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# Swear words among homosexuals: transgression of heteronormativity or replication of gender values?

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## Abstract

Swearing words are powerful weapons of social control. In the act of swearing, gender values are not only represented but perpetuated. Based on previous research showing that there are binary and sexist values in swear words, the present study aimed to survey and compare the swear words considered as worst by self-declared homosexual groups in order to verify if the same kind of gender values are present or if they are subverted. A total of 303 questionnaires were applied, divided in 150 men (75 homosexuals and 75 heterosexuals) and 153 women (74 homosexuals and 79 heterosexuals). The answers underwent semantic and pragmatic analysis and were subsequently classified in analytical categories. After this stage, a quantitative and qualitative comparison between groups was conducted. It was observed that the worst swear words elected by homosexual categories were similar to those elected by the heterosexuals, pointing to the replication of heteronormative values in the choice of insults.

**Keywords:** Sexism. Social discrimination. Homosexuality.

## Resumo

### Xingamentos entre homossexuais: transgressão da heteronormatividade ou replicação dos valores de gênero?

Os xingamentos são poderosas armas de controle social. Neles, os valores de gênero são não apenas representados, mas também perpetuados. A partir dos resultados de pesquisas anteriores, que demonstraram a existência de valores binários e sexistas nos xingamentos, o presente estudo teve como escopo fazer um levantamento e comparação de xingamentos considerados piores pelos grupos autodeclarados homossexuais, para verificar se os mesmos valores de gênero se fazem presentes ou são diferentes. Foram aplicados 303 questionários, divididos em 150 homens (75 homossexuais e 75 heterossexuais) e 153 mulheres (74 homossexuais e 79 heterossexuais). As respostas passaram por análise semântica e pragmática e, posteriormente, foram classificados em categorias analíticas. Após essa etapa, realizou-se comparação quantitativa e qualitativa entre os grupos. Notou-se que os piores xingamentos eleitos pelos grupos homossexuais foram semelhantes aos dos heterossexuais, o que sugere a validade da hipótese da replicação de valores heteronormativos na escolha das ofensas.

**Palavras-chaves:** Sexismo. Discriminação social. Homossexualidade.

## Resumen

### Los insultos entre homosexuales: ¿la transgresión de la heteronormatividad o la duplicación de valores de género?

Los insultos son poderosas armas de control social. En ellos, los valores de género no sólo están representados, sino que también se perpetúan. A partir de los resultados de investigaciones hechas previamente, con las cuales se demostró que existen valores binarios y sexistas en los insultos, el presente estudio tuvo como objetivo recopilar y comparar los insultos considerados como los peores por parte de los grupos auto-declarados homosexuales, para determinar si los mismos valores de género se hacen presentes o son diferentes. Fueron aplicados 303 cuestionarios, divididos entre 150 hombres (75 homosexuales y 75 heterossexuales) y 153 mujeres (74 homosexuales y 79 heterossexuales). Las respuestas pasaron por un análisis semántico y pragmático, y fueron posteriormente clasificadas en categorías analíticas. Después de esta etapa se llevó a cabo una comparación cuantitativa y cualitativa entre los grupos. Se observó que los peores insultos seleccionados por los grupos homosexuales fueron similares a los escogidos por los heterossexuales, lo cual sugiere la validez de la hipótesis de duplicación de valores heteronormativos en la elección de las ofensas.

**Palabras-clave:** Sexismo. Discriminación social. Homosexualidad.

Aprovação CEP/ICH-UnB 05-04/2012

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Declararam não haver conflito de interesse.

Homosexuality, understood contemporaneously as the sexual and affective relationship between people of the same sex, presupposes several cultural and historical “pre-conceptions” (representations), among them the notion of sexual identity<sup>1-3</sup>. The representation of this relationship may be very different in an indigenous community, for example, in which the notion of person is not based on the idea of a constant identity<sup>4</sup>. Besides, in the past, several societies and even ours, western, interacted differently with the practice of homosexuality<sup>5</sup>. This way, to equalize the relationship of a Greek youngster with his mentor in ancient Greece to the union between two men in the present would be a mistake, considering the distinct look on the phenomenon that both periods present.

Social acceptance of the sexual relation between people of the same sex is in accordance with the ideological apparatus established in a certain moment. According to historiography, from the rise of Christianity to the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century, this behavior was seen as circumstantial, subject to prohibition and penalties for its sinful character<sup>6</sup>. From the advance of the medical knowledge during the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, with the broad elaboration of the classification of pathologies in the form known today, the sexual affective relationship between people of the same sex was linked to identity definitions, materialized in the creation of the social representation of the homosexual subject from the term homosexuality, conceived in the end of the 1860s decade<sup>7-8</sup>.

