan* (1999) -, two female characters have behaviors historically constituted as masculine, and even if, at a first glance, they are perceived

with some rejection, over time, they become respected by the places they occupy: it's the main character Mulan, disguised as a man to go to war, and the gorilla Terk, a leader of her pack.

Santos and Piassi (2014), in turn, observed, on Disney stories, an association between transgression of gender standards and villainy. While Sheer Khan (*The Jungle Book*, 1967) and Scar (*The Lion King*, 1994) performed their gender in a feminine way, Queen Grimhilde (*Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, 1937) and Ursula (*Little Mermaid*, 1989), being hyperbolically feminine, are close from drag queen and camp performances. The main characters, however, fit into a heterosexist and cisgender logic.

Cardoso and researchers (2015) analyze the Toy Story trilogy, released between 1995 and 2010. In their conclusions, they perceive that the movies reiterate the maintenance of socially accepted gender expressions and restrain behavior outside the heterosexual norm. The character Ken (*Toy Story 3*, 2010), which would represent an alternative to hegemonic masculinity, when acquiring a comedic character throughout the story, would precisely operate in this place of marking something you should avoid.

In most recent animations, Disney have been breaking gender stereotypes with characters like Merida (*Brave*, 2012), Elsa (*Frozen*, 2013) and Moana (*Moana*, 2017). Merida is a princess who doesn't want to get married and a hero of her own story; like Elsa, which does not show interest in men throughout the narrative and criticizes her sister, princess Anna, for wanting to get married with someone she just met - something recurrent in the studio animations; and Moana, finally, being focused on learning how to sail and discover the sea so she can save her tribe, having the role of leader rather than a princess (MACHIDA, 2017).

Such movements, towards a wider perspective referring to LGBT character representation in their productions, have been generating intense conversations about the possibilities Disney has of having gay or lesbian lead characters. There are already news about that on the

internet, foreseeing the first lesbian princess/queen for 2018 (DISNEY PODE TER..., [s. d.]):

### **Network conversation and cyber events**

Regarding social media websites, Recuero (2014) understands that conversations that happen in digital network platforms, like Twitter and Facebook, although they bring many characteristics of the presencial dialog, end up being more public, permanent and traceable in certain contexts. These social spaces outline networks and bring information about feelings, tendencies, interests and intentions of different people. These are public and collective conversations that influence culture, unlocking phenomena of different nature, spreading information and memes, According to Pereira de Spa (2016, p. 63) digital networks have been working as

[...] Locus of conflict dissensus, symbolic and political dispute. As we've recurrently have been observing, subaltern cultural expressions gained visibility from the appropriation of tools and environments of the digital culture for actors of the lower layers of society; through this visibility, they started to be more brutally attacked by their opponents.

These characteristics are also responsible for a crisis in journalistic frontiers and in the ways the market deals with its transformations that, performed in network, reconfigure sociabilities and subjectivities. There is a new intrinsic happening to these discussions and mobilizations that are engendered through convergence, spreading and ubiquity (JENKINS et al., 2014).

According to Henn (2014), events are singularities that generate rupture, transformation and production of meaning. Cyber events, in turn, are outlined in the field of social media websites, in a scenario in which new technologies transform event processes. The constitution of cyber events, then, would be due to three dimensions: trans-narrative, hyper-mediatic processes, the reverberation or spreading, and the forms

of happening that are given in a scenario of highly systemic connections (HENN, 2014).

The dimension of trans-narrative processes, through convergence (JENKINS, 2009), creates numberless alternatives, enabling interaction among media. The reverberation or spreading (JENKINS et al., 2014) occurs through the circulation of content on the web, legitimating a certain case through complex systems that generate journalistic stories, structuring cyber events. Thus, each cyber event is singular, with their own particularities that create tensions and controversies and initiate the production of meaning materialized in social media websites, in which signs enable new interpretations and translate events in language.

