

Media habits and resignification by students in the public school system¹

Maria Aparecida Baccega

Full professor in communications by the Escola de Comunicações e Artes of the Universidade de São Paulo (ECA/USP). Currently a professor, researcher and supervisor at the Post-graduate Program in Communication and Consumer Practices (PPGCOM) of the Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing de São Paulo (ESPM-SP). She coordinates the national network OBITEL Brazil through ESPM-SP.

E-mail: mabga@usp.br

Camilla Rodrigues Netto da Costa Rocha

PhD student in the Post-graduate Program in Communication and Consumer Practices (PPGCOM) of the Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing de São Paulo (ESPM-SP), holding a scholarship by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Capes), in the modality integral Support Program to Post-graduation in Private Higher Education Institutions (Prosup).

E-mail: camilla@costarocha.com.br

Abstract: This article aims to investigate the role of the communication/education field in shaping the social reality, aiming to understand, on the one hand, the role played by the media in the student's daily lives and, on the other, what are the resignifications done by these students in relation the theme of gay families, which was approached by the telenovela. For that end, we have adopted as a methodological itinerary the quantitative approach to investigate the media habits of students in two public high schools and, later on, the qualitative approach, aiming to understand, through the French Discourse Analysis (FDA), its use and appropriation in regard to the telenovelas.

Keywords: communication; communication/education; telenovelas; discourse analysis; gay family.

Resumo: Neste artigo temos por objetivo investigar o lugar do campo da comunicação/educação na conformação da realidade social buscando compreender, por um lado, o espaço ocupado pelos meios de comunicação no cotidiano dos estudantes e, por outro, as resignificações desses estudantes frente à temática da família homoafetiva, pautada pela telenovela. Para tanto, adotamos como itinerário metodológico a abordagem quantitativa para investigar os hábitos midiáticos dos estudantes de duas escolas públicas do Ensino Médio e, posteriormente, a abordagem qualitativa, buscando entender, por meio da análise de discurso de linha francesa (ADF), seus usos e apropriações quanto à telenovela.

Palavras-chave: comunicação; comunicação/educação; telenovela; análise de discurso; família homoafetiva.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This article was based on a reading key that enables understanding what the essence of the communication/education field is: the perspective that communication media would occupy a place in the social reality in order to dispute, in equal conditions, the hegemony in the formation of social meanings along with other socializing agencies, which used to be prevalent: the family and the school. What is the possible dialogue among these agencies? This is one of the questions that propel the reflections on the communication/education field².

When recalling the dialogism and dialectics that compose the clashes occurring through the language, within society, Baccega³ indicates the communication/education field as a privileged area to unveil the praxis, which composes and re-composes the meanings, towards tradition or rupture, from the traditional or new, from permanence or change.

This article aims to investigate this privileged place of the communication/education field in the social reality, seeking to understand the role played by the media in the daily lives of the young audience⁴. It is interesting to observe, at first, the media habits of public high school students and, later, its uses and appropriations regarding the telenovela cultural product.

We chose, as an empirical object for our analysis, two telenovelas produced by Rede Globo: *Amor à vida*, aired between the 20th of May 2013 and the 31st of January 2014, and *Em família*, which aired between the 03rd of February 2014⁵ and the 18th of July 2014⁶. Regarding the first one, we are interested in the secondary plot of the character Félix and, in relation to the second one, in the plot of the character Clara. This happens because we are focused in observing the meaning-making and resignification process about the gay family theme, which is present in the chosen characters in these narratives. We believe that by doing so, we will be able to answer the following question: how can both the media habits and the teenagers' reception indicate that the means of communication are disputing a space in the hegemony for constructing social meanings?

Given that, it is important to understand the difference of what we consider, in this article, as media consumption and as reception. We do so based on Toaldo and Jacks⁷, whose title of a 2013 article foresees the authors view on that matter: "Media consumption: a specificity of cultural consumption, an antechamber for reception studies" (*Consumo midiático: uma especificidade do consumo cultural, uma antessala para os estudos de recepção*). Based on the models by Canclini⁸, the authors suggest the cultural consumption as resulting from subject appropriation, in which the symbolic dimension prevails over the economic one. Thus, they distinguish consumption from cultural consumption.