When the figure of the “homosexual” individual is disseminated, heterosexuality is grounded as a naturalized way to express pleasure. That is, the maintenance of sexuality as identity made possible the establishment of an essentialist binarity in which homosexuality was perceived as the difference and the abnormality while heterosexuality would be conceived as the authentic way of affective and sexual relationship, biologically manifested in human beings<sup>1-2</sup>. For the decades following the creation of the term homosexuality, homosexual women and men lived with the stigma of having their sexuality marked by medical diagnoses, besides the aggressive and, in many cases, invasive healing techniques<sup>6-9</sup>.

During the period in which it was submitted to the verdict of medicine, homosexuality was also object of study of psychology and psychoanalysis. From the Freudian theory<sup>10</sup>, which focused on human psyche and its relation with sexuality, the psychoanalytic knowledge started contributing to the enhancement of the concept of sexual deviation

in psycho-diagnosis, which was soon incorporated into the psychiatric semiotics<sup>11</sup>. However, in the middle of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, social movements started questioning the permanence of the definition of homosexuality as a disease. Faced with the discrimination based on the abnormality tag, groups were formed of subjects identified as homosexuals who, for seeing themselves as a marginalized category, ended up creating identity ties<sup>12</sup>. With the strengthening of a political-identity link, the gay militancy in the U.S. demanded that the American Psychiatric Association withdrew homosexuality from the classification of mental diseases, what happened in 1973<sup>13</sup>.

In Brazil, the first movements of homosexuals arose in the 1970s in the context of the military ruling, a period in which several militant groups were created, questioning the authoritarianism in force.<sup>9</sup> As occurred in the U.S. these organizations, initially, sought to discuss the social and individual implications of their sexual orientation, besides questioning discrimination and intolerance. As different forms of oppression were questioned in homosexual movements, the negative impact of male chauvinism was also debated.

It was mainly the group of lesbians who sought to denounce and contest the reproduction of male chauvinist behaviors within the militancy itself. With this, a gap was created between the groups formed by homosexual men and women, as they opted to approach the feminist movements which, having great organization and studies in the area, could, in a certain way, respond with more understanding and affinity to the demands of the lesbian groups<sup>4</sup>.

Feminist gender studies arose in the 1960s-70s, with the purpose of deconstructing the idea of a feminine essence, a concept that contributes to the permanence of women in underprivileged social positions<sup>14</sup>. Progressively, this ancient reductionist conception of woman was substituted by a more plural comprehension, composed for example, of the different attributes that may be incorporated by women, such as age, ethnicity and economy. Besides, such studies came to emphasize the need to regard gender considering its relational character, in such a way that men were also included in this perspective<sup>15</sup>. This condition is based on the complementarity and in the superposition of several categories related to gender roles, which belong to the same mode of social functioning<sup>16</sup>.

The understanding of the relational character of gender, on the other hand, should not highlight the idea of differentiation between men and wom-

en based on biological determinism, implicit in the usual concepts of “sex” and “sexual difference”. The third wave of feminism, in the 1980s, broke up with his logics of understanding by suggesting that the very understanding of sex is a gender construction. This new feminism also proposed the deconstruction of the concept of identity, heir, according to Judith Butler <sup>1</sup>, of a western metaphysical tradition marked by the idea of substance.

For Butler, gender is not, in any way, stable, nor would it be an operating locus from which different acts would proceed; it is, rather, an identity feebly constructed over time, an *identity instituted by a stylized repetition of acts* <sup>17</sup>. In this sense, gender is a performance that gradually crystallizes as a consequence of stylized repetition of acts, producing the (misguided) idea of substance. Such repetition does not occur freely: as stated by the thinker, there is a “*survival strategy*” that suggests a situation of clearly punitive social coercion, in which this performance takes place. This was, becoming a man or becoming a woman in our binary society would consist in *obligating the body to conform to a historical idea* <sup>18</sup> of “woman” or “man”.

Thus, the dualistic regulation of sexuality is seen by Butler <sup>1</sup> as a way to erase the multiplicity of a subversive sexuality, which would break the heterosexual hegemony, whose construction counted on great theological-medical-juridical support. According to the thinker – who stresses the social pressure present in the compulsory linearity between sex, gender and sexuality –, *heterosexualization of desire requires and institutes the production of discriminates and asymmetric oppositions between “feminine” and “masculine”, in which these are understood as attributes of “male” and “female”* <sup>19</sup>. That is, like the thought of Witting <sup>2</sup>, Butler understands human sexuality as a paradigmatic materialization of the incorporation of the values of gender in society.

