# Heterosexism and Transphobia Present in the School

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# Abstract

This study is the result of production of meaning analysis of discourses produced in discussion groups. The subjects were 32 female students and 8 male students in groups and one female student in an individual private interview, in public schools. The results point to a strong presence of heterosexism and transphobia at school. Such rejections hinder healthy interpersonal relationships. It is concluded to be necessary to create public policies aimed at training professionals, leading to information and debate on the topic for school, so that people can identify their strengths and coping strategies and resistance to lesbo-bi-trans-homophobic violence.

Keywords: Heterosexism; School; Lesbo-trans-bi-homophobia; Adolescents.

# 1. Introduction

In the present study the theme of homosexualities and transexualities was studied from the perspective of discourse analysis of the female students and male students to the production of meaning and the construction of subjectivity of these subjectsat schools. In the field of sexuality, this approach becomes relevant from this causal shift to the dimension of subjectivity when subjects, dipped in effect expressing their perceptions in this rejection panorama cut in relation to lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans genders, or lesbo-trans-bi-homophobia in the school environment. It is witnessed a historic moment, in which discussions agitate the national panorama about the inclusion of references to gender issues in schools, when activists of women's rights and activists of the cause LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Transgender) argue that this is the space that produces reflections on gender and sexuality in an attempt to improve the quality of education, overcoming inequalities, prejudice and combating exclusion and school droprout. On the other hand, conservative politicians and religious argue that the inclusion of gender studies at school can be a serious threat to what they call traditional family, and ask for the exclusion of this subject, and even the word gender, in school curricula. Understanding forms of manifestations of these prejudices and resistance to them, supported by reasoning of the theories of Guacira Louro, Judith Butler, Simone de Beauvoir, Michel Foucault, among others, will allow a discussion on the analysis of the production of meaning of teenager students' speeches in high schools.

### **1.1 Speaking of Identity**

Adolescence, for José Outeiral (1994) is a stage of human growth characterized by the definition of identity, beginning at puberty, extending until maturity and social responsibility are acquired by the individual. Initially, the young man and young woman experience passivity in relation to their body changes, creating from there a feeling of impotence to the world and reality.

Later, a clash between generations occurs because the family structure that she/he wants to experience is very different from that experienced by her mother and father. Their independence would be the central focus, including sexual definition. In the last phase, the pursuit happens of professional identity and financial independence. Luiz Carlos Osorio (1992) reminds us that it is during adolescence that great psychological and social changes happen which accompany the biological process of puberty and that these phenomena cannot be studied in isolation.

Contardo Calligaris (2009) opposes the essentialist view, speaking of adolescence as a historical and cultural construction, born of the need to question dreams and accomplishments in the post war when adults started to put in the young people their desire for change. This passage, in which the young people are between childhood and adulthood without being recognized as children and still not getting due recognition as adult, would place a young person in this waiting period, without a ritual that marks its beginning or end. Because they already have some insight, teenagers are no longer considered children and can assign values, as highlighted by the financial, social, sexual and loving success, as well as their bodies and minds have already reached sufficient maturity so they can act the activities to ensure such successes. However, it is still required moratorium by society, which imposes them a number of restrictions, resulting in defiance in this unfair period, insofar as this is expected from her/him.

Recognizing themselves as gay, lesbian, gay or transgender, can be a difficult process for the teenager as it will be necessary to detach their perceptions in this regard to the meanings which they learned to associate, failing to perceive them as deviations, disease, abnormal and illegal forms of sexuality. And as they plunged into a normalizing speech at school and in the family, it is much more difficult to articulate their sexuality with pleasure, with eroticism and without guilt, considers Louro (2008).

Throughout history, particularly in the last two hundred years, pejorative forms of social attributions have predominated towards non-heterosexual practices, according to Marco Aurélio Prado (2009). The historical and cultural construction of these attributions, sedimented in institutions and in the social imaginary, engendered the notion of sickness and perversion, such as naturalization and concealment of homophobia. For this reason, according to the author, we do not question ourselves about the reasons why our institutions and our culture restrict the rights to non-heterosexual people, or even encourage forms of violence against them. This is mainly because the codes that regulate the relationship between gendered identities do not allow sexual hierarchies and their symptom, lesbo-trans-homophobia to gain public visibility in the social injustice condition, since they were naturalized and assimilated by simplification.

