

# International Journal of Human Sciences Research

## THE MEDIA AND THEIR INFLUENCE FOR THE REPRESENTATION OF THE LGBTQIAP+ COMMUNITY

---

*Thiago Trévia Menezes Queiroz*  
Sobral-CE

All content in this magazine is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution License. Attribution-Non-Commercial-Non-Derivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).



**Keywords:** Representativeness; LGBT; and Media.

## INTRODUCTION

The media has a high importance in society because, in different ways, it reaches the greatest number of people with models and ways of thinking and acting, who, willingly or not, influence the people. According to Correa et.al (2015) although we have recently had a greater representation of the lgbt community in the media, for a long time there were no such representations, and when there were, they were often caricatures and did not necessarily represent the reality of this community. However, even though this community is currently being represented, this is not happening easily and much less quickly. According to Araújo and Stein (2021) even with the rise of this community in audio visual, many people still criticize the presence of LGBT characters in series and especially animations, which are mostly dedicated to children and youth.

Talking about this delay for representation, and now that it is here, about this difficulty in establishing itself, is important. It is important because it affects how people will see this group, and how this group will see itself. "The refusal of recognition can inflict damage on those who are denied it, and the projection of an inferior or humiliating image onto the other can even cause distortion and oppression, to the extent of the internalized image". (TAYLOR, 1994. P 36 apud Mizutani 2012, p 138). That is, in the act of seeking to reduce, criticize negatively, or prevent lgbt representation in the media, it also prevents these people from seeing themselves as part of society and as human beings worthy of respect and visibility. And besides, a precedent is created that the orientation or way of life in which they find themselves is corruptive, marginal and wrong.

"When prejudice rooted in society is fought from childhood, it becomes more difficult to reproduce in adulthood. That is, the more representativeness there is in animations (which reach a large part of the young audience), the greater the acceptance of what is "different", and the greater the chance of society leaving behind conservative and prejudiced ideas." (Araújo and Stein 2021; p.3). In the past, representation in cartoons, movies and even commercials would have been important, because through it individuals who felt different from what they were told as "normal" and "right" could find themselves in the same group and way of existing. But now this importance is even greater, because as seen, if this representativeness is presented to children early in their formation, they will not see the lgbt community as an alternative way of existing, they will see their reality as something normal, diminishing thus the prejudice against this group. This work, therefore, aims to discuss how the media representation of the lgbt community can influence its normalization before society. To do so, we will delve into the different ways of representing this community over time, in addition to going through the motivations and actions of the groups that want to prevent or reduce it; and we will also see how this representativeness affects the community.

## METHODOLOGY

This is a literature review. The articles were collected through the descriptors: Representativeness; LGBT; and Media. And to support this work in the national context, only Brazilian articles were collected, even if they speak of productions from other countries. All materials were collected over a period of 15 years (2007-2022), as a way of investigating the subject over time.

## RESULTS

First, it is necessary to discuss the evolution of lgbt representation over time. In their work on the importance of LGBT representation in advertising Correia et.al (2015) points out that there is a current trend called: humanization of brands; where brands are currently focusing on more marginalized groups in society, helping with their naturalization and recognizing individuals such as LGBTs as consumers, also advertising for them. Regardless of whether the intentions behind this are more humanitarian or more commercial, the point is that this further strengthens the importance of the media for the representativeness and naturalization/normization of a community today.

However, by admitting the importance of advertising for a certain population, and by saying that this is recent in the case of LGBTs, it opens a precedent for a discussion of what it was like before. Correia et.al (2015) points out that before, at least in the advertising part of the media, this representation was null, or when it existed, it was mostly caricature. Correia et.al (2015) also highlights that in the advertising market, it is necessary to be aware of changes in society's behavior, which leads us to reflect on a double influence between society and some aspects of the media, because from that sentence we can highlight that: just as a part of the media affects society, it can be an ally for the regulation of the lgbt community, or being the trigger for an evolution and thought of society; Another part is influenced by the thoughts and historical context of the time, trying to create consumer materials that reflect the demands and opinions of society at that time.

By pointing out the importance of the historical context, we can associate that the evolution of LGBT representation in the media has gradually grown along with the achievements that this community has had over

decades of history. We can start our discussion in this regard with the Stonewall revolt, which took place on June 28, 1969 in New York City and where, according to Gorisgh (2014), homosexuals and transvestites united against the oppression of the police force, this day is currently known as LGBTQIAP+ Pride Day. The Stonewall revolt was the trigger for several fights for LGBT rights around the world, and in my view, it began the deconstruction of this community in society. In Brazil, a movement that we can take as the "Brazilian Stonewall" was the uprising at Ferro's bar on August 19, 1983 in São Paulo, according to Silva (2020), the uprising was led by the GALF (feminist lesbian action group) and supported by several politicians of the time, where the people fought for freedom of expression by defending in Ferro's bar the dissemination of the bulletin ChanacomChana (1982-1987) released by GALF.