Teresa de Lauretis <sup>20</sup> denominated *gender technologies* the social processes that involve discourses and epistemologies, beyond the institutional practices and everyday life that will influence the social representation of “masculine” and “feminine” along history. According to the author, gender would consist in a technology produced and reproduced through the most diverse social techniques, institutionalized practices and actions of everyday life whose function is to transform concrete individuals in men and women, promoting the engagement in socially acceptable subjectivity models. Among the gender technologies are the media in general and the use of insults.

Despite the theoretical advance in the field of gender studies, male chauvinist values related to the image of women subsist in our culture. Among these are the ideal of suppression of sexual desires in favor of a demure and pure image <sup>21-22</sup>; the ideal of zeal, expressed in an allegedly caring essence, marked by renunciation <sup>23-24</sup>; the made up volition for conjugality and maternity <sup>25-26</sup>; the control of the bodies, keeping the woman from deciding on the continuity of her pregnancy or encourages her to constantly seek an ideal of beauty that would make her stand out in the affective market <sup>27</sup>; the violence <sup>28-29</sup>, and the exclusion from benefits that guarantee autonomy and liberty to enjoy the same opportunities assured to men.

Concerning masculinities, it is evident the imperative character of “*being man*”. According to Badinter, *being a man is said more in the imperative than in the indicative form* <sup>30</sup>. Being man is, in this sense, the interposition of not being a “*little girl*”, of which he will be demanded to show proof all his life, in living and belonging in the house of men <sup>31</sup>. Two pillar-values are highlighted: the sexual and productive working virility. The former is aligned with the idea of a “*comedor sexual ativo* (active sexual fucker)” <sup>32-34</sup>. The latter affirms the idea of productivity, of which the proof of success is the accumulation of wealth. As this model does not include every man, the concept of hegemonic masculinities was formulated, in which the groups that do not adapt to the normative standards would be dominant, while the subordinates would be the ones that do not fulfill social expectations, such as homosexual men, for example <sup>35</sup>.

As seen, gender consists in a performance assured or evoked by social practices, among which gender technologies era highlighted. As a performance, insulting may be understood as one of the manifestations of these technologies, since, as it is uttered, it indicates to the interlocutor interdicted places and social values <sup>36</sup>. According to Houaiss and Villar, “*xingar* (to insult)” is a verb that expresses the action of *agredir por meio de palavras isultosas, injuriosas; ofender, descompor, destratar, afrontar* (attacking through insulting, injurious words; to offend, decompile, mistreat, reproach) <sup>37</sup>.

Considering the characteristic of the action indicated by the verb “*xingar*”, the choice of vocabulary to be used is never random, but it takes place mainly as a function of gender values. This choice comprehends not only the semantic aspect of the word but also its mode of use when attributed to people perceived as of different sexes in diverse

contexts, that is, the sense of its use, its pragmatic aspect<sup>38</sup>. With the aim to list gender values in insults, Zanello and Gomes<sup>39</sup> performed a study with a sample of 376 adults in Brasília. Through questionnaires, participants were asked to point the worst insults attributable to a woman and a man, besides indicating the situation in which the insult would take place.

In the result of the study, it was observed that the insults considered as the worst by women, when attributed to themselves were the ones that denoted active sexual behavior (66.2%), such as “*puta (whore)*”, “*piranha (slut)*” and “*vagabunda (tramp)*”. In second place, came the ones with a relational character (10.94%), such as “*interesseira (self-interested)*” and “*falsa (false)*”. In third place were insults related to aesthetic ideals, such as “*gorda (fat)*” for example. This way, the three forms of insult that were considered the worst were exactly those that our society keeps in relation to women: sexual restraint and abstinence; availability and dedication to others; and beauty.

In relation to men, the worst insults attributable to themselves were related to passive sexual behavior (46.6%), such as “*veado (fag)*”, “*bichinha (little faggot)*” and “*boiola (queer)*”. In second place came the ones with a self-investment character trait (37.8%), among which “*vagabundo (bum)*” and “*fracassado (loser)*”. Thus, it can be noticed that the insults intended to affront sexual and productive working virility, identity base of the constitution of a “true” man in our culture.

In the study, the division of the participants by sex showed that both men and women shared male chauvinist social values and used insults as a reassurance of gender standards. Besides, in certain occasions, the same term took different senses according to their use (pragmatic aspect), when used towards a man or a woman. An example of that was the term “*vagabundo (bum)*”, which, when used to insult a man, got the meaning of “man who does not work”, “lazy”, while when used to insult a woman got the sense of “woman with an active sexual behavior”. However, even in the case of women, there were answers in which this insult got the meaning “woman who does not work”<sup>38</sup>.