Given this difference, the authors present a strand of cultural consumption, introducing media consumption as two strands: one focusing the media's role over consumption, with the mediatic apparatus working as the mediator for material consumption, and a second one, which unites the consumption offered

2. BACCEGA, Maria Aparecida. Comunicação e a construção de uma nova variável histórica. *Comunicação & Educação*, São Paulo, v. 14, n. 3, p. 19-28, set./dez. 2009

3. Ibidem, p. 20

4. We consider young audience those aging from 15 to 24 years-old (according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics—IBGE) and, in this work, we limited it to high school students (1st and 3rd grades).

5. MEMÓRIA GLOBO. *Amor à vida*. Rio de Janeiro: Globo, 2014a. Disponível em: <<http://memoriaglobo.globo.com/programas/entretenimento/novelas/amor-a-vida/amor-a-vida-trama-principal.htm>>. Acesso em: 2 jan. 2018.

6. MEMÓRIA GLOBO. *Em família*. Rio de Janeiro: Globo, 2014b. Disponível em: <<http://memoriaglobo.globo.com/programas/entretenimento/novelas/em-familia/em-familia-trama-principal.htm>>. Acesso em: 2 jan. 2018.

7. TOALDO, Mariângela; JACKS, Nilda. Consumo midiático: uma especificidade do consumo cultural, uma antessala para os estudos de recepção. In: ENCONTRO ANUAL DA COMPÓS, 22., 2013, Salvador. Anais... Salvador: UFBA, 2013.

8. CANCLINI, Néstor García. *El consumo cultural en México*. México: Grijalbo, 1993.

by the media based on its products. They also explain that, in the media consumption, it is important to know what the individuals are consuming in media (medium and products/contents), the way through which they appropriate it (of what is consumed – how it is used), and the context in which they engage with it (places, ways, routines...) ⁹.

Given that, in this article, we will deal with media consumption as a diagnosis of the subject's media habits, and not based on the first notion, which characterizes it as the mediator for material consumption. This happens because – as it will be further detailed in the methodology –, in the quantitative phase of the field research, it will be observed the media contents consumed by the students, the ways they consume these products, and the contexts in which this consumption occurs (through a cultural consumption chart).

However, in the qualitative phase, what was observed was not, mostly, the teenagers' media consumption, but their engagement to telenovelas. The media consumption dimension does not involve: the analysis of receivers' responses to the content of a specific show, nor the consequences of the involved with such show or genre (the influences of the media contents in the individuals' lives), which used to be performed by the study on effects and, nowadays, to some extent, by the reception studies ¹⁰.

We are interested in observing, in this moment, the relationships established by the students with both telenovelas and, based on that, which are their interpretations and meaning-making processes in a broader sense than the one restricted to the media experience itself. Thus, in a first moment, we deal with the media consumption, and, later on, with the reception, since, in the case of the reception studies, the aim is to detail aspects of the media phenomenon in its content dimension, narrowing the observation focus, which does not mean dismissing an analysis of the media consumption ¹¹.

Besides that, it is important to justify that the option of working with high school teenagers was taken because that offered a possibility of investigating the critical reading of the media. While choosing public school was justified by our impossibility of entering private schools. The research's initial intention was to compare two schools, a public and a private one, and to understand each one's socio-economic scenario, as well as the students' perceptions in each situation. However, contacts to private schools were thwarted ¹². Thus, we visited two public schools: JSA, which is located in the Estrada Velha de Sorocaba, in the Granja Viana neighborhood in Cotia; and PRP, located in the Chora Menino neighborhood, in the northern region of São Paulo's capital, both in the State of São Paulo. In the first school, we worked with two classes, 1st grade B and 3rd grade A, while in the second one we worked with 3rd grade A, all grades belonging to the high school.

