



## From controversy to hate speech: a study of reception on twitter from a semiolinguistic perspective

### *Da polêmica aos discursos de ódio: um estudo da recepção no twitter sob a perspectiva semiolinguística*

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to contribute to the study of reception within the scope of Discourse Analysis, analyzing the fine line between controversial manifestations and hate speech in comments by Internet users in response to a video published by former deputy Jean Wyllys, entitled “Which of the two is closest to – or more closely following – the teachings left by Jesus in the gospels? Which of the two most preserves true Christian values?” From the contributions of Charaudeau (2008) and Barros (2015), among others, we sought to analyze the comments produced by Internet users on this message. Through the differentiation of expressions of agreement and disagreement, we identified cases of extreme rejection of the speaker, which go beyond the scope of the controversy and are characterized as hate speech, revealing, in the analyzed data, traces of the so-called ideological matrix of the conservative right.

**Keywords:** Discourse; hate speech; religion; politics.

**Resumo:** Esse artigo tem como objetivo contribuir para o estudo da recepção no âmbito da Análise do Discurso, analisando o tênue limite entre manifestações polêmicas e discursos de ódio em comentários de internautas em resposta a um vídeo publicado pelo ex-deputado Jean Wyllys, intitulado “Qual dos dois está mais próximo dos – ou segue mais os – ensinamentos deixados por Jesus nos evangelhos? Qual dos dois preserva mais os verdadeiros valores cristãos?” A partir das contribuições de Charaudeau (2008) e Barros (2015), dentre outros, procuramos analisar os comentários produzidos pelos internautas sobre essa mensagem. Por meio da diferenciação de manifestações de concordância e discordância, identificamos os casos de rejeição extrema ao locutor,

os quais ultrapassam o plano da polêmica e se caracterizam como discursos de ódio, revelando, nos dados analisados, traços da chamada matriz ideológica da direita conservadora.

**Palavras-chave:** discurso; discursos de ódio; religião; política.

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## 1. Introduction

Brazil has experienced moments of political effervescence since the impeachment process of ex-president Dilma Rousseff, which ended in 2016. Since then, the country has experienced a political polarization between left and right that has reverberated in all sectors of society. The election, in 2018, of far right-wing Jair Bolsonaro, who defends a neoliberal policy and ultraconservative principles, fostered the debate around political, economic, social and moral issues. Bolsonaro's public demonstrations in favor of dictatorship, torture and homophobia, in addition to all of his government's actions against the less favored, minorities, universities, culture, the environment, among others, have triggered favorable and contrary reactions.

Most of these reactions have materialized through publications on social networks, a space that has proved to be a privileged setting for public debate around topics of general interest. The messages published in these environments are not restricted to political agents, but are also, and to a large extent, the responsibility of representatives of some institutions, such as religious leaders, union leaders, university leaders and also ordinary citizens.

One of the personalities that have been more active in the sense of commenting and questioning the directions adopted by the current government is former federal deputy Jean Wyllys. A journalist, university professor and politician affiliated to the PSOL (Socialism and Freedom Party), Wyllys was re-elected in 2018, but gave up his third term and left Brazil, claiming to be a victim of threats. In a statement to the newspaper *Folha de S. Paulo*, the deputy stated that the intensification

of death threats, recurring even before the execution of Marielle Franco,<sup>1</sup> and militia's actions in the state of Rio de Janeiro, led him to make this decision (BARROS, 2019).

Jean Wyllys has been expressing himself through social media on a series of themes that relate to the Brazilian reality. His publications, however, are the target of a series of manifestations, in large part contrary to his position, manifestations that often exceed the limit of disagreement in relation to his opinions and escalate to personal aggressions.

Given this scenario, our article aims to contribute to the study of reception within the scope of Discourse Analysis, in the sense of proposing, based on works by Charaudeau (2008), Amossy (2017) and Barros (2015), some parameters that allow us to interpret the fine line between controversial manifestations and hate speech and, through these parameters, describe and analyze the comments of internet users in response to a video published by former deputy Jean Wyllys, entitled "Which of the two is closest to – or more closely follows – the teachings left by Jesus in the gospels? Which of the two most preserves true Christian values?" The message and comments, objects of our analysis, were published on Twitter on October 6, 2019, and refer to Pope Francis' initiative to convene the Amazon Synod, to discuss the problem of deforestation and burning in the Amazon region. It is a video that obtained, until October 8, 2019, 72 comments, which we intend to analyze from the theoretical and methodological framework that will be presented below.