The analysis of these results, however, indicated that it would be interesting to ask about the sexuality of participants in order to find if there would be a distinction between insults made by homosexual and heterosexual groups or if the het-

eronormative values also permeate the discourse of homosexual individuals, so that an equivalence is found between them.

Based on this reflection, the following questions were asked: would homophobia be present in the insults by groups of self-declared homosexual men? Among insults by homosexual women would there be values of sexual restraint in detriment of the references to homosexuality? And, if the answer is affirmative for both questions, would male chauvinistic and misogynous values prevail even among such groups? Do these groups insult homosexual and heterosexual man and women differently?

Thus, facing these questions, the present study sought to continue the study on insults performed previously, Now having as study target the groups of lesbians and gay men. Considering the specificity of the language adopted by these groups, the present study had, as a general objective, to survey the insults considered as the worst when directed both toward heterosexual women and men and to homosexual women and men, in a self-declared homosexual group. Besides, a comparison was sought between the forms of insult when the offense is attributed to people in general, homosexual or not, and to confront these data with the results obtained in a group self-declares heterosexual.

## Methods

This research project was approved by the Comitê de Ética do Instituto de Ciências Humanas da Universidade de Brasília (Ethics Committee, Institute of Human Sciences, University of Brasília, CEP/ICH-UnB). After acceptance by the CEP, questionnaires were applied to groups of goers to different events of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender (LGBT) in the different administrative regions of the Federal District, as well as places with higher frequency of the target public of the research, during the second semester of 2012 and the beginning of the year of 2013.

Questionnaires consisted in four questions (each including a complementary question, in order to clarify the use of these insults): 1) *What are the worst insults attributed to a heterosexual woman? In what situation?*; 2) *What are the worst insults attributed to a heterosexual man? In what situation?*; 3) *What are the worst insults attributed to a homosexual woman? In what situation?*; 4) *What are the*

worst insults attributed to a homosexual man? In what situation?

Questionnaires were applied in the University of Brasilia, in bars and restaurants frequented by the LGBT public and in the gay pride parade of Brasilia. At the end of the survey, data of 303 questionnaires were used, being 150 men (75 homosexual and 75 heterosexual) and 153 women (79 heterosexual and 74 homosexual). 73 questionnaires were excluded for not being properly answered, either due to the absence of the self-declaration of sexual orientation or because more than half of the four items were blank. We believe that the high occurrence of incomplete answers was due to the fact that the application of questionnaires occurred mainly in moments of leisure of the interviewees. These places were chosen due to the ease of access to the target public. The transcription of data was performed through the transfer of all social-demographic and answers to electronic indices, in order to facilitate data analysis.

In the group of homosexual women, the age of participants ranged between 16 and 62 years (average 28.27 years), with 43% of high school level education and 57% college level. Among heterosexual women, age ranged from 17 to 65 years (average 27.80 years), with 2.6% of elementary school education; 57.1% of high school, and 40.3% college-level. In the group of homosexual men, the age of participants ranged from 16 to 47 years (average 24.68 years), with 1.5% of elementary school level education; 51.5% high school and 47% college level. Among heterosexual men, age varied from 17 to 59 years (average 27.73), with 57.2% of high school education and 42.8% college level education.

Data were submitted both to content analysis<sup>40</sup> and to pragmatic analysis<sup>41-42</sup>, seeking to evaluate the semantic content of the term and, at the same time, the sense of its use (pragmatic aspect)<sup>38</sup>. In this stage, data were worked in a way to permit the selection and grouping of answers in categories representative of their contents, as well as facilitate their understanding. Along the process, the answers and categories were tabulated.

From the thematic-semantic axes obtained in the groups, it was possible to perform a comparison of groups concerning: 1) contents that arose; 2) gender values present. In order to organize the information collected, results were distributed in four large blocks, according to the analyzed divisions of

sex (men and women) and self-appointed sexual orientation (homosexual e heterosexual).

## Discussion and results

Concerning insults mentioned by homosexual men, when asked about the worst offenses attributed to their own group, the main results found were associated to sexual behavior (68%) and exclusion and rejection (12%). Besides the significant difference perceived between the first and second places in occurrence, within the category of sexual behavior, the largest number of insults was observed in the "passive sexual behavior" subcategory (90%). That is, according to the answers, the worst insults that homosexual men consider for themselves are those denoting passivity or behaviors that bring them closer to traits considered as feminine. Among the most frequent examples found, are "*viado (fag)*", "*viadinho (little fag)*" and "*bicha (faggot)*". In the "exclusion and rejection" category, examples obtained were, "aberration") and "sick".