### 1.2 Within the School

The male and female identities, according to Sissi Pereira and Ludimila Mourao (2005), are idealizations socially constructed by a society that creates these patterns of femininity and masculinity and are now considered normal or deviant. Thus, which is attributed to the opposed, male or female, is not derived from biological subjects, but in accordance with what has been established for each culture. Thus, barriers, grounded in biology and sexist culture, mean that boys and girls experience an education focusing on differences, without possibilities to explore their bodies in gymnastics practices, sports, dances, fights, games and activities.

Marco Antonio de Moraes (2010) says that the school is not only a reproduction model of reality in which it operates, for in it there are spaces of freedom for transgressions when segments unfold in other segments of knowledge. From this fact, school education that allows new meanings helps in successive and unlimited reconstructions of student's knowledge.

According to Gabriela Rizo (2010), the task of the teacher is to lead people to the way of everyday construction standards to better recognize their needs, reflecting how human rights are built, not a given normativity. The normativity of human rights as any moral code should be a historical construction of any society in a given context. But as Pereira (2010)mentioned, although children present much curiosity and questions regarding matters related to their sexuality, these important issues are commonly left out because they are taboo, unnecessary or even lack of interest or lack of preparation from male and female teachers for the necessary interventions.

# 2. Method

This is a qualitative, observational, descriptive and interpretative study which happens from the analysis of the discursive practices of teenagers heard in groups approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Santa Cruz do Sul and is registered under the number 22102313.1. 0000.5343.

According to Mary Jane Spink (1994) it is the discourse practices that make it possible to access the production of meaning established on the scale of interpersonal relationships. However, one must become familiar with the diversity and the social imaginary about the objects that are the focus of the signification processes. Discourse practices, still say Spink and Medrado (2013), correspond to active times of the use of language, where both the order and diversity coexist, involving the language in action, ways from which people produce meanings and position themselves in everyday social relations.

According to Spink and Benedict Medrado (2013), sense is a social construction, a collective and interactive venture, through which people in the dynamics of the historically and culturally localized social relationships, build the terms from which understand and deal with the situations and phenomena around them.

The method chosen for data collection for this study was, initially, the formation of focus groups, but because of the number of participants, it was turned into discussion groups. Also a personal interview with a transsexual student was done. For the study of the results, we proceeded to the analysis of the production of meaning. The male and female subjects of the research were teenagers in their third year of high school in public schools and the first year of high school teenager from one of the schools. All of them signed Terms of Free and Informed Consents, when of age. Minors had legal guardians signed for them, but Agreement Terms were also signed by the adolescents. The discussion group's strategy consisted in the screening of short film entitled "I Do not want to go back alone," Ribeiro (2010), to trigger the discussion. The interview of the transgender teenager was possible by the availability of the teenager to participate in the study and considering her age, although she was studying in her first year of high school.

The speeches were recorded, as contained in the free and informed consent form and then transcribed so that the analizys of production of meaning could be done. Regarding the profile of participants, see table below:

Schools	Female students	Male students	Total	Areas
E1	01	00	01	Urban/Periphery
E2	08	04	12	Urban/Center
E3	00	06	06	Rural/periphery
E4	17	04	21	Rural/diff. Access
Total	26	14	40	

The city chosen for this study is located in the Vale do Rio Taquari region, within the State of Rio Grande do Sul. With a population of 69,521 inhabitants, according to IBGE (2014), evenly distributed between rural and urban area, originated from the arrival of German immigrants who settled in the village to work in agriculture and subsistence livestock. The economy of the municipality is based on the cultivation of tobacco and yerba mate, in addition to maize, cassava, beans, among others, in between harvest. The city is also known for the presence of tobacco processing industries, as well as metallurgical, refrigeration industries, food and yerba mate. According to information gathered in the Department of Education (PMVA, 2013), the municipality has 11 Municipal Schools of young Children Education, 33 municipal schools of primary education, 1 Municipal Special School and 11 state high schools. The private schools network comprises of three schools from kindergarten to the high school and 7 young Children Education Schools. In addition, there are vacancies in technical and university courses in advanced campus.