9 TOALDO, Mariângela; JACKS, Nilda, op. cit., p. 7.

10 Ibidem, p. 9.

11. Ibidem, p. 8.

12. During the research, we attempted to contact four schools and received similar answers for refusing our request: that our visit would interrupt the year end's calendar (December 2016), which has close deadlines due to the National High School Exam (Enem) and finals. Given these refusals, we looked for other school options and were able to contact two State schools.

2. METHODOLOGICAL PATH

Once we were on the field, we adopted as guiding methodological procedures both the ones based on quantitative research – which have enabled our approach and understanding the students' socio-economic profile and media habits – and the qualitative research ones.

For the examination in this article, the conclusions reached when employing the cultural consumption chart (quantitative approach) prevail, as well as the ones reached through the discussion group, which uses a qualitative approach. The chart was filled by third grade students. Whilst the discussion group was performed in all classes (two third grades and one first grade), after making them acquainted to excerpts from the selected telenovelas.

Our qualitative analyses were based on the theoretical-methodological perspective of the French discourse analysis (FDA). Bakhtin¹³, when problematizing the language philosophy, evinces the intertwining of language and social. By bringing up the mark of the linguistic and ideological sign through the *social horizon* of a determined time and social group¹⁴, the author foresees as consequence the prevalence of social in the language processes. Also for Baccega¹⁵, the subject constitutes itself in the social interaction through language, as each word materializes the social practice of the group or social class that uses and permanently changes it in its daily life, based on its experiences.

Thus, we see that social human existence is not possible without language and, consequently, without discourse. This happens because language relations are subject and meaning relations and its effects are many and varied ones. Consequently, we have the discourse definition: the discourse is a meaning effect between speakers¹⁶. For Orlandi, pioneer in the FDA studies in Brazil, the discourse analysis understands language as the necessary mediation between man and the natural and social reality¹⁷.

For Baccega, language is not only a tool with the purpose of transmitting information. It is a dynamic whole that embraces the movements of society: because of that, it is a place of conflict. These conflicts are 'materialized' in discourses¹⁸. For Bakhtin, the sign becomes the arena where the class conflict is developed¹⁹, which brings forth the sign's ambivalence as a guide to reflecting on the fact that social meanings are always being constituted, that is, they are never completed constituted.

Consequently, it is essential, if one wills to reflect on reality, to do so based on the understanding of what are discourses. For Orlandi²⁰, this is the contribution of the discourse analysis: putting us all, as subjects and researchers, in a reflective state. Thus, in this article, because we walk towards the understanding that lies with the discourse polyphony of the JSA and PRP students in relation to the media productions *Em família* and *Amor à vida*, we have employed the FDA theoretical-methodological perspective.

13. BAKHTIN, Mikhail. *Marxismo e filosofia da linguagem: problemas fundamentais do método sociológico da linguagem*. São Paulo: Hucitec, 2014.

14. Ibidem, p. 45.

15. BACCEGA, Maria Aparecida. *Comunicação & Educação: do mundo editado à construção do mundo. Comunicação e Informação*, Goiânia, v. 2, n. 2, p. 176-187, jul./dez. 1999, p. 8.

16. ORLANDI, Eni. *Análise de discurso: princípios e procedimentos*. Campinas: Pontes, 2013, p. 21.

17. Ibidem, p. 15.

18. BACCEGA, Maria Aparecida. *Palavra e discurso: história e literatura*. São Paulo: Ática, 1995, p. 48.

19. BAKHTIN, Mikhail, op. cit., p. 47.

20. ORLANDI, Eni, op. cit.

3. THEORETICAL AFFILIATIONS: TELENOVelas AND THE COMMUNICATION/EDUCATION FIELD

We chose the telenovelas because of their significance due to the fact that their narratives bring forth a new public space: taken to the position of the main product of a great-sized television industry, the telenovelas became one of the most important and widened problematization spaces in Brazil, ranging from private intimacy to social issues. This *sui generis* capacity of uniting public and private, political and domestic, news and fiction, masculine and feminine, is inscribed in the telenovelas' narratives, which combine formal documentary conventions to television melodramatic ones²¹.