The other categories present were: relational character traits (4%), in offenses like "*sem-vergonha (shameless)*" and "bad company"; self-investment character traits (1%), such as "*vagabundo (bum)*", "*sem future (no future)*" and "*incompetent*"; sexuality as insult (1%), which, in this case, would be to offend a homosexual man by calling him "*heterosexual*"; physical attributes (1%), such as "*feio (ugly)*" and "*fora de forma (out of shape)*"; intellectual attributes (1%), such as "*burro (stupid)*", and, lastly, the category "others" (2%), in which offenses do not fit in the remaining categories, like "*da moda (trendy)*" and "*xiboca (too cheerful)*".

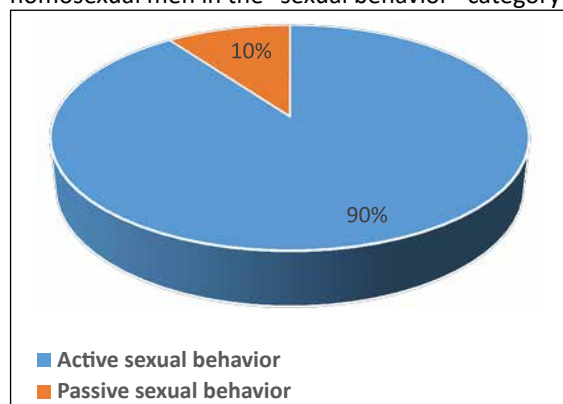
Insults referring to relational character traits are those that contradict dignity and honesty, while insults associated to the self-investment character traits are the ones that contest productivity, that is, the professional role and the ability to generate income. Besides the categories mentioned, there were questionnaires (10%) in which the participant either used expressions or terms that would not be insults if compared to the standards previously established by the research or left blank answers.

Among heterosexual men the worst insults attributable to homosexual men were also in the "sexual behavior" category (79%). In this, the passive sexual behavior, expressed in insults like "*viado (fag)*" and "*bichinha (little faggot)*", is also

predominant (93%). Other categories were also present, such as: traits of relational character (7%); self-investment character traits (3%); exclusion and rejection (2%); physical attributes (1%); intellectual attributes (1%); sexuality as insult (1%), and others (2%). In 4% of the questionnaires, either terms or expressions that would not be insults in comparison to the standards previously defined by the study or the item was no answered.

Analyzing the data obtained, one notices that the attribution of characteristics culturally associated to women, such as passivity, is considered the worst means of insulting the homosexual man. These evidences also arose in the groups of insults that homosexual and heterosexual women directed to homosexual men, in which the “passive sexual behavior” category predominated in the “sexual behavior” category (96% and 98%, respectively). Thus, it is possible to notice the misogyny predominant in the insults attributed to homosexual men, as the worst insults refer to the hatred to female traits<sup>7</sup>. The very group of homosexual men, the largest target of this pattern of insult and possibly capable of subverting this situation, corroborated the reassurance of misogyny (Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Insults from homosexual men attributed to homosexual men in the “sexual behavior” category



From Figure 1, one can infer the magnitude of the presence of sexually passive behavior in insults by homosexual men attributed to their own group. This datum denotes the presence of the homophobic discourse in homosexuality and the appropriation of virility values as representation of acceptable homosexuality. According to Badinter, *while practiced in its active form, homosexuality can be considered by men as a way to reaffirm its power; in its “passive” form, it is, on the contrary, a symbol of decadence*<sup>43</sup>.

For heterosexual men, the main categories of the worst insults that they attribute to their own

groups are sexual behavior (48%), relational character traits (27%) and self-investment character traits (12%). Four categories had 2% of occurrence; these are: exclusion and rejection; physical attributes; intellectual attributes, and others. The “politically correct” category had only 1%. In the sexual behavior category there was more spread among the subcategories, compared to the previous group.

Passive sexual behavior predominates with 57% and the passivity behavior by betrayal, expressed in insults such as “*cornio* (cuckold)” and “*chifrudo* (also cuckold)” – denoting the inability of the man to keep control over the sexual behaviors of the partner in the relationship – is in second place (26%). Then, come sexually active behavior (10%), with insults like “*safado* (naughty)” and “*machão* (macho-man)”, and the efficiency sexual behavior (7%), as “*brocha* (limpdick)” and “*ruim de cama* (bad in bed)”. The “efficiency sexual behavior” category is the one that questions the effectiveness of the man during the sexual relation, manifested in expressions like “*pau mole* (floppy penis)” and “*impotent*”. In 4% of the questionnaires, there was no answer to this question.