# 3. Results

The categories emerge from the produced and materialized senses, in this case, in the words, in the silences, the metaphors, the lapses. The words carry meaning and when this sense is embodied in offensive boos, they will be classified as HATE. Between the lines which expressed feelings of fear in the face of aggression arises FEAR category. FEELING OF INADEQUACY is the category that emerges before the incongruence between self perception and social recognition. RESTRICTION TO CIVIL RIGHTS, to disregard otherness. RECOGNITION AS NORMAL, when the sense reveals the perception of the phenomenon as normal within its views and still ABNORMALITY is the category that emerges from lines that express this perception by the male and female subjects on the topic.

The first interviewee was a teenager, indicated by a school that is not willing to open discussion groups, but too bothered by the presence of transgender teen in the first year of high school, the school referred her to talk to the researcher. Very interested in the study and in participating, she was willing to discuss the matter individually, fulfilling all the formalities that the ethics of the research required, she signed the Term of Consent.

First contact with the teenager, it was difficult to identify her status as transsexual, since the apparent anatomical features and clothing led to recognize her as a woman. The transformation of a trans woman according to Larissa Pelúcio (2005), is a process of feminization that starts with the extraction of hair from the face, legs and arms, as well as thinning the eyebrows. The hair is left to grow and the wear of makeup and clothes considered feminine in activities outside the home are the initial steps. In a following stage, female hormones begin to be used which can be in the form of pills or contraception and / or hormone replacement injections. The process also includes the application of liquid silicone which can be difficult to access since not all people can afford it. Also there are surgical procedures such as nose surgeries, removal of Adam's apple, reduction of forehead, filling the cheekbones and silicone implants, says the author.

#### 3.1 Hate and fear

Gabriela<sup>1</sup>, a young transsexual 18 years old, speaks of insults from classmates. Words that, unfortunately, this researcher had the opportunity to hear at the end of the interview, from the door of the school through the dark courtyard, after 8 pm, to the outside gate. Approximately 150 meters walk listening to the repetitive speech in a repertoire that, there was talk of discrimination, intolerance and hate, they could also be talking about interest and desire. Therefore, one might think that those young men, seeing Gabriela passing by indifferent to them, tried to speak, each at a higher pitch than the other, words that if they hurt, they also marked their presence, drawing attention to themselves.

- Queer!
- Faggot!
- Fairy
- It's always like that ... I'm really scared .

Gabriela's fear is not without foundation, since, according to the Homophobic Violence Report in Brazil, the Secretariat of Human Rights - SDH (2012), the vast majority of victims focuses on young people, with 61.16% of them between 15 and 29 years of age. In this age group, victims between 15 and 18 represent only 1.23%, while 18-29 years old, 59.93%. With regard to the profile of the people causing such violence, according to the allegations made, the data indicate that 58.9% of victims knew the suspects, while 34.1% did not know them. Homophobic violence happens both in public places and in private places. It was learned that 38.63% of violations occurred in the house. In the houses of the victims violations were 25.54%, and in the houses of suspects there were 7.76% registered cases. In the workplace violations were 5.37% and 3.18% in the school records of cases of homophobic violations. These numbers show only reported violations rather than all violations occurred against the LGBT population.

### 3.2 recognizes as normal

In an interview, talking about their relationship in the classroom with colleagues, Gabriela reveals:

- Oh, A... Type I felt sad, right. I wanted them to see me as a girl, right. Not like what they were telling me. Because I always thought I was different from others. Like I was a girl and the others were boys, you know? Those who tried to be boys were boys. They were different. I was normal. But that was in my point of view.

In this declaration of the teenager we can understand that their perception of normality is to be acting according to their gender identity. She reveals not trying to match what was expected from her, but to be consistent to her identity: she was a girl. Interestingly, she uses the word try, as if for the boys there were needs to be attempts of masculinity performances of experiments (and why not of femininity?). This refers to the concept of gender performativity of Judith Butler (2010), which speaks of the behaviors associated with particular genre, ranging, validating and updating the binary logic that boys wear blue and play football and girls wear pink and play doll, compulsorily, for example. Gabriela expressed the feeling of sadness at the fact that boys did not see her as she saw herself as a girl, but as a fagot and gay, always putting her down.