Our article will be organized as follows: first, we will present a brief discussion around social networks and Twitter as a space for debate on relevant topics and promoting the social capital of Internet users. Then we will present the theoretical and methodological framework that will guide our analysis, to then discuss the issue of polemics and hate speech, based on the existing parameters and those proposed by us and, finally, to analyze the selected comments.

## **2 Twitter interactions as a situational genre**

As one of the most popular social networks around the world, Twitter is a tool that combines blogging, social network, and instant

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<sup>1</sup> The city councilor Marielle Franco, from PSOL (Partido Socialismo e Liberdade), murdered in March 2018.

messenger features. It allows users to publish a public profile and interact through it, make public posts and follow and be followed by other users. According to Recuero (2012), social networks (including Twitter) provide:

(1) the creation of a public or semi-public profile in a particular tool; (2) the articulation of a list of connections (also public or semi-public) and (3) the possibility to view and browse those connections available in the same tool. These elements thus allow social networks publications that can be viewed by other actors. (RECUERO, 2012, p. 598.)

Twitter, as well as social networks in general, has contributed to the emergence of a new public space for discussion of various topics. Its use also corresponds to a process of expanding the use of these networks, which have been increasingly used by institutions and their representatives, who start to use them strategically for the publication of personal and institutional content, and as a mechanism of capture.

We can describe Twitter interactions as a situational genre, adopting the parameters described by Charaudeau (2004). For this author, the so-called situational genres are the result of the communication situation, the identities of the partners in the communication act, the situation in which this act takes place, and the purpose of that act. In other words, what the participants do in the language act, the context and purpose of that act configure communication situations.

We will focus here on the purpose of the genre Twitter interactions, taking into account the relationship between the identities of the exchange partners (and the choices of the enunciative modes associated with them), the communicative purpose, and the material circumstances where the situations of communication that make up the corpus take place.

Regarding the purpose, Twitter affords several *visadas*.<sup>2</sup> Among them, information and encouragement predominate. In terms of “information,” the speaker subject (the *I*) is in a position of wanting

<sup>2</sup> For Charaudeau (2004), the term *visadas* (views) corresponds to enunciative attitudes derived from the pragmatic orientation of communicative acts, in view of their pragmatic orientation and situational anchoring. The types of views are therefore defined by a double criterion: the pragmatic intention of the *I* in relation to the position it occupies as an enunciator in the relationship that links him to the *you*, and the position that the *you* must occupy.

to “make known,” while his interlocutor (the *you*) is in the position of “must know” something about the existence of the facts, or about the why or how of their emergence. In Wyllys’ speech, the purpose of information is materialized in several statements that bring knowledge about the purpose of the post, which is the Amazon Synod and Pope Francis’s stance in favor of preserving the environment, compared to that of President Bolsonaro. An example is:

1) Today is the beginning of the Amazon Synod, a meeting of bishops from the Amazon region with Pope Francis in the Vatican, who will be together for three weeks.

As for the incitement *visada*, the *I* wants to “have it done,” but having no explicit authority over the other, he cannot force him to do something, but only inciting it. For this, he tries to “make the *you* believe” (by persuasion or seduction) that he will be the beneficiary of his own act. This is what is observed in the following passage, in which incitement appears in the form of questioning, which leads the Internet user to reflect on the behavior of President Bolsonaro in comparison with that of Pope Francis, so that the Internet user is convinced that the president does not act like a true Christian:

2) But I ask all of you: who is the one that is closest to Jesus and following Jesus’ example: Bolsonaro and the Catholic right or Pope Francis?

This encouragement on Twitter is favored by the so-called “cascade” effect. For Kleinberg and Easley (2010), through social networks, individuals influence each other. Users’ posts can impact the decision of others, generating mass behavior. This effect results from the potential of broadcast networks and the rapid return of posted messages.

Regarding participant identity, although interactions via Twitter are in the domain of media communication, they involve a production instance that can be linked to different domains (political, religious, citizen). According to Klenberg and Easley (2010), in social networks it is possible to have, as source of messages, several social actors, contrary to what happens, in general, in traditional media. The networks therefore provide greater visibility for all its nodes, democratizing access and information production. Thus, when the user publishes any information, he reaches other users who, in turn, can replicate the message. This

characterizes this space as more “democratic,” promoting a closer relationship between users, a characteristic that will have an impact on the image construction of the enunciating subject.