In the opinion of homosexual men, the categories with greater relevance as the worst insults directed at heterosexual men were sexual behavior (57%), self-investment character traits (19%) and relational character traits (15%). In the subcategories of sexual behaviors, we had: passive sexual behavior in first place (74%); passivity by betrayal in second (15%); efficiency sexual behavior in third (6%); and, finally, active sexual behavior (5%). Beyond the main categories, in this group there were also: exclusions and rejection (4%), in insults like “*disgraced*”; physical attributes (2%), such as “*fat*” and “*pinto pequeno* (small penis); politically correct (1%), such as insulting a heterosexual man calling him “*machista* (chauvinist pig)” and others (1%), among which was the apparently unknown “*fraking*”. Although this may correspond to the wrong spelling of the English slang “*freaking*”, designating something or someone abnormal or strange, spelling mistakes were only considered as such when they were obvious, like in “*bixa*” instead of “*bicha* (faggot)”. In 1% of the questionnaires there was no answer to this question.

Homosexual women followed the pattern of homosexual men in the main categories of insults directed to heterosexual men. Sexual behavior was in first place (53%); self-investment character traits came in second (20%), and, in third place, the relational character traits (13%). Sexual behavior

subcategories were: passive sexual behavior (64%); passivity by betrayal and efficiency sexual behavior, both with the same value (16%); as well as active sexual behavior (4%).

Other categories arose in this group: physical attributes (4%), with insults like “*bombado* (pumped up)” and “*careca* (bald)”; exclusion and rejection (3%), with insults like “*sujo* (filthy)” and “*lodo* (scum)”; intellectual attributes (2%), like “*burro* (stupid)” and “*ignorant*”; and, finally, politically correct (1%), in which again the term “*machista* (chauvinist pig)” arose as an insult. In 4% of the questionnaires, either expressions or terms were used which would either not constitute insults when compared with the standards previously established by the study, or the item was no answered.

In the distribution of the worst insults among homosexual women directed toward heterosexual men, sexual behavior was still predominant (51%), despite relational character traits having high occurrence (20%), followed by self-investment character traits (15%), intellectual attributes (5%), exclusion and rejection (4%) and physical attributes (2%). “Sexuality as insult” and others had only 1%.

In the subcategories of sexual behavior, passive sexual behavior still had the highest occurrence (60%), and passivity behavior by betrayal also had considerable occurrence (21%). Active sexual behavior and efficiency sexual behavior were less expressive (7% and 12%, respectively). In 1% of the questionnaires, there was no answer to this question.

Even the distribution of the categories and subcategories of sexual behavior being greater in the worst insults attributed to heterosexual men, it is evident that the sexual passive behavior is still prominent in the questionnaires. Joining this result to the one of the group of homosexual men, it is clear that, independently of the sex and the sexuality of those who answer the research, we are always called to answer for the ideal of virility required by the society, be that homosexual or heterosexual<sup>7</sup>. This result corroborates the theory by Daniel Welzer-Lang that men *must combat aspects that would make them associated to women*<sup>44</sup>.

In relation to the questionnaires in which the worst insults were directed to women, as in the case of men, it is also possible to notice prevailing elements in the choice of the worst insults. When asked about the worst insults attributed to their own group, heterosexual women chose the active sexual behavior (74%), which was the only subcategory of sexual behavior that appeared in the results,

with insults such as “*puta* (whore)”, “*vadia* (tramp)” e “*piranha* (slut)”.

Other less expressive categories were: intellectual attributes (6%), with “*burra* (stupid)”, “*barbeira* (bad driver)” and “*dona Maria* (Miss Mary)”; relational character traits (6%), with “*pistoleira* (insensitive and moved only by self-interest)”, “*dishonest*” and “*traíra* (traitor)”; physical attributes (5%), with “*fat*” and “*baranga* (very ugly and unattractive woman)”; exclusion and rejection (4%), with “*nojenta* (disgusting)” and “*porca* (female pig)”; self-investment character traits (3%), with the insults “*fracassada* (loser)” and “*incompetent*”; and others (2%), in which unknown terms, such as “*banda*” and “*rupiada*” were found.

In the worst offenses that homosexual women chose for heterosexual women is sexual behavior (76%), in which the subcategory “active sexual behavior” represents 89%, followed by inverted sexual behavior (8%) and frustration sexual behavior (3%) – this last one having as insults the expressions “*mal-amada* (badly loved)” and “*mal-comida* (badly fucked)”. The other categories found were intellectual attributes (3%), relational character traits (3%), physical attributes (6%), exclusion and rejection (4%), self-investment character traits (3%) and others (1%).

In the “inverted sexual behavior” subcategory, predominant insults are “*sapata* (dyke)”, “*sapatonna* (dyke)”, “*caminhoneira* (truck driver)”, which express, in the social imagination, the behavior of a woman who intends to approach to the behaviors socially attributed to men, i.e., an “inversion of roles”. The choice of the term “inverted” is justified by the answer to the complementary question *In what situation?*, which suggested an idea of breaking the “necessary” relation (in the social imagination) between sex, gender and desire<sup>1</sup>. In 4% of the questionnaires there was no answer to this question.