### **3.3 Inadequacy**

- (...) because for now I'm not happy. You know? Because I am not complete. And here at school I cannot use the bathroom of the bo ... girls. I have to go back there or ...

- And what's back there?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>All names have been replaced by pseudonyms to preserve the identities of / participants. 100

-It's the bathroom that nobody ... that nobody uses. It is a bathroom ... like a closed bathroom, you know? Then I'll go. So no one will see where I'm going in the bathroom. Then Igo back there. Without anyone noticing it. But in the classroom the boyssay things because they know me. It is this definition that Gabriela seeks to subtract, from having to answer the man's name at roll call, having to tell if she is a boy or a girl, having to choose the bathroom at break time. She says she does not feel complete, perhaps as the bathroom, restricted back there, where no one sees who enters, unnoticed. Gabriela is invisible and banned, as the bathroom considered improper and inappropriate. But it is precisely at the door of a public toilet where definition is required: Woman or man?

The situation can be very difficult for the men and women who see themselves not as heterosexual, since there are few alternatives to them, as silence, concealment or segregation. The rejection of homosexuality follows the production of heterosexuality, expressing itself often by declared homophobia, says Louro (2007).

For Bento (2008), transsexuality and other movement experiences between genders show that we are not bound to comply with the targets of our body structures. The system cannot obtain the unit it wishes, as there are bodies that are beyond the production of the understandable genera, and in doing so they put themselves at risk because they disobeyed gender norms. This disobedience reveals the possibilities of transformation of the same standards and this get away process of sexed bodies is marked by pain, conflicts and fears that can lead subjects living in conflict with gender norms to locate in them the explanation for their pain, to feel as a freak, an impossible thing to exist.

### 3.4 transphobic speech

-The Teacher said, I will call your names for attendance and she looked very serious at me. And I, I opened up my eyes thinking, my god. What now!

-You know, because when the teacher does the attendance calls my heart races. Because everyone calls me a name and the teacher comes and calls another one, you know?

It looks like when a person calls me Marco it seems that the person is shooting at me. I feel very scared, you know?

-The other day, I came to class, there was another new teacher. Then I thought: Everything new?

- (...) Shetalked this way: What's your name? Then I said, Gabriela. And she was looking for the name in the attendance list. She said: But your name's not on the attendance list. I said: It is Marco. Then she just said, is it Marco? I said, No, call me Gabriela. She said: no. We will not call you Gabriela because it is written in your record Marco Gabriel Nascimen to, so until then this is your name, it is the one we'll call you. The day you change your ID, and you are Gabriela, I will call you Gabriela.

-I cried. You know, I cry.

Through decree number 48,118 of June 27, 2011, the Rio Grande do Sul State Governor states nominal use, inclusion and use of the social name of transvestites and transsexuals in state records related to public services provided under the State Executive Power. Since then, it is assured to transvestites and transsexuals the right to choose their social names, regardless of their original name whenever served by organs of the state government, considering that human dignity is a fundamental principle of democratic rule of law and the Federative Republic of Brazil, as well as freedom, equality and individual autonomy are constitutional principles that guide the actions of the state and impose the performance of public policies aimed at promoting citizenship and respect for human differences, including sex differences. Considering also that the rights of sexual diversity are human rights, and that its protection requires effective actions of the state to ensure the full exercise of citizenship and full social inclusion of lesbian, gays, transvestites, transsexuals and bisexuals. Social name is defined as one with which transvestites and transsexuals identify themselves and are identified by society and the original name should be required only for internal use of the institution, along with the social name of the user, which will be externalized in the acts and administrative files.

Ignorance of the law of the social name, which eliminates the change of the registered name to replace the name on the attendance list by the person's choice one and the indifference of male and female teachers of that school to the suffering of this teenager intensify the conflict. She expresses in her body the emotions that hurt her. Eyes wide open, heart racing and feeling of death. Continually the death wish in denial of her person.

### 3.5 Abnormality

Another time, hearing teenagers in discussion group, it was possible to notice their feelings about sexual diversity.

- It's not normal, right?

- I had a friend in another school, and at home he was normal so ... It's a boy, you know? And at school, no way. At school he showed what he was ... that he liked boys too, you know? Only at home, he did not.