Cyber events are a product of social media websites, of practices developed through subjects and processes that have been modifying society and journalism. One of the potentialities of this process is the appropriation of social media websites and digital platforms for the development of contents in an independent way from massive media - such as alternative narratives around a certain event. Social media websites allow issues to gain attention through practices developed on network, maximizing voices and, to a certain extent, restructuring communication, as different works point out (HENN and KOLINSKI MACHADO, 2015; GONZATTI et al., 2013; HENN, GONZATTI and KOLINSKI MACHADO, 2016).

Through the analysis of construction of meanings in social media, constituting studies of cyber events (HENN, 2014) we identified three cases that articulate visibility (or invisibility) of LGBT characters on Disney with the emergency of cyber events that are created through digital processes.

### **Analysis of construction of meaning in social networks**

Henn (2011) understands that, methodologically, the application of semiotics allows us to unravel complex objects intersectioned under some perspective, including those that are created by journalistic semiosis. Semiosis, according the author, presupposes “[...] Movement,



acceleration, stockastic processes, tendencies, crystallization and ruptures” (HENN, 2011, p. 82), gearing towards the future, the expansion. Henn (2011) understands that brands, erasures and essays form semiotic layers that are also present in the productive routine of media. Processes on social networks, in this sense, materialize semiosis, becoming trackable through technical possibilities.

As a path in the analysis of construction of meanings in social networks, the author proposes “[...] The mapping of constitutional processes of these signs and their respective semiosis in the intense transformation event/sign/interpreting/sign that are given in the web environment” (HENN, 2011, p. 91). Semiotics, therefore, appears as a lens to understand processes in digital networks according to Ronaldo Henn (2011). It is through that presupposition that the analysis of construction of meanings in digital networks is configured. Thus, much more than semiotics, it is the methodology inspired in the semiotic studies of the author, that have been unfolded in the Cyber events Research Lab (LIC) at PPGCCOM at Unisinos, that mobilize us. Therefore, we identified semiosis materialized in the social media platform Twitter that, up until then, it was possible to understand what meanings emerged and potentialized certain cyber event.

Three specific cases were analyzed and find their potential of inauguration of meaning strongly linked to the little visibility of LGBT people in Disney productions. The cropping around the production of meanings involving the three cases was propelled by the temporality of those cyber events. In addition to being emblematic for the attention they received on news portals, they are configured as singularities to reflect about the issues of the study. Twitter was chosen as the main platform for application of the method for being there where the semiosis was configured in articulation with hashtags and keywords, beyond being a social network website that allows the development of an advanced search for subjects with more open data, unlike Facebook, that configures more specific digital territorialities. Having as presupposition three methodologic movements that integrate the analysis of construction of

meaning in social networks - mapping and identification, grouping of constellations of meanings and inference - we problematized each one of the selected cases.

Frozen (2013) is inspired by the tale “The Snow Queen”, created by Hans Christian Andersen, and narrates the story of Princess Anna looking for her sister, queen Elsa, whose powers made the kingdom of Arendelle be in an endless winter. The character Elsa began to be considered a lesbian when, mainly, the LGBT fans perceived the absence of a romantic interest for the queen, her reticent posture facing the sudden wedding of her sister and because of the song “Let it go”, main soundtrack of the movie, an anthem about coming out (SEDGWICK, 2007).

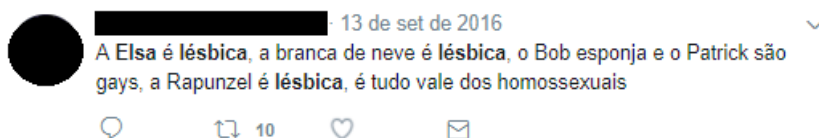
The network movement began after the release of the movie and did not have any big repercussion, but still created controversy - especially coming from users that considered impossible the existence of a lesbian queen on a Disney production. In 2016, however, this theory started to spread again on social media through the hashtag #GiveElsaAGirlfriend, quickly becoming one of the trending topics on Twitter, opening a series of journalistic stories and being sent even to Idina Menzel, American voice actress for the character, which was open for the possibility.

In the analysis, we’ve collected 180 tweets about this issue between May 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017 and, through mapping and identification of these semiosis in the network, we perceived four groups of meaning that seek to comprise the complexity about this case: support, visibility, Disney producers and disapproval.