Getting to know these pioneering movements is important, because they influenced the visibility of LGBTs, and began to place these people in a place of consideration in society, and as the struggles progress, consideration also advances. According to Correia et.al (2015) a little over a decade after Stonewall, several renowned brands publicly declared their support for the LGBT community; in Brazil five years after Stonewall in 1974, we had what according to Peret (2005) apud Collin (2007) would be the first telenovela to present an LGBT character on screen: *o Rebu*, by Braulio Pedroso. In the 1980s, at the same time as the uprising at Ferro's bar, there was a huge increase in these characters throughout television drama, although at that time, according to Collin (2007), in his work on LGBT representation in Brazilian television drama, they still they weren't very positive pictures, where the characters were either associated with a criminal and sexual plot or were associated

with a flashy comedy. With the first gay parade in the world in 1993, and in 1997 in Brazil, the presence of LGBT representations in the media continued to be frequent, this time presenting something that differed from the old models: Non-heterosexual people, acting in a hetero normative way and the so-called revelation narrative:

“In the revelation narrative, homosexuals reveal their orientation very close to the end of the plot. To reveal or not is the common thread of these characters’ stories. When soap opera authors do not use this artifice, they opt for caricatured characters, which viewers easily identify as homosexuals. (Collin 2007, p. 10).

With the approval of gay marriage in the United States in 2015, the criminalization of homophobia in Brazil in 2019, among many other victories, the 21st century was marked by advances in LGBT representation. In advertising, for example, we can see an initiative by Perfumaria Boticário in 2015, where it placed LGBT couples together with straight couples in a family context in a Valentine’s Day campaign. We were also able to find more of these representations in content aimed at different audiences, such as: *Modern Family* (2009) by Christopher Lloyd and Steven Levitan, an Emmy-winning series, which featured a homoaffective family in one of its main cores; “*Hoje eu não quero voltar sozinho*” (2014) national feature film written and scripted by Daniel Ribeiro, which featured a blind and gay boy on a journey of discovery; “*Um milhão de finais felizes*” (2017) book by Victor Martins that portrays in his fiction the reality of many young LGBT people; And finally: *Steven Universe* (2013) cartoon created by Rebeca Sugar that speaks subtly but openly about the LGBT community by a children’s group.

As we have already discussed here, even though the media affects society, it is also greatly influenced by it, which explains the

evolution of the quality and quantity of LGBT content in its most varied sectors. However, there is a portion of society that does not support and goes against the fight for the rights of the LGBT community, and they have their influence in the media as much as the movements in favor of this culture. For example, Correia et.al (2015) says that Boticário’s Valentine’s Day campaign was the target of resistance and boycott by some people who defend the traditional model of family configuration. According to Oliveira and Baracuh (2017) the LGBT movement is marked by being a movement of resistance, against a heteronormative pattern that naturalizes the categories of man and woman primarily in the biological, they also point out that in addition to conservatives, religious segments are also resistant and militants with the idea of reframing taboos already crystallized in society. “With this imposition of what would be right or wrong according to the majority of the population or who represents them (State), minorities end up being marginalized and exposed to emotional illnesses.” (Araújo and Stein 2021; p. 598). Soon resistance from this part of society proves harmful, as it affects the way minorities are seen, interpreted and represented.

The presence of these groups also interferes with an extremely important audience for the regulation and respect of the LGBT community, young people. When we talk about media representation and its influence on standardization, we cannot leave young people aside, because according to Araújo and Stein (2021) if prejudice is fought from childhood, such as through cartoons that teach respect and seeing these “different” people as the normal in society, it becomes more difficult to propagate in adult life.

“We can think of cartoons as regulatory instruments of mass culture that can influence the cultural and identity formation

of children and adolescents today. Therefore, these television and film productions are important instruments for propagating discourses on sexuality.” (Oliveira and Baracuhy 2017; p.285)

This importance of paying attention to representativeness in the young public did not go unnoticed by content creators and the mainstream media. Currently, in addition to drawing: *Steven universe* (2013) already mentioned here, we have the books: “*15 dias*” (2017) and “*Se a casa 8 falasse*” (2021) see Victor Martins; in addition to cartoons that do not necessarily have a focus on LGBT, but include characters representing the community presented in a natural way for children in various stories such as: *The loud house* (2016) by Chris Savino, and “*Hora de aventura*” (2010) by Pendleton Ward. However, according to Araújo and Stein (2021), despite the representation being more frequent, it still undergoes criticism when it happens, especially when it is in cartoons or children’s content in general, where there is still great control by conservative groups over what is right or wrong, and about what will or will not be done and consumed for and by that group. Oliveira and Baracuhy (2017) even say that because of these groups, much of the representation in drawings is done in a symbolic way or in a subjective tone.

An example of the militancy of conservative groups would be the controversy resulting from the gay kiss shown in the drawing: “*star vs as forças do mal*” (2015) by Daron Nafcy, where in a scene of seconds you can see a gay kiss on the screen. This fact, according to Oliveira and Baracuhy (2017), in their study of this case along with Foucault’s ideas, despite being seen as a pioneer, since it was considered by the media vehicles as the first openly gay kiss in animations, was also target of criticism.