The purpose, that is, the thematic modes, which concern the organization of themes and sub-themes, in general revolve around events in the public space, that is, everyday issues of general interest. More rarely, these publications may also be linked to manifestations of a personal nature. In the analyzed post, the purpose is to make the Internet user believe that Bolsonaro, unlike Pope Francis, does not behave like a true Christian.

The circumstances, which refer to the material conditions of communication, involve digital communication, with the use of texts, images and videos, which have an unlimited permanence, allowing the posts to be viewed and commented for an indefinite period of time after publication.

In this space, the user can build an image of himself through discourse, which is one of the main factors responsible for his acceptance and, consequently, for the repercussion of his ideas. And because it is, at first, a democratic space, interaction and greater proximity between users is possible. However, because it is a specific communication situation, it imposes specific restrictions on its users. These restrictions are also imposed on institutions and their representatives who adopt Twitter to communicate with the public. In this sense, Twitter establishes some general rules for users, identifying some behaviors that are not allowed in this environment, such as the use of “robots” or applications to publish similar messages based on keywords; aggressive manifestations or whose content is harmful or abusive; inappropriate ads, among others.<sup>3</sup>

### **3 Interactions on social networks and the constitution of social capital, from the discursive point of view**

We agree with the thesis defended by some authors, including Recuero (2009), that social networks, today, can be responsible for the construction of individuals’ social capital. We adopted the definition of Bourdieu (1998), for whom the notion of social capital represents

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<sup>3</sup> Information available at: <https://help.twitter.com/en/rules-and-policies/twitter-search-policies>. Accessed on: 13 May. 2020.

[...] the set of real or potential resources that are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual inter-knowledge and inter-recognition, or, in other words, to the affiliation to a group, as the set of agents that are not only endowed with common properties (capable of being perceived by the observer, by others and by themselves), but also that are united by permanent and useful connections. (BOURDIEU, 1998, p. 67).

Thus, social capital is related to results obtained from more or less institutionalized relationships that the subject establishes throughout life. Applying this notion to the discursive practices of social networks, we can say that there is a predominance of positions of agreement or non-agreement. It is about the repercussion of comments, responses, replies and rejoinders from the initial situation or the new interactions that originate from it, which can contribute to the construction of the social capital of the author of the original publication or, depending on the case, of the subject he promoted. Therefore, we claim that the creation of a positive social capital, through social networks, can be a factor in attracting the Internet user, who collaborates in promoting the viewpoint defended by a particular social actor.

Putnam and Elisson (*apud* RECUERO, 2012) also adopt the concept of social capital, in order to interpret, within the scope of social networks, a kind of game of following and being followed, typical of this environment, which reveals collective values. Thus, since social capital would be related to social connections, that is, belonging to a social group, social networks are relevant to obtaining and sustaining them, since they are related to six values relevant to their promotion, namely: visibility (the fact that the subject is visible in the network); reputation (the perception of the actor by other actors); authority (the level of knowledge or competence that the network attributes to the actor); popularity (the number of connections the profile has, identified by the number of followers, comments, shares and responses); interaction (possibility of conversational exchange) and social support (level of return for a request). In other words, when publishing a message on social networks, the communicating subject not only exposes content, but also exposes himself publicly, thus being able to raise positive capital from the values described above. However, depending on the repercussions and the level of controversy or non-engagement expressed in the comments,

this can negatively affect some of these values, especially their reputation, authority and popularity, as we will see throughout our analysis.

In order to analyze interactions on social networks, it is essential to address the instance of reception. This aspect has been gradually introduced in discursive studies, in view of its importance for understanding the functioning of the act of language. Within the scope of Patrick Charaudeau's *Semiolinguistic Discourse Theory* (2008), the sociodiscursive relations, which comprise the reception space, are circumscribed to what he calls the "external communication circuit," which involves the beings involved in speech acts as psychosocial subjects. That's what we shall see next.

#### **4 A basic typology for the study of reception on social networks: twitter comments seen from a semi-linguistic perspective**

Within the scope of Patrick Charaudeau's *Semiolinguistic Discourse Theory* (2008), the sociodiscursive relations, which comprise the reception space, are circumscribed to what he calls the "external communication circuit," which involves the beings involved in speech acts as psychosocial subjects.

In order to better understand how reception is included in the enunciative scheme proposed by Charaudeau (2008), it is necessary to know that this author distinguishes, in the instance of discourse production, a subject that unfolds into I-enunciator and I-communicator. The I-e is a being of speaking, present explicitly or implicitly in every speech act. It is about the image of an enunciator produced by the speech-producing subject (the I-c), representing his trait of intentionality in the instance of production of the language act.