Considered, by Baccega²², as trans-classicist, having intense penetration in Brazilian society due to their peculiar capacity in creating and feeding a common repertoire²³, the telenovelas are accessible to many people and their narratives reach a broader audience, distinguishing no race, gender, or social class. It is due to this widen circulation that the telenovela, by discussing important social themes, brings within the reach of most people the possibility of debating the facts narrated by it.

Thus, in this sense, the telenovelas' educational potential is interesting. By mixing public and private, that is, bringing to the public sphere themes that were formerly seen as intimate and unique, so to build a common space for identification and projection, the telenovelas summarize broaden issues in specific figures and plots and, at the same time, they suggest that personal and specific problems may have a wider meaning²⁴. Such identification recalls what Baccega²⁵ recovers as "persuasion", resulting from the telenovelas' ease in exposing concepts and talking to society, being constituted as a potential area for education.

The research that supports these reflections comes from a master thesis (cf. Rocha²⁶) and has comprised our visits to two state schools, JSA and PRP. We have highlighted some considerations made in this investigation to feed the discussion in this article, so that, based on the students' media consumption and discourse, we can observe indications that the media disputes a space for hegemony in the construction of social meanings. The focus is, thus, on the space media platforms take on these subjects' lives; which role they play in constructing the meaning – which we intend to observe based on the debate on gay families.

When discussing the existence of the communication/education field, it is significant to observe that, for this field of study, it is essential to surpass the notion that studying communication is to study technologies. This field constantly advocates for not ever reducing the communication to the media or technological apparatus.

Besides, this communication/education process deserves the role of priority segment in theorization and field research in the communication field, since it allows the researcher to consider, most of all, the role of media

21. LOPES, Maria Immacolata Vassalo de. Telenovela como recurso comunicativo. Matrizes, São Paulo, ano 3, n. 1, p. 21-47, ago./dez. 2009, p. 26.

22. BACCEGA, Maria Aparecida. Narrativa ficcional de televisão: encontro com os temas sociais. Comunicação & Educação, São Paulo, n. 26, p. 7-16, jan./abr. 2003.

23. LOPES, Maria Immacolata Vassalo de, op. cit., p. 22.

24. Ibidem, p. 27.

25. BACCEGA, Maria Aparecida, op. cit., 2003.

26. ROCHA, Camilla Rodrigues Netto da Costa. O conceito de família na telenovela: um estudo sobre sua recepção. 2017. 170 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Comunicação e Práticas de Consumo) – Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing, São Paulo, 2017.

in the configuration of culture²⁷. It is this field's task to reflect on the consolidated intertwining of media and culture, so that it is considered as a significant contribution for this field's thinkers any reflections that intend to understand the contemporary scenario related to the media, associated to culture (not only to the media apparatus).

However, our interest in this reflect falls on another view, which is the debate arising from one of the scopes of the communication/education field, the one that suggests a dialogue among the many socialization agencies – family, church, school, and communication means. The mentioned view is the dispute for hegemony, performed by these socializing agencies, in order to constitute social meanings that overpass and constitute subjects. This happens because it is intrinsic to the field's discussions to think on the means of communication and their realities as a socializing agency that acts on the dispute for hegemony in the formation of social meanings through its discursive propositions, be it verbal, image, sound, or aesthetic ones, and that is the focus of our attention.

4. FIELD WORK: INVESTIGATION WITH STUDENTS

In the first school, JSA, we worked with two classes, both High School grades: 1st grade B (during one class) and 3rd grade A (during two classes). In the second, PRP, we talked to 3rd grade A, also in High School and during two classes. In the observation, the differences regarding the socio-economic context were highlighted. Firstly regarding the places, since PRP is located near middle-class households, while JSA is in a more isolated place from the urban center and near a community. Also, most of its students live in this area.

In the research's quantitative phase, the aim was to approach 3rd graders from both schools, in order to get know these teenagers' profile, as well as their media consumption habits. For that, we used the cultural consumption chart that was applied to 22 students in the State school PRP and for 19 students in the State school JSA.