In the “support” section, there are posts showing, through multiple languages, agreement to the thesis that Elsa would be a lesbian. Memes of pop divas Gretchen and Ines Brasil and typical expressions of the LGBT community, like “lacrou”, for instance, frame these meanings, creating a real support established on the network. In this category, one of the questions that appeared, even if transversally, was the *ship*, in other words, the promotion of a relationship by fans (AMARAL et al., 2015). Fans that idealized a ship composed by Elsa and Jack Frost, male character of the movie Rise of the Guardians (2012), although they

wanted this couple to happen, shared adhesion to Elsa's homosexuality. We perceived a movement that was strongly linked to issues like the fan's presence and convergence, once users not only started to expand the narrative of potentialities of the digital culture, but also developed other readings about them and gave them visibility through multiple semiosis (JENKINS, 2009).

Image 1 - Everyone in the homosexual valley.



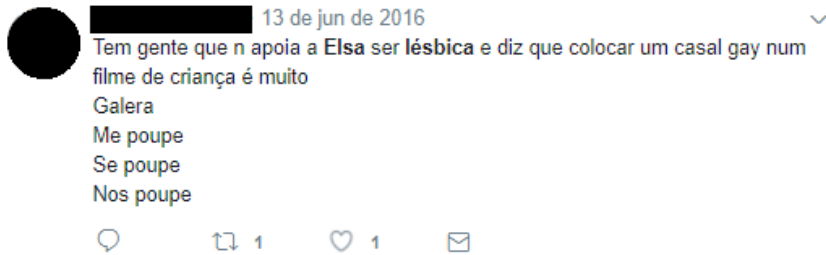
Source: research data.

Image 2 - Bring it on, monamour.



Source: Research data.

Image 3 - Tweet from the support section.



Source: Research data.

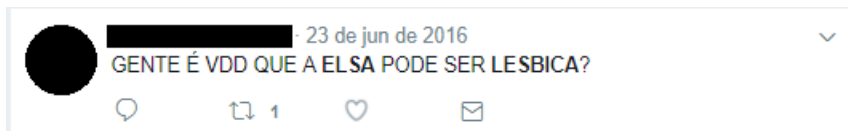
Image 4 - Tweet shipping in the support section.



Source: research data.

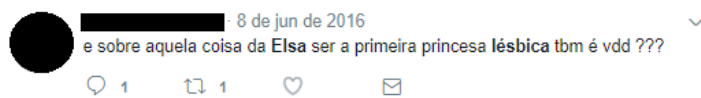
In “visibility”, we observed, instead of support or opposition to the supposed sexual orientation of the character, doubts or clarifications about what was happening. Even though these tweets do not contain opinions, they are essential, as Recuero (2014) reminds us, for raising the engagement around the issue, once it actively collaborates so that the knot connections can be established.

Image 5 - Tweets of the visibility section.



Source: research data.

Image 6 - Tweets from the visibility section.



Source: research data.

Image 7 - Tweets from the visibility section.

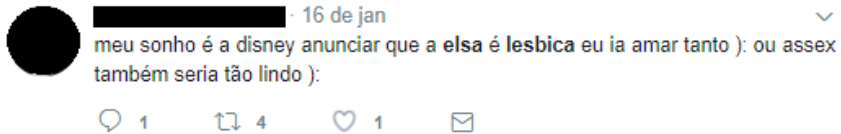


Source: research data.

A third section, named “Disney Producers”, gets closer to Jenkins and his researcher’s (2014) discussions about convergence, propagation and products of a pop culture in this scenario. We see here, on one hand, the perception of strength fans/users have when they promote visibility of discussions that are important to them, and, on the other hand, what

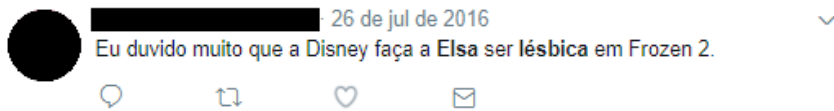
effectively producer's duty about the insertion or not of the requested demands in the traditional narrative. Thinking about none of the sections is set in stone and every one of them dialogue/converge, here there is equally, manifestations of support and rejection to Elsa's homosexuality.