In the instance of reception, we also have the unfolding of two beings: the YOU-recipient and the YOU-interpreter. The first is an interlocutor idealized by the I, which can be explicitly marked or not in the language act. The YOU-interpreter is responsible for the interpretation process. When it comes to reception, it is this interpreting subject and his reaction that interests the researcher. However, as Charaudeau (2008, p. 46) states, this subject "escapes the domain of the I," since he does not always correspond to the being idealized by the speaker. In other words, an order is directed to a YOU-r, an idealized being, which, probably, will recognize in the speaker an authority and, consequently, a position



of subordination in relation to that speaker. However, the real subject to whom this order is going may not necessarily correspond to the real subject who will receive that order. The YOU-i is defined, therefore, as a real being, who acts outside the act of enunciation, being responsible for the discourse interpretation process.

According to Charaudeau (2010), the reception space is the space of social practice in which the subject must attribute meanings to the act of communication. It is, therefore, the space of the effects produced. For the author, in communication situations in which the interpreting subject is plural and heterogeneous (such as in media communication), the possibility of coincidence between the effect targeted by the speaker and the effect produced by the receiver is even less. For the author,

[...] this interlocutor subject is a social actor who has his own autonomy in his act of interpretation; he dedicates himself to this activity in terms of his own social identity, the social identity of the speaker he perceives, the intentions he attributes to him, his own knowledge of the world, and his own beliefs. (CHARAUDEAU, 2010, p. 5.)

Between the subjects of the discourse, for Charaudeau (2010), there is a contractual relationship that depends on three components: the communicational one, which concerns the physical situation; the psychosocial one, which refers to the statutes linked to the partners, such as age, sex, socio-professional category, etc.; and the intentional, which concerns what is being said and the strategic intention underlying the act of language.

We will consider the texts produced in the scope of reception as commentary discourses. For Charaudeau (2006), this type of discourse reveals the opinion of the subject who comments. It is a kind of thermometer that allows evaluating the repercussion of the discourses that have repercussions.

The YOU-interpreting, responsible in this scheme for the interpretation process, is subject to restrictions, that is, his behavior depends on the circumstances of the discourse that lead him, among other things, to “calculate the risks of its possible reactions (CHARAUDEAU, 2008, p. 46). Before predominantly argumentative discourses, this subject is taken to take a stand regarding the proposal and the subject issuing the proposal, adopting some attitudes to the social actor issuing

the proposal and/or to what is said. Starting from Charaudeau's (2008) description, we propose that these attitudes can be basically of agreement or disagreement.

Among the attitudes of agreement, we identified the following possible reactions:

1. *acceptance of what was said*: the interpreting subject demonstrated he accepts the said, through statements of agreement in relation to the original publication;
2. *acceptance of the issuer's status* : the interpreting subject recognizes authority, credit, knowledge, or charisma in the issuer. This recognition, however, does not depend on what has been said;
3. *reduplication*: this is a typical attitude of social networks, since they enable the reduplication of what is said, with sharing of the original message. It is understood that the interpreting subject who shares the original message not only demonstrates agreement, but also becomes co-responsible for it, unless this reduplication is accompanied by a comment questioning its content.

Among the disagreement attitudes, there may be:

1. *rejection of what was said*, with disagreement with what was said, often accompanied by predicates that disqualify the post. It may or may not be accompanied by questions or counter arguments to the defended proposal;
2. *rejection of the issuer's statute*: questions that may revolve around the subject's credibility and legitimacy to address the subject addressed or his social identity, regardless of what he has said.

Let us see, next, how the controversial discourse and, therefore, hate speech are related to the scheme described above.

## **5 Attitudes of disagreement: The controversial discourse**

Non-engagement or disagreement, as described above, can create controversy in the discourse. The controversy concept has been

approached in the scope of discursive studies by a few authors, among whom we will highlight the work of Amossy (2017), who reinterprets Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1980). Amossy (2017) traces a path about the notion of controversy, from rhetoric to discursive studies. He understands that, different from what traditional rhetoric proposes, controversy, and not just consensus, can be situated in the domain of argumentation. In this sense, the author proposes that argumentation is a continuum, which includes the debate around divergent theses, the clash of antagonistic positions.