When observing these teenagers' cultural habits in order to investigate what we consider as media consumption, their profile is very similar in relation to watching television: the vast majority does so, in both schools, with only four students in each school saying that they do not watch television. The activity's frequency stood out, once only half students watches television daily in PRP and, in JSA, only 36.84% do so. The socio-economic profile was reflected on the question about payed TV, since while 72.73% PRP students have the service, 57.89% JSA students do not.

Among the favorite channels, the scenario was very diluted, but, even so, most students marked Rede Globo as the most watched channel. As for the kind of programs they most watch, most JSA students marked telenovelas

27. BACCEGA, Maria Aparecida, op. cit., 2009, p.20.

and entertainment/comedy shows. While in PRP, the most watched programs are sport ones, followed by telenovelas and entertainment/comedies. The vast majority of teenagers talk to someone while watching television (68.18% PRP students and 64.71% JSA students). About the subject and to whom they talk to, we highlight:

PRP

To my parent: about what we are watching.

To my mother: about similar situations to the ones we see on the TV.

To my sister: usually about the show.

To my grandmother and mother: about what is on TV.

JSA

To my mother and my brother: about the telenovelas and movies.

About what we are watching: to my mother.

About telenovelas and to my friend.

We observed a consistent *presence of the family* in the conversations, which was confirmed when the students were asked about who they watch television with: 84.21% in PRP and 52.94% in JSA said they did so with their families. Besides, most students, in both schools, do other things while watching the shows, being using the cellphones most frequent in PRP, as well as eating meals, in both schools. About why they watch TV, the teenagers mostly said it was for fun and to be informed, equally in both schools.

As to currently watching any telenovelas, most students in PRP are watching (59.09%), while in JSA most students are not (66.67%). This can probably be explained by the fact that JSA students go to school at night. Among the highlighted telenovelas, *Haja Coração* was mentioned in PRP, while for JSA it was *Malhação*.

Still regarding telenovelas, the interviewed teenagers believe they influence people's behavior – only four students in each school said they do not – and, as for it being a positive or negative influence, in both schools the perception was that the influence is equally positive and negative, with no form prevailing over the other.

The students reported, when answering the questionnaire, having experienced or seen some situations that led them to believe in the influence of telenovelas, such as:

PRP

I have seen discrimination against the LGBT society. I am in favor of and fight for the equal respect for everyone.

Well, I happened to witness real facts and that changed my attitude and way of thinking.

Some of my friends have already behaved as prejudiced after being inspired by a telenovela character.

A telenovela has influenced a friend to “change” his sexual “option”.

JSA

To buy things, to encourage people to be consumerists, influencing the number of children, the way of talking or expressing themselves, for example, with the telenovela *Rebeldes*, there were lots of girls who copied Alice, in the way they walked or talked, even using the same laces she used to wear, or Roberta, with her dyed hair.

It is notable seeing the influence of media, an example are the thousands of women that do not accept themselves for not seeing a little of their characteristics in a telenovela.

Catchphrases, if I watch it too much, I start to act, talk, just like my favorite character.

The actors' way of talking that we start using in daily life.

In the way of dressing, talking, etc.

Concerning the telenovelas studied by our research, half of the JSA students watched *Amor à vida*, and only 31.282% PRP students said they have watched it. While for the telenovela *Em família*, according to the cultural consumption chart, the vast majority of the students have not watched it, in both schools (63.64% for PRP and 88.24% for JSA). Through other answers to the questionnaire it was possible to see that the teenagers engagement to *Amor à vida* and *Em família* was little, since they did not talk about it in the social networks, did not look for information on the telenovelas and only a few identified themselves to the characters in the shows.

At JSA, there was no identification by the students to the characters in *Amor à vida*, while at PRP, three students have identified to Félix, and three others to Paloma. As for the telenovela *Em família*, two PRP students identified themselves to Clara, one to Helena, and another one to the Vitti family, while at JSA, the students did not identify themselves to any of them. This lack of information marked by the students at JSA was not confirmed when they answered why they have felt identified, to which students who had marked they did not feel identified answered reporting reasons for feeling identified to some characters.