Image 8 - Tweet from the producers section.



Source: research data.

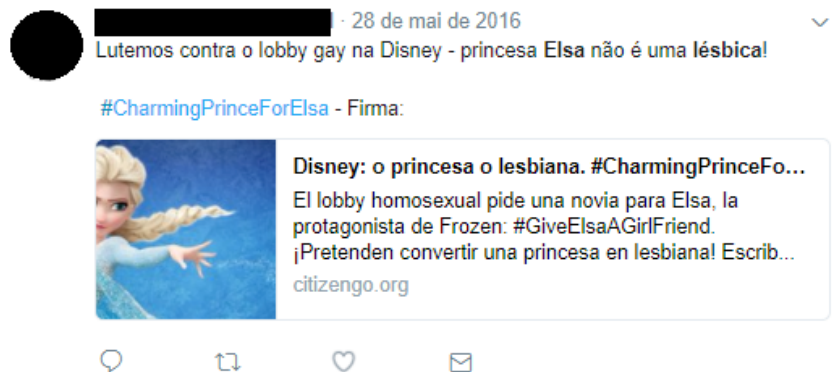
Image 9 - Tweet from the producers section.



Source: research data.

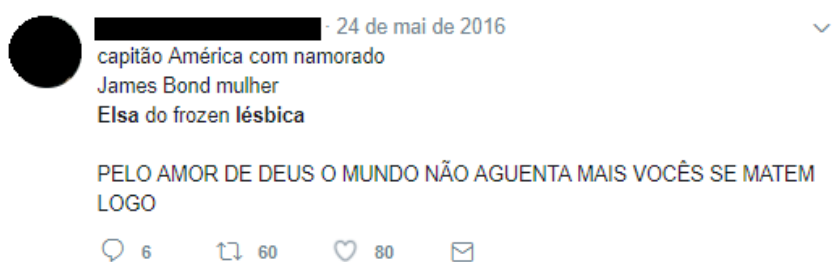
In the “disapproval” section, meanings majorly observed refer to criticism around the possible presence of a lesbian character in a children’s movie. A homophobic view (BORRILLO, 2010), exposing a perception of homosexuality as abnormality, was the core of discourse of many users, but beyond that, an equally visible issue refers to the question that, why, necessarily, a female character that are not in a relationship with men would be a lesbian. The thesis that “Let it go” is related to freedom and a life without a love/sexual partner also appeared as a relevant element. In both cases, however, an erasure of female sexuality in the absence of male figures was constant (RICH, 2010).

Image 10 - Tweet from the disapproval section.



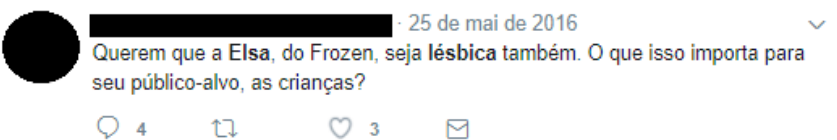
Source: Research data.

Image 11 - Tweet from the disapproval section.



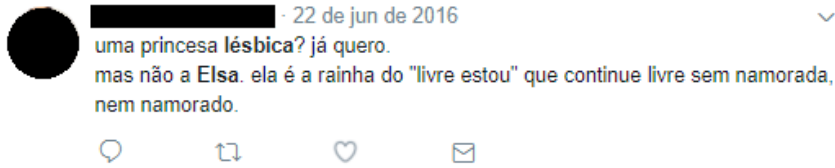
Source: Research data.

Image 12 - Tweet from the disapproval section.



Source: research data.

Image 13 - Tweet from the disapproval section.



Source: research data.

Star against the Forces of Evil is an animation television series that tells the story of an alien princess called Star Butterfly. When she turns 14, the princess receives a magic wand as a family heirloom and is sent to Earth, so she can learn to control her powers. It was the first Disney animation to show a same sex couple kissing. The episode was shown on the Disney channel in the United States on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2017 and gained repercussion in Brazil on March 1<sup>st</sup> after being vehiculated in pop culture portals, shows a gay and a lesbian couple, among other heterosexual couples, sharing a kiss during a romantic concert. Referring to the constitution of this case in cyber events, from 234 tweets, we perceived four sections of meaning: disapproval, discussion between Silas Malafaia and Vera Holtz and comparisons.