In the scope of discursive studies, Amossy rescues the definition of controversial discourse by Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1980). For this author, the controversial discourse is strongly dialogical, characterized by being opposed to the other's discourse, disqualifying that discourse or disqualifying the very enunciator. For Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1980), in polemic discourse, there is a confrontation of antagonistic theses that reflect different opinions on a given theme, through rhetorical and discursive procedures, such as denial, axiological marking (evaluation in terms of good/evil), quotes, ironies, hyperboles, among others. This situation would involve a polarization around opinions that are not entirely individual, but that represent group positions. However, this controversy does not necessarily imply verbal violence. When one extrapolates from controversy to verbal violence, extremely rejecting not what is said, but the one who said it, there is the expression of hatred.

We will try, in the following sections, to articulate the discursive approach from the controversy, summarized above, to hate speech to, finally, analyze the data in question.

## **6 From controversial speech to hate speech**

We understand, from the description above, that hate speech goes beyond non-engagement or disagreement with the thought or what the other said, that is, we understand that it goes beyond the controversy. We propose to understand hate speech as a verbal manifestation that concerns the behavior of extreme rejection of the issuer's statute, which promotes violence and hostility, especially against people belonging to more vulnerable groups, due to their social identity.

Hate speech is the object of study by some researchers in the field of law. Meyer-Pflug (2009) understands hate speech as the manifestation of "ideas that incite racial, social or religious discrimination

in certain groups, in most cases, minorities” (MEYER-PFLUG, 2009, p. 97). Sarmiento (2006) addresses hate speech as “expressions of hatred, contempt or intolerance against certain groups, motivated by prejudices related to ethnicity, religion, gender, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation, among other factors [...]” (SARMENTO, 2006, p. 54-55). According to Shafer, Leiva and Santos (2015, p. 147): “Hate speech is aimed at stigmatizing, choosing and marking an enemy, maintaining or changing a state of affairs, based on segregation. For this, it delivers an articulate speech, seductive for a certain group, which articulates means of oppression. ” Consequently, this type of discourse can cause highly harmful effects, as pointed out by Brugger (2007), for whom these manifestations can cause two types of effects: immediate (insult, harass, intimidate) and mediate (instigate violence and/or discrimination).

In the scope of discursive studies, the contribution of Barros (2015) stands out, regarding the so-called “intolerant discourses.” For the author, intolerant discourses are based on four thematic paths: animalization of the other; abnormality of the different; sickness of the other, and immorality of the other (being unethical). According to the author:

[...] intolerant discourses develop themes and figures based on the fundamental semantic opposition between equality or identity and difference or otherness, and, thereby they construct four most frequent thematic and figurative paths: that of animalization and dehumanization of the “other,” to whom physical traits and behavioral characteristics of animals are attributed; “abnormality” of the different, who is and acts against “nature”; that of the unhealthy and aesthetically condemning character of the difference, because in this path, the different is considered as sick and crazy, as opposed to healthy in body and mind, and, as “sick,” also as ugly; that of the immorality of the “other,” of their lack of ethics. (BARROS, 2015, s / p.)

From the data we analyzed, we propose that, in addition to the four thematic paths identified by Barros (2015), three other recurring themes in intolerant discourses can be found, which we identified as: *i.* association of the other with sin; *ii.* demonization of the other; *iii.* ridicule of the other.

Associating the other with sin is recurrent in reactions expressed, possibly, by followers or sympathizers of some religion, due to the fact that the post deals with a controversial religious theme or because the speaker, author of the post, is considered as a person who fits into groups who are segregated or discriminated according to dogmas or religious traditions. Along this line, sin can be understood as a deliberate transgression of divine laws. Demonization of the other is also an association of the speaker with sin, but in an exacerbated way. It is about identifying the subject as someone possessed by the demon or by evil spirits. Ridicule, in turn, is an assessment of the other or their behavior as worthy of causing laughter, mockery. Finally, there are expressions of hatred that are materialized not by offensive expressions, but by explicit or veiled threats.

It is necessary to highlight that all these representations are subjective qualifications, originated from a personal point of view, but submitted to the ideological formations to which the commentator is linked.

## **7 Data description and analysis: hate speech and conservative discourse imagery**

From the articulation of the proposals of Charaudeau (2008) and Barros (2015), plus the thematic paths we have incorporated, we seek to bring a small contribution to the analysis of hate speech, setting up a framework that allows us to describe the data of our corpus and analyze the hate speeches manifested in them. Therefore, we have identified the following stances:

### *1. Agreement attitudes*

- acceptance in relation to said;
- acceptance in relation to the speaker.