Lastly, regarding the characters Clara and Félix, two PRP students marked Clara as powerful and determined. About Félix, four students marked "hot dog" as a word the associate to the character. At JSA, one student marked Félix as crazy and another one as evil. No one at JSA wrote about Clara when filling the cultural chart.

Considering this information, we started to analyze the material gathered in the qualitative phase of the empirical research. The goal was to understand, in this article, which meanings are associated to the gay family, so homosexuality was defined as an empirical analysis category. We believe that, thus, we may be able to examine the students' resignifications using discursive propositions of a theme based on the dispute for the formation of social meanings arising from telenovelas.

During the discussion group performed at the JSA school with 1st grade students, we observed a division among students, some supporting homosexuality and others rejecting it:

A2: I liked the scene of the man, of the wedding, of their kiss. [...] Nowadays that's normal.

A3: Nowadays? How can that be? Two women is ikay, now two men...

A3: How can that be, two men kissing each other?

A2: It's normal, just like two women.

A4: It's all sin.

A3: God made it that way: Adam and Eve, man and woman, they stay together, not man with man and woman with woman.

When Baccega²⁸ affirms that the subject is constituted by the social interaction through language and that, when we learn a language, we are learning and absorbing a system of categories that will guide our perceptions on reality, and it is within this system that objects, experiences, processes, will be given meaning²⁹, we understand how much the religion system is present in some of the students' worldview, making them perceive the world based on this system's views, and not on a critical, elaborated, and reflected construction.

The debate among JSA students was very focused on the matter of gender differences when considering the homosexuality theme. In the 3rd grade class, this conflict could be seen in the speeches of more than one student:

A13: No, but for real, like my neighbor, when I was watching the telenovela, she told me, I even talked about it. She was not surprised to see two women kissing each other, but when she saw two men, she started complaining about it.

A8: It's because they sexualize women more, isn't it? Two women kissing, they make us think that's sexy, two women kissing each other is sexy, specially for men. But two men kissing is not something we see, like, "look how beautiful, how sexy".

A12: With their kiss, man with man and women with women, but for men it is usually a lot worse, like she said. There are men who like to see women kissing, which is not my case, but a man kissing another man is more strikingly, much more shocking. As there are men who seem to be all masculine, and men are very chauvinist. And then you see two men kissing like that, it's a bit shocking.

What draws our attention in these speeches is the presence of the chauvinism issue. If, when analyzing the discourse, what we have as the product of analysis is the comprehension of the meaning-making processes, as well as the constitution of subjects in their positions³⁰, it is possible to see the subject constitution in a chauvinist position when observing the A12 student speech. That is, the chauvinist worldview prevents them to accept homosexuality as a sexual orientation. As in the speech by the student A8,

28. BACCEGA, Maria Aparecida, op. cit., 1999, p. 8.

29. BACCEGA, Maria Aparecida, op. cit., 1995, p. 48.

30. ORLANDI, Eni, op. cit., p. 72.

even when they point out “they” sexualize women too much, the student ends up showing the presence of chauvinism in his own speech, when he talks about not finding two men kissing sexy.

Now focusing on the discussion group performed at the PRP school with High School 3rd grade students, it is possible to observe for the start a difference in relation to JSA students. While a share of the teenagers was favorable to broadcasting the homosexuality theme on television, exposed in the stories of Félix and Clara, others expressed their disagreement and elected, as their favorite scene, the one in which the father (César) slaps his son (Félix) due to his sexual orientation.

The reason given by the student A20 as to why Félix deserved being hit was “because he chose this path, and I think that’s wrong”, limited to the fact that he believes homosexuality *is wrong*, so the slap works as a correctional factor, a deserved punishment that the father given to the son. Meanwhile, the student A19 talked about the need for deconstructing themes that are considered taboos by the society and valued the media exhibition of the homosexuality matter.