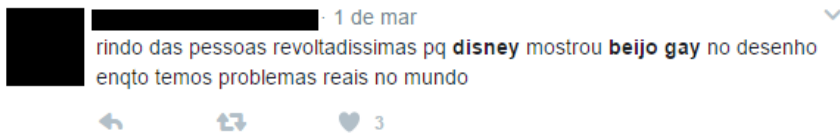
In the “support” and “disapproval” sections, the dispute of meanings remains similar to that previously exposed about Elsa’s sexuality. In the “support” section we generally see a defense around Disney’s posture of dealing naturally with the issue in a TV show. In the “disapproval” section, the speech promoted was the one that perceived in the exposition of an affectionate/sexual expression outside of the heterosexual norm an imposition of a homosexual culture to children.

The pastor Silas Lima Malafaia is a leader of the Ministry Victory in Christ, linked to the Assemblies of God and nationally known for his extremely conservative posture regarding gender and sexuality issues. About the cyber event analyzed, the pastor promoted a boycott to Disney for understanding that the company would want to “erotize and teach homosexuality to kids” (MALAFAIA PROPÕE BOICOTE À DISNEY..., 2017) by showing, in an animation, a gay kiss. This position was



responsible for inflaming a semiotic potential on social media websites around the subject, generating an intense and polarized conversation. A series of memes constituted through a logic opposed to Silas took Twitter by storm. In this semiotic melting pot, there was a specific tweet with strength of meaning capable of enabling one more level of the cyber event in question.

Image 14 - Tweet of the support section to the kiss on the animation.



Source: research data.

Image 15 - Tweet of the disapproval section to the kiss on the cartoon.



Source: research data.

A fake profile of the actress Vera Holtz with over 60 thousand followers and kept with the actress' consent was one of the firsts to be contrary to the pastor's declarations. The response through tweet of the fake (but authorized) Vera Holtz was intensely shared both in the platform and in print screen circulating on Facebook and news portals.

Image 16 - Vera Holtz's tweet.



Source: Research data,

In “comparisons”, we’ve perceived a predominance of parallels between the kiss in *Star* against the forces of evil and other non-heterosexual kisses shown in other cartoons like *Bugs Bunny* and *Woodpecker*, in addition to memories of situations in which cartoon characters ruptured gender roles. In this section, therefore, there was a demarcation of support through a humorous approach.

In 2017, Disney released a remake with real actors of the animation *Beauty and the Beast*, from 1991, telling the story of a young woman

named Bella who is imprisoned in a castle dominated by a beast in exchange of her father's freedom. The movie, directed by Bill Condon, gained more visibility when the director declared to *Attitude* magazine that Lefou, friends with the villain Gaston, would be a homosexual and the new version of the story would have a "exclusively gay moment" (*BEAUTY AND THE BEAST...*, 2017) involving the character. The revelation, as expected, generated an intense mobilization on social media. For this case, we analyzed 226 tweets in order to identify the meanings created by the network mobilization. Throughout this process, we found four sections of meaning: support, disapproval, visibility and only you didn't know.

Image 17 - First gay kiss on TV.



Source: research data.

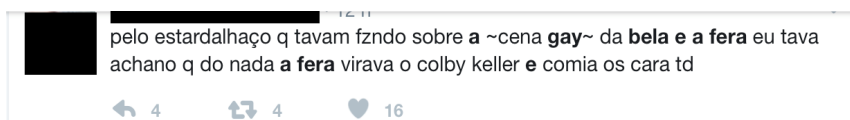
## Image 18 - Why the controversy?



Source: research data.