### *2. Disagreement attitudes*

- in relation to said;
- in relation to the speaker:
  - rejection of the other;
  - extreme rejection of the other through: animalization; abnormality; immorality; sickness; aesthetically objectionable

image or out of line with the hegemonic pattern; sin; demonization; ridicule.

As we reported above, the comments under study refer to a video published by former deputy Jean-Wyllys entitled: “Which of the two is closest to – or more closely follows – the teachings left by Jesus in the gospels? Which of the two most preserves true Christian values?” In this video, the deputy praises Pope Francis’ initiative to hold the Amazon Synod, an event in which the Catholic Church sought to guide the Catholic Church’s actions in favor of the Amazon Forest and the people who live in it.

Through the delocative mode, where apparent objectivity predominates, through the use of statements that suggest an indisputable truth, Wyllys extols the Pope’s concern for nature and the poorest and compares the behavior of the Holy Father with that of the Catholic right and President Jair Bolsonaro. Finally, using the allocative mode of questioning, transcribed in the title of the video, he urges Internet users to reflect on the actions of President Bolsonaro and the Catholic right in Brazil.

The exaltation of Pope Francis’s behavior and the implicit criticism of Bolsonaro motivated a series of reactions of hatred towards the Pope, of praise to Bolsonaro, but, above all, of criticism and intolerance against Wyllys’s speech and person, through Internet users’ hate speeches.

As we have seen, hate speech is one in which there is disagreement due to extreme rejection of the other, expressed by the processes described above. Of the 72 (seventy-two) comments that followed Wyllys’s posting up to the date on which we ended our survey, only 08 (eight) expressed agreement or engagement with what was said or the person of Wyllys. All the others expressed disagreement or non-engagement, with 13 (thirteen) representing rejection of what was said and 51 (fifty-one) towards the speaker.

Of the 51 (fifty-one) comments that show rejection of the speaker, we identified 38 (thirty-eight) cases of extreme rejection, whose transcriptions we sorted out as follows:

*i. Animalization*

- 3) Communists, like you, don't even believe in God. Now you defend a communist pope? freaked out she-llama

*ii. Abnormality*

- 4) Thinking that a condom could have prevented "That"

*iii. Immorality*

- 5) This guy is so funny!!! He talks without knowing what he talks about, without knowing who is it, without knowing if it's true, and with each video, he changes his hairstyle. lol. He wants to show off, that's why he talks, talks, talks, and nobody understands a fucking thing, hypocrite
- 6) And since when are you on the Pope's side! Go back to your little pot, nitwit
- 7) SPITTING girl you cannot deceive anyone, behind all these books are those who spit in the face of others and do not understand that politeness and respect are essential in learned people.
- 8) Stop being ridiculous, dude! You are the most rotten thing in a human being, despicable, disgusting, loathsome there you stand in front of a bookshelf as if you had read them all and start talking about the church. Dude you gotta talk about the hell, that's where you are going to.
- 9) Liar. Go drum and wash your mouth before speaking about Christianity.
- 10) Now the girl is a fan of the Pope? You're really a tramp. SOAB
- 11) Hypocrite, you do believe in God?
- 12) You are really shameless, now you are standing for the Pope. Dude you're worth nothing. This shameless face of yours is really embarrassing.

- 13) Now you respect Catholicism? You guys suck. You guys have problems with interpretation, worse still, I think it's just personality deviation.
- 14) Wash your mouth before you speak the name of the son of God! You're nothing but trash!
- 15) Are you talking about Christian value? He he, what a hypocrite!
- 16) You certainly don't follow Jesus' example either. You coward, you keep on slandering Brazil by trying to cause intrigue among Brazilians. You should be ashamed of yourself and not come here to try to teach lessons using the name of Jesus.
- 17) This guy is a sheer joke
- 18) Wash your mouth before talking about Jesus!
- 19) Get lost, *Umbanda* follower, an *Umbanda* follower claiming to know about Christianity, TAPIR, however hard you study and say you are intellectual you will never be!! However hard you try people will not like you, you have something that is disgusting, you are not a pleasant person.
- 20) One might think you follow Jesus You are HYPOCRITES!
- 21) Mind the Portuguese, "intellectual"! You talking about religion is as shameful as Lula talking about honesty.
- 22) Quiet b4mb1, c0w4rd, quitter, dirty pigeon
- 23) Man, when I think you couldn't be more false, liar and tramp then you come up with this one, by the way are you made in Taiwan?
- 24) Who are you to talk about Jesus, man? Wake up, fag
- 25) Shame of #Brazil fearful hypocrite
- 26) Gross



*iv. Sickness*

27) My God... how stupid you are... you have a thing about @ jairbolsonaro it can't be

*v. Aesthetically reprehensible image*

28) WHEN WE THINK YOU CAN'T BE UGLIER THAN YOU ALREADY ARE, YOU SHOW UP WITH THIS HAIRCUT...