It is possible to see two discursive instances, one in the student A20, in favor of a power that has for a long time repressed homosexuality, placing it as a disease in the medical discourse, and another one in the student A19, who was attentive to what Foucault³¹ calls the perception of discursive maneuvers adopted by the hegemonic power in order to maintain dominance. The student A19 went further in her reflection and made a question to the class:

A19: Nobody imagines... for example, you are watching the TV with your son and there is a lot of violent scenes and the father is okay with it. But when he sees a gay kiss, I think it is a kind of deconstruction. It’s saying “wow, why can he watch violence, sex scenes and other things, but he cannot see a gay kiss?”.

We will go back, now, to the matter of the telenovela’s educational potential, by talking, in its narrative, to each person’s particular dramas. This is what can be seen in the reflections brought up by the telenovelas when observing the considerations made by student A19 and by others, as the student A22, when questioning: “And why is it okay to show a violence scene and not a love scene, right?”. Félix and Clara work as window that enables thinking beyond what we want to see being shown and imposed. Lastly, A19 also showed the significance conferred to the means of communication when guaranteeing visibility for *themes that are not much discussed in the families*:

A19: I think it is very hard to break with somethings our society has. This deconstruction of homosexuality, of these themes that are not much discussed in the families, I think it is very nice when such an important TV station as Globo puts something like this.

At JSA, two students, A19 and A23, discussed the relation between media and gay families, affirming the importance they see in having a “big”

31. FOUCAULT, Michel. *A vontade de saber*. São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 2015. (Coleção História da Sexualidade, v. 1).

broadcasting company as Globo showing an issue that may encourage many homosexuals to make their own families. For them, when homosexuality is approached by the communication means, people “get inspired, I think they let go a little and are encouraged to follow their own lives, to be happy without thinking or caring what the others will think” (A23).

5. FINAL REMARKS

Based on the quantitative research, it was possible to observe the great presence of television, specially of Rede Globo, in the daily lives of the interviewed teenagers. It was evident the telenovela’s significance as a cultural product for these students who said to prefer, when watching TV, entertainment/comedy shows, telenovelas and sport shows. Besides that, they considered that television *influences* people, both positive and negatively. They have cited, as examples, questions that involve the dispute of social minorities (as the one studied in this article, the homosexuality), consumerism, and identity formation. For them, the fictional narrative, when building their characters, talks to the audience’s ways of being and acting. We recall, on that matter, what Kellner³² affirms as the audience’s quality of creating their own readings and their own ways of absorbing mass culture, using their culture as a resource to strengthen themselves and to create their own meanings, identities and lives.

Based on the quantitative gathering performed in the two public schools, JSA and PRP, it is possible to observe that both the interweaving of television in the daily lives of teenagers and the subjects it deals with, through the telenovelas, of a theme such as the gay family, guarantees that the means of communication have a relevant place within society and place it, as advocated by the communication/education field, as one of the most important existing socializing agencies. Therefore, by proposing to think on the reality, a critical examination must always take into account the *communication* aspect of the question raised.

Regarding the research’s qualitative phase, the discursive analysis of the results collected in the discussion groups performed with the students has shown interesting aspects, of which we highlight the fact that they consider the means of communication places that talk to their desires and identities. This is seen both when the student A19 talks about the homosexuality issue being treated by television – while it is a taboo in the family environment – and when the students see in the means of communication a channel for self-discovery, affirmations, and constructing who they are.

Lastly, we understand that dealing with homosexuality in telenovelas has showed its relevance. We believe that, specially when discussing a counter-hegemonic theme, it creates a place that strengthens the construction of the communication/education field, based on what it essentially proposes:

32. KELLNER, Douglas. A cultura da mídia: estudos culturais – identidade e política entre o moderno e o pós-moderno. São Paulo: Edusc, 2001, p. 11.

to construct a dialogue among socializing agencies – communication means, family and school – while they dispute the construction of social meanings, as well as it shows the relevance of communication means in the search for constructing social meanings in the contemporary world.

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