Among these criticisms, we can mention the example that Oliveira and Baracuhy (2017) bring in their work: a report from

a religious website treating the event as worrying and worthy of the attention of Christian communities; and also the video by Pastor Silas Malafaia, which talks about preserving the innocence of children, and places homosexuality on an erotic scene, and points to Disney, the print company responsible for the design, as a company that is trying to educate children sexually, which which in his opinion must be something solely the responsibility of the parents. Such attitudes still show an aversion and misinterpretation of an act of normalization of the culture of a marginalized people. Araújo and Stein (2021) also comment that, in several countries, from old productions until now, designs, lines and concepts of characters and stories are being changed to fit what the rulers of that country deem acceptable. This is a practice that walks on the border between adaptation and censorship, but it is explained by the fact that, in the case of LGBTs rights and the community itself, many countries are not equal in opinions and advances in rights.

In addition to adaptations, criticisms and impediments by this group in relation to media representation of LGBTs, it is also possible to find a barrier in the education of children and adolescents in relation to this theme. An example of this is the “school without homophobia” project, which, according to Rodrigues e Silva (2020), came with a proposal to combat homophobia and discrimination based on sexual orientation, through booklets and educational videos. The project was dubbed the gay kit, and was heavily criticized by conservative and neoconservative groups present or not in positions of power in politics, which resulted in 2011 in its acceptance by President Dilma Rousseff. Such an act can also contribute to the lack of naturalization/standardization of the LGBT community in society, because in addition to the groups barring or criticizing

the different representations of this people in the media, they also avoid actions that try to educate and fight against prejudice.

## **CONCLUSION**

With this work we were able to conclude that the media exerts a significant influence on society in the same way as it is also influenced, in some aspects, by the customs and ways of acting in society, which can be altered by the movements of certain groups, whether they are conservative or minorities. We also conclude that representativeness is important for the non-invisibility and healthy recognition of a community as part of society, in the case of this work of the LGBTQIAP+ community. The lack of this recognition, as well as a caricatured or pejorative representation of this or any other community, can contribute to the emergence of psychological problems, and delay the acceptance and normalization of some people on this subject. With the conclusion of society's influence on media representations of the LGBTQIAP+ community, we were able to trace an association between some movements and advances in struggles for rights, with advances in the quantity and way in which this community is represented in different corners of the media.

We also saw that representativeness, in the case of young people, can influence their foundation as a human being, helping to standardize LGBTs in society and reducing prejudice. We also saw that there are different conservative groups, with opinions and beliefs crystallized in an old and often harmful way of thinking, especially with regard to LGBTs. It is concluded that among the people in these groups there are those who not only criticize LGBTQIAP+ representations in the media, but also have a still very mistaken idea of this community, associating them, for example, with a much more sexualized idea of what it is, which implies activism by these conservative

groups against not only representations in the media, but also against an education about this community both for the general population and for young people.

## REFERENCES

ARAUJO, Alexia Silva da Silveira et al. Representatividade LGBT em curta-metragem animado. 2020. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37390/avancacinema.2021.a285>

COLLING, Leandro. Personagens homossexuais nas telenovelas da Rede Globo: criminosos, afetados e heterossexualizados. **Revista Gênero**, v. 8, n. 1, p. 207-222, 2007. DOI: <http://www.cult.ufba.br/Artigos/Personagens%20homossexuais%20nas%20telenovelas.pdf>

CORREA, Elzo Newton Souza et al. As gays também consomem”: a importância da representação da comunidade LGBT na mídia comercial. **Anais do Encontro Nacional da Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Administração, Belo Horizonte, MG, Brasil**, 2015. DOI: <https://portalintercom.org.br/anais/nacional2015/resumos/R10-2506-1.pdf>

DA SILVA<sup>56</sup>, Jaíne Chianca. LUTE COMO UMA LÉSBICA: PANORAMA HISTÓRICO DO DIA NACIONAL DO ORGULHO LÉSBICO NARRADO NO BOLETIM CHANACOMCHANA. **Anais Digital do II Seminário de História e Gênero: Gênero, Ditadura e Autoritarismo**, p. 71. DOI: <https://nocorpocerto.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Anais-Semin%C3%A1rio-UFC.pdf#page=71>

OLIVEIRA, Dayane Adriana Teixeira; BARACUHY, Regina. NOTAS SOBRE A POLÊMICA DO “BEIJO GAY” EM UM DESENHO ANIMADO INFANTIL DA DISNEY| NOTES ABOUT THE POLEMIC “GAY KISS” IN A DISNEY ANIMATED CARTOON FOR CHILDREN. **Estudos linguísticos e literários**, n. 57, p. 277-296, 2017. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.9771/ell.v0i57.24769>

RODRIGUES, José Rafael Barbosa; SILVA, Josenilda Maria Maués da. Democracia e diferença em tramas político-curriculares contemporâneas: o Escola Sem Homofobia em análise. **Educar em Revista**, v. 36, 2020. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/0104-4060.75686>