Homosexual men elected, as the worst insults of heterosexual women, those related mainly to sexual behavior (80%), in which the subcategory “active sexual behavior” had 93%, followed by inverted sexual behavior (5%) and by passive behavior, with the insult “*pau no cu* (penis in the anus)”, and the one of frustration, each with only 1%.

In this group other categories arose: relational character traits (6%); physical attributes (5%); intellectual attributes (2%); exclusion and rejection (2%); others (2%); besides self-investment character traits and biological sex as insult, each with 1%. In 1% of the questionnaires there was no answer to this



question. Insults associated with frustration sexual behavior such as “*mal-amada* (badly loved)” and “*encalhada* (stranded)”, refer to the difficulty of the woman in being chosen as the object of love and/or desire of a man, which gets right at the “*love device*”<sup>25</sup>, the privileged way, in or culture, of the subjective constitution of women<sup>45</sup>.

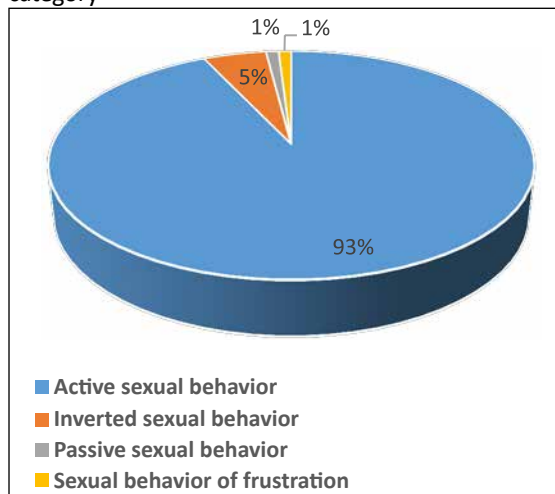
In the group of the worst insults from heterosexual men toward heterosexual women, sexual behavior and physical attributes were the categories of higher occurrence: 70% and 13%, respectively. The other categories were less expressive: relational character traits (7%), exclusion and rejection (4%), intellectual attributes (3%), self-investment character traits (1%) and others (1%). In 1% of the questionnaires either there was no answers or expressions or terms were used which would not be insults if compared to the standards previously defined by the study. In the sexual behavior category, active sexual behavior was majority (97%). The other three subgroups were inverted, frustration and passive sexual behaviors, each with only 1% of occurrence.

Based on the results of the present study and in previous studies on insults<sup>38-39-46</sup>, it is possible to notice that active sexual behavior, independent of the sexual orientation of the insulter, is the main tool of insult to heterosexual women. That is, there is a pattern in these insult mechanisms with the function of coercing to behaviors considered appropriate to women<sup>26</sup>. Since docility and femininity constitute attributes socially imposed to women, being a “*puta* (whore)” or “*vagabunda* (tramp)” is seen as something offensive, and, thus, are considered the worst insults. This phenomenon was quite evident in the insults of homosexual men directed to heterosexual women (Figure 2).

In the categories of the worst insults that heterosexual women attribute to homosexual women are: sexual behavior (63%); exclusion and rejection (17%), in which insults such as “*sick*” and “*nojenta* (disgusting)”; physical attributes (5%), such as “*fat*” and “*peluda* (hairy)”; intellectual attributes (2%), such as “*burra* (stupid)”. In 10% of the questionnaires either the interviewee could not define any insult or mentioned expressions like “*você gosta de aranha* (carpet muncher)”. The self-investment and relational character traits, as well as reference to celebrity had 1% of the occurrences each. This last category refers to the use of names of famous people as insults. In this group, the name chosen was that of the singer Justin Bieber. Among the subcategories of sexual behavior, inverted sexual behavior is predominant (72%), with “*sapatão* (dyke)” and “*mulher macho*

(macho woman)”, followed by active sexual behavior (25%), with “*vadia* (tramp)” and “*puta* (whore)”, and frustration (3%), through insults like “*solteirona* (spinster)” and “*mal-amada* (badly loved)”.