- What was he like at school?
- Oh, he was, well ... he looked like a girl.

In this speech, six teenage girls gathered in a discussion group show that they perceive homosexuality as abnormal to refer to the gender identity and homosexual expression of the colleague as abnormal.

The production of heterosexuality is accompanied by the rejection of homosexuality, a rejection which expresses itself often by declared homophobia, says Louro (2007). Consented and taught in school, homophobia expressed by contempt, remoteness, and imposition of ridicule, as if homosexuality were contagious, one creates a high resistance to show friendliness for gay people. Approaching homosexuals can be interpreted as a commitment to the practice or identity. The result of this segregation is that, in general, homosexuals hide their sexual identity or live discreetly, fearing the consequences of living publicly his or her homosexuality and attract rejection to themselves. The author admits that the school is one of the toughest places for someone to take their status as gay or bisexual, because school denies and ignores homosexuality and offers few opportunities for teens or adults to take their homosexuality without guilt or feel ashamed to have desires, since one assumes that there is only one kind of sexuality possible, which is heterosexuality, and that the opposite sex is to be the target of the affections of all people.

The limitation of the possibilities of the subjects in a binary logic, man or woman, imprisons them in a performance playing field, says Judith Butler (2002). In theory the author, rules out that sex, gender and sexuality exist in a necessarily mutual relationship. So that if someone is biologically female, this does not imply that she displays conventionally recognized characteristics as female and that she has desires for men. The author also introduces the concept of gender performance, which refers to the regulatory practices in maintaining compulsory order dictated by heteronormativity, the repetition of behavior, speech, manners, gestures, culturally established, strengthening the construction of male and female bodies in intentional acts, performative gestures.

#### 3.6 Assuming as normal

As Foucault (1985) reminds us, if people today do not go and see a psychiatrist, analyst, sexologist and the experts to talk about their sexuality, it is because they are surrounded by information on a daily basis, in newspapers, books, and now, on television, in cinemas, on the environment pornography, by all the mechanisms of appeal that refer the individual to this statement of sexuality every day, that meet the prescription role in this proliferating discourse. That seems to be very present in the speech of a teenage girl who falls through a very eloquent lapse, a thought which produced a sense in the group which meets exactly the talks of this author.

- I think it's more normal you see two women rather than two men. Honestly ... However ... However ... For example, right ... A woman can dress like a man, right? But a man dressed like a woman ... It's weird, right? So it's more ...

- I think ... Since old times, even as a joke ... the old folks, they spoke as a joke, but spoke, they aborted<sup>2</sup> ... aborted! (Laughter) they approached homosexuality even in Trapalhões<sup>3</sup>. I remember Trapalhões, folks! I am a very educated person. Then ... like ...

- Then now they showed two lesbians and my Dad went: Oh my god! Two lesbians in the soap! That's not possible. They can only show gay men. They cannot show lesbians.

It is the involuntary change, the lapse committed by the student, she speaks of what Foucault (1985) said. Television is in charge of presenting homosexuality to people without them needing to leave their homes to meet it, to be recognized. However, television produces caricatured figures, ridiculous figures, loaded with stigmas that are to chase the victims that are identified, at schools, in hallways, in bathrooms, for ever, so that no one wishes to be a fagot, a queer or dykeof the sitcom, let alone having someone like that in the family. A real abortion of homosexuality. For this reason the student says that television would abort homosexuality already when she was a child.

<sup>3</sup>Sitcom of the 80s television

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>In Portuguese, thelanguageoftheinterviewees, thewords abortar and abordar are very similar

and they were used by the interviewee, that is what justifies the lapse committed by one of them.

When creating those born characters of pejorative senses, incapacity, they would become negative references, making a real abortion of homosexuality in social representation, in the popular imagination, introjecting in families and non-heterosexual people, the rejection of that model to which no one would want be associated with.

### 3.7 Civil Rights Restriction: Reverse logic

- I just do not think it's right to marry, both a religious marriage and a legal marriage and adopt children...

- Why?

- Cause in the school there is prejudice too ... And children also suffer prejudice maybe ... I do not think it'sright.

- Not like, relationship like this, I do not think it has anything to do. But I do not think it's right to adopt a child. Among these couples...