29) What a DESPICABLE haircut!!! Ha ha ha gross

*vi. Sin*

30) They are desperate but God is against homosexuality gender theory abortion drugs they are great liars just stay with your old ally the PCC and leave God alone beware of God's wrath no kidding with God.

31) Man, you have to talk about hell, that's where you are going to.

32) Have you heard of Sodom and Gomorrah? So don't come to pollute Christianity.

33) Have you found a gay cure? Hypocrite Leviticus 20:13 If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.

34) Again, you have no morals or ethics to even mention this name! Review your sins, ask for forgiveness for them, and "come as you are"!

*vii. Ridicule*

35) I love the left because it makes me laugh a lot.

36) if you think it is good then it is not a good thing Sorry but this is how the Brazilian people see you! smelly PT voter!

viii. *Demonization*

37) The devil has several faces and I see in you one of them!

38) What do you know about the gospels?!?!?! Your will is to destroy the Christian people and now come up with this?! Anathema! Wash your mouth before talking about Jesus!!!

Finally, there are examples of a veiled threat to the physical integrity of the speaker or people in his family, as seen in:

39) Where is your mother? Wasn't she being threatened? Why didn't she run away with you? You just disgust me.

40) Jean.... one day I will piss on your corpse.

In addition to these verbal manifestations against the speaker's moral integrity, there are more extreme situations of threats to his physical integrity, as well as to his family, as we find in the example below:

41) Where is your mother? Wasn't she being threatened? Why didn't she run away with you? You just disgust me.

The data above have one aspect in common: they all work with a representation of Jean Wyllys as an anomalous being or that differs from a standard, be they ethical or aesthetic. As for comments that disqualify Wyllys in the ethical domain, there are processes of animalization, abnormality, immorality, sickness and ridicule. Judgments in the domain of ethics represent an assessment of individuals' behaviors in moral terms, which define them as right or wrong behaviors, good or evil, based on a certain parameter that is not individual, but that represents, almost always, the stance of a group. Also, these standards adopted by certain groups in society at different times affect the evaluation of the individual's body in terms of the aesthetic domain, defining, among others, what is ugly or beautiful. Let's see how this happens in the selected data.

With regard to animalization, when the Internet user refers to Jean as a "freaked out she-llama," it is considered that he has characteristics that are outside the normal standards of human beings. In addition, the use of a female animal, accompanied by the adjective "freaked out," which means uncontrolled or neurotic, retrieves the stereotyped image

of the scandalous gay man, whose behavior goes against the standards considered normal. As for the abnormality, we have in (4) the use of the demonstrative pronoun “that,” normally used to point out objects, and, in the given statement, it is used to refer to Jean Wyllys. The use of this pronoun to refer to people is seen as a way of denigrating them, disqualifying them, comparing them to things, objects and depriving them of their human essence.

Also in the domain of ethics, some comments deliver to Wyllys offenses of all kinds, expressed by adjectives such as: “hypocrite,” “nitwit,” “despicable,” “disgusting,” “loathsome,” “liar,” “tramp,” “shameless,” “trash,” almost always expressed arbitrarily. This attitude hardly provides any space for a counter-argument, since they are, in general, angry expressions without a rational basis that can be contested. This escape to normality also reaches the aesthetic domain, in statements that express contempt for his look and hair.

The construction of Wyllys’ image as someone who breaks the standards of normality advances in the sense of characterizing him as a sick figure, as someone who has pathological features (idiot, pervert) and who is seen as ridiculous. Finally, it extrapolates to religious values, describing him as a sinner, that is, as someone who violates the laws of God. The statements that present some justification for this judgment are based on the fact that Wyllys is gay, a behavior associated with sin defined by the Catholic Church as “lust,” identified, for example, by the reference, in the data, to Sodom and Gomorrah and the biblical quote Leviticus 20:13. Finally, some comments go so far as to associate him with the devil.