**Figure 2.** Insults from homosexual men attributed to heterosexual women in the “sexual behavior” category



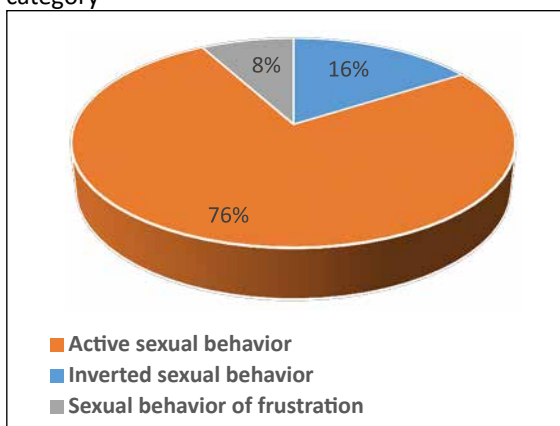
The sexual behavior category has expressive occurrence in the worst insults of heterosexual men directed to heterosexual women (77%). the remaining categories appeared as: relational character traits (7%), exclusion and rejection (5%), physical attributes (3%), followed by intellectual attributes, reference to the celebrity and others, each with 1%. In 5% of the questionnaires, the subject did not answer these questions. The sexual behavior categories were inverted sexual behavior (59%), active sexual behavior (33%), besides passive and frustration sexual behaviors, each with 4%.

If compared to the previous group, the list of categories that appeared in the worst insults of homosexual men to homosexual women: sexual behavior (71%), relational character traits (5%), exclusion and rejection (5%), physical attributes (4%), self-investment character traits (3%). Besides the categories “intellectual attributes” and “others”, biological sex as an insult, when the words “*homem* (man)” or “*mulher* (woman)” were used as insults, each had 1%. As subcategories of sexual behavior there were: inverted sexual behavior, still ahead with 83%, followed by active sexual behavior (11%) and frustration and passive sexual behavior, each with 3%. This question was left blank in 9% of the questionnaires.

Sexual behavior remained as majority category in the worst insults chosen by homosexual women

toward their own group (80%). Besides, the most frequent subgroup in this category was also inverted sexual behavior (76%), followed by active sexual behavior (16%), and the passive and frustration sexual behaviors, with 8% each. Other categories that appeared with less frequency were exclusion and rejection (5%), physical attributes (4%), relational character traits (3%), intellectual attributes (2%) and others (1%). There was no answer to this question in 5% of the questionnaires. One notices that homosexual women followed the same behaviors as the majority in the group of homosexual men, thus homogenizing the results. (Figure 3).

**Figure 3.** Insults from homosexual women attributed to homosexual women in the “sexual behavior” category



### Final considerations

The aim of this study was to identify in which way self-declared homosexual subjects use insults and, mainly, to check if the values of gender remain in the maintenance of traditional social roles. With basis on the results, it was possible to define little distinction in the use of insults in the groups analyzed, which suggests the perpetuation of the male chauvinist and the values of gender in our society.

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Among homosexual men, insults attributed to men, both homosexual and heterosexual, keep the category of passive sexual behavior as predominant insult, even if the insults are directed to the group itself. Therefore, although many times marginalized and oppressed due to their homosexuality, subjects resort to the same homophobic mechanisms against men in general. Besides, homosexual men consider the worst insults to heterosexual women those associated to active sexual behavior and, for homosexual women, those related to inverted sexual behavior, reassuring normative standards imposed on women.

Analogously to homosexual men, self-declared homosexual women also show the tendency to appropriate heteronormative values in the choice of the worst insults directed to different groups. Thus, they also attribute as the worst insults to men, be them homo sexual or heterosexual, those denoting passive sexual behavior. Moreover, they ratify the division found in the group of heterosexual women, in which the worst insults attributed to their group refer to the subcategory of active sexual behavior, while the worst insults directed to the very own group of homosexual women correspond to the subcategory of inverted sexual behavior.

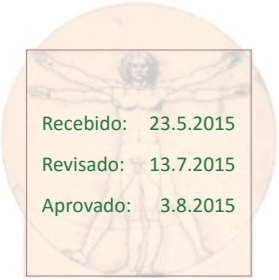
In sum, from the data obtained, it can be inferred that homosexual men and women, although not included in the standards of oppositional homosexuality<sup>1</sup>, reiterate social and traditional gender roles, which preach virility to men and sexual restraint to women. Besides, despite finding themselves at the margin of heteronormativity, they reproduce the behaviors of their heralds. Considering this situation, this study intends to highlight the importance of the reflexion about mechanisms that build subjectivity and guide moral judgments in social life, for it is understood that they are fundamental for the awareness on the behavioral patterns in force, which, by reproducing iniquitous, repressive moralities, even contrary to the basis of citizenship, go against the respect for individual autonomy.

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**Participation of the authors**

Felipe Baére participated of data collection and analysis, and in writing the article. Valeska Zanello was responsible for the conception of the study, besides participating in data collection and analysis, and in writing the article. Ana Carolina Romero participated in data collection and analysis.



Recebido: 23.5.2015

Revisado: 13.7.2015

Aprovado: 3.8.2015