- What aboutgetting married?

- Oh, that's right ... Living together, perhaps...
- No. I do not think its right.
- Do you think that would hurt children?

- I think it might harm the child, then later in school as well, find out ... that your parents are ... They are ...they are like this

- What can theydo...

- Is the child born like that? Or is it later, later in life, with the living that he or she gets this way?

This last speech, taken from the female students' group states acceptance of the relationship between people of the same sex, but then introduces restrictions on the rights to marriage and adoption of sons and daughters from non heterosexual couples. And these restrictions include religion. The question "Is the child born like that? Or is it later, with the living that he or she gets this way?"In the sequence that it is inserted in this context there is another question that has not been asked, but it is implied, it would be about the possibility of gay people produce homosexual children. Thus, it is suggested that the danger of allowing the adoption of children by homosexual couples would be the production of gay people, this belief deeply rooted in traditional and static references of heterosexual family.

A father or a lesbian mother as André Diniz (2007), are often still seen in society as sick people, capable of transmitting their homosexuality to their children. This may be associated with a myth, reminiscent of old misconceptions, which has been rectified, from medicine and psychology that these people are obsessed with sex and tend to abuse their offspring. These conceptions, for Teixeira Filho (2007), heterocentrists may be justifying ideologies in which civil rights restrictions of non-heterosexual people are naturally accepted, of marriage and parenthood.

Miriam Grossi (2000) points out that the discussion of heterosexuality to be essential to human reproduction and thus perpetuation of the species is analogous to another discussion that took place in the late nineteenth century, when the sexual desire of women was regarded as non-existent. Women, they believed, had sexual relations only in compliance with the reproduction needs and family preservation and sexual desire was intrinsic only to men. Thus, passivity and frigidity were naturalized behavior and expected of women, and female pleasure, considered dangerous and pathological and not without great effort on the part of liberation movements of women and of psychoanalysis contribution, today it is clear that women have desirers and are able to orgasmic pleasures.

It is interesting to note the inversion of the logic of cause and effect in this speech. According to the reasoning of these teenagers, if the prejudice against lesbians, gays and transsexuals, the lesbo-bi-trans-homophobia, because the suffering of children in schools, then it would be better not to adopt children, even if they were happy in their homes with their parents and adoptive parents to avoid suffering harassment and bullying at school by people who do not likegay and / or transgender parents. The logic would then be clear, eliminate, cripple homosexuality and transsexuality, the victims of the scandal, not the lesbo-bi-trans-homophobia, bullying, and also the persecutors of lesbo-bi-trans-homophobic that are the scandal themselves.

In the latter speech of a teenager, the simplicity of the logic that summarizes what can be believed to be the result of efforts to end the lesbo-bi-trans-homophobic violence in and outside schools:

- I think it's a lot of hypocrisy to say, for example: Oh, I accept homosexuals, but not in my family. So you do not accept them. If you do not want them in your family, it's because you do not accept them.

### 4. Conclusion

Listening to the words so frightened and with no hope of a transsexual teen regarding her own life, and the perception of lack of perspective to fully experience the possibilities of sexual affective scope, although she has strategies to deal with these problems, was a very painful experience for me. But it is easy to understand if we perform the crossing of that speech with the speeches of other male and female adolescents of the same age, where the lines were full of senses ruled by prescribed heterosexist structure.

On one hand, the echo of patriarchy, faithfully looking after stereotyped, unequal and unjust family relations roles. On the other hand, a young transsexual, deviant of the transphobic norm, but also so permeated by the horror of the threat she represents to order. All so fragile and misinformed, deprived of information those people, as their male and female teachers have been, as in the school they do not talk about sex, pleasure, gender and sexuality. The result is a strong presence of lesbo-trans-bi-homophobia at school, including the rejection of achievement to equal rights as marriage and adoption of children by same sex parents.

But death wish and fear do not match school environment and much less adolescence. For this reason, it is urgently recommended to think about the possibility of inclusion of multidisciplinary teams in those schools, so that discussions on the topic may start, demystifying taboos and old standards, and that the subject can identify their skills and talents for facing and resisting to lesbo-trans-bi-homophobia also beyond the school walls.

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