It can be seen, in the comments above, that the expressions of hatred rescue the social identity of the speaker, with explicit manifestations of gender, religious and political intolerance, directed, in the case under analysis, to the identity of the speaker as a gay man, an *Umbanda* follower, and a left-wing politician, respectively. These manifestations speak a lot about the communicating subjects, responsible for the posts. Although it was not our goal to investigate who are the authors of the post, we are interested, in addition to surveying the content of these posts, to understand the imaginary they represent.

From Charaudeau (2007), the imaginary can be understood as a way of apprehending the world, associated with values, beliefs and knowledge that are configured in language practices through socially

situated discourses. In view of the data collected, we can identify the typical imaginary of conservative discourse, as defined by Charaudeau (2016).

When analyzing the populist phenomenon, Charaudeau (2016, p. 38) defined “belief systems” that characterize the right and left positions, which he calls “ideological matrices.” For the author, the right-wing ideological matrix has the following characteristics: a view of the world in which nature imposes itself on man, that is, a view of inequality as something inherent to human nature and, therefore, of relations between men as relations of strength, domination; defense of values, such as, family, work (based on hierarchical relationships); the defense of the nation, as an identity asset and the reaction against any “enemy” that tries to invade or disaggregate the social body. These features, according to Charaudeau (2016), define some behaviors characteristic of the right-wing doctrine. It is about behaviors that characterize a tendency towards conservatism. They are: *authoritarianism*, which aims to impose obedience to the values it defends and the moral order; *segregation*, which distinguish people in terms of race, ethnicity, religion; and *patriarchy*, where men maintain political power, moral authority and social privilege over women.

Most of the comments described above bring the expression of gender and religion intolerance, as we highlight in the following examples:

42) Get lost, *Umbanda* follower, an *Umbanda* follower claiming to know about Christianity, TAPIR, however hard you study and say you are intellectual you will never be!! However hard you try people will not like you, you have something that is disgusting, you are not a pleasant person.

43) Now the girl is a fan of the Pope? You’re really a tramp. SOAB

Authoritarianism is also marked by some expressions of interdiction to the word of the other, which, despite any attempt at dialogue around the proposal that is presented, comes to violently impose silence on the speaker:

44) Quiet b4mb1, c0w4rd, quitter, dirty pigeon

Finally, both the gender intolerance and the authoritarianism that appear in the messages are also materialized in insults that attribute immorality traits to the author of the publication. Such manifestations are reflections of the patriarchal and capitalist society in which we live, as pointed out by Zanello (2008). For the author, cursing is

[...] a symptom of the society in which it appears (in our case, capitalist patriarchy), and shows, precisely because of the offense it contains, the rules and values proclaimed by that society. In addition, cursing is a speech act that not only repeats these values, but reaffirms them. In other words, regardless of the speaker's conscience when uttering them, insults convey a practice based on the values attributed to the different genders. (ZANELLO, 2008, n/p.)

According to the author, these manifestations through insults represent repressive and constitutive mechanisms for maintaining power.

If, as we saw above, social networks can be, at least partially, responsible for promoting a social capital of the subjects involved in the interactions, we find that the comments analyzed contribute to build a negative image of the speaker, responsible for the publication of the video, since they seek to negatively affect some values, especially his reputation and authority.

From the path we have outlined, we can say that the analyzed comments reveal, on the part of their authors, a right-wing, conservative, and intolerant profile, who see the speaker, Jean Wyllys, as a member of a minority, who is apparently taken as a representative of an enemy to be fought.

## **8 Final Considerations**

Our intention with the study presented here was to bring a modest contribution to the discussions around reception and hate speech on social networks. From the articulation of the proposals of Charaudeau (2008) and Barros (2015), in addition to the thematic paths that we have incorporated, we created a framework that would allow us to describe the data in our corpus and analyze the hate speeches that are manifested in them.

Such analysis allowed us to identify an extremely high number of expressions of hatred that, in the case of our data, define behaviors characteristic of right-wing doctrine and conservatism, among them: authoritarianism, segregation, and patriarchy.

We believe that the analysis of the comments that make up our corpus can serve not only as a verification of the effects obtained by the post in question, but also, as an indication that allows us to understand how interaction takes place on social networks and how it can be constituted not only as a space for discussion, controversy and diffusion of hate speech, but also as an attempt of silencing and oppression and as a mechanism for maintaining power.

Finally, we are convinced that the discussions around the theme of verbal violence and hate speeches are very relevant in the scenario we live in, since they can serve as a denunciation of attitudes of intolerance that stand out, increasingly, in our society.

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