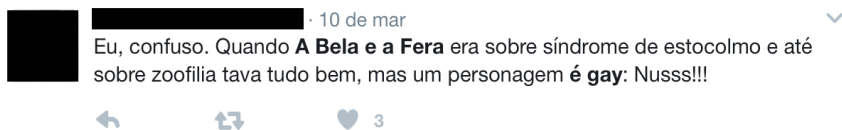
In this third cyber event, as the other two, we see a recurrence of meanings. We observed a strong binarism signaled by a posture that perceived in the existence of LGBT characters in Disney products a motive for a wider discussion regarding sexuality issues (often, but not entirely, from the own LGBT community) or from a opposite position that, generally disqualifies practices that are not comprised in a heterosexual logic. The religious discourse, then, was constant in these cases. More specifically, however, we also observed a criticism to gay representation through the effeminate performance of Lefou, exposing, equally, the reinforcement of the importance of a hegemonic masculinity (CONNELL, 2003).

## Image 19 - Tweet gay scene.



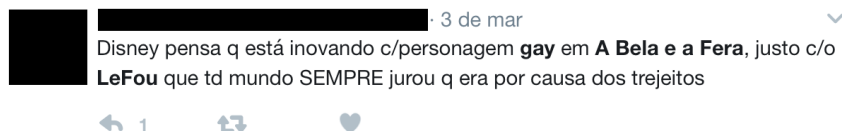
Source: research data.

## Image 20 - Tweet gay presence is too much.



Source: research data.

Image 21 - Tweet.



Source: research data.

Image 22 - Tweet from the disapproval section



Source: Research data.

In the “visibility” section, as it happened in the other cases, there is a contextualization of what is actually happening. Regarding the presence of Lefou, in *Beauty and the Beast*, there were many reposts of news.

Image 23 - Tweet HuffPost Brazil.



Source: research data.

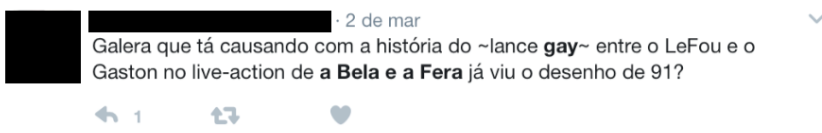
## Image 24 - Tweet MTV Brazil.



Source: research data.

The forth meaning section, “only you didn’t know”, comprises opinions that reinforce that, for the way of performing his gender (BUTLER, 2012), Lefou was, since the 1991 film, perceptively gay. When they criticize those who still haven’t perceived this matter, these posts made, effectively, a critic to the presupposed heterosexuality of the character and, therefore, the compulsory character of that, which tends to involve all the bodies within a norm which would try to occupy the place of what is natural and un-historical (RICH, 2010). Equally, however, they reiterated a stereotyped place and a camp performance as being necessarily related to gays.

## Image 25 - Tweet of the section Only you didn’t know.



Source: research data.

## Final considerations

The three cyber events mapped here, described and analyzed show, in a general way, that visibility (or invisibility) of LGBT characters on Disney Productions operated as a propelling element of different network movements that, from multiple places and operating under particular logics and perspectives, generated intense conversation, dispute and visibility. Activist positions of fans (AMARAL et al., 2015) and also the LGBT community were constant, as well as the constitution of what is being called pockets of hate, in other words, cores of meaning whose essence is prejudice, and, more concretely, homophobia (BORRILLO, 2010).

About oppositional opinions, it is important to reinforce that, in many cases, we observe a religious base that sees homosexuality as a place of deviation and degradation, and still, the defense of a childhood that remains “free” from what is understood as an imposition of non-heterosexual practices.

Transsexual, bisexual and other sexual orientations and gender performances remain invisible in Disney productions, pointing that, despite the movements recently performed by the company, other paths are important to be followed, after all, as Fischer remembers, media plays an important role in what is referred to teaching the forms of being in the world. It is also through cartoons that children and adults can understand identities, respect differences and constitute oneself in a more plural, less prejudiced way.

As a conclusion, it is important to reinforce that, as we already discussed, pop culture, building other narratives around gender and sexuality, has been actively contributing for an array of sociopolitical accomplishment in that field.

At the same time, the emergency of cyber events around these representation movements, especially in the form of dispute, clarifies a binary, Manichean logic of perception of reality and the force that operate there, either for good or for evil.

Therefore, understanding the meanings materialized not only in these cases but in others, constitutes a potential to outline paths in which we can, in fact, consolidate other meanings and possibilities.

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