

# Moral lapses in the media scene: reproduction of intolerance or opportunity for new moral grammars?

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## Abstract

The paper discusses how moral lapses conveyed in the media reinforce prejudices or reveal little themed issues in the public sphere. What is the role of these moral lapses in the expansion of relations of recognition and transformation of moral grammars that govern society? From an approximation between theories of recognition and deliberation, we analyze the impact of Internet in two articles: one about the gay movement, by JR Guzzo, published in *Veja Magazine*, and another on the Guarani Kaiowá, published by the Walter Navarro on the online version of the diary *O Tempo*. The analysis took into account a) the unveiling of tacit consensus and b) the possibility of discussion of values in order to expand moral grammars.

## Keywords

Moral Lapses. Recognition. Public Debate.

## 1 Introduction

Could public outrage contribute to struggles for recognition? Intolerant positions are publicized by the media precisely because they are a latent part of social life, but they only reach the category of moral lapse and promote moral transformations when subjected to public scrutiny. This is the core argument of this article.

From time to time these routine expressions of intolerance stand out and mobilize everyday conversations and public debate, either in defense or in indignation of it. The *media* certainly plays a privileged role in thematizing and identifying issues of injustice, either due to their reach or to the potential of the plurality of the voices that constitutes them, which may also favor manifestations of hatred and intolerance.

In this work, the core issue is the discussion of when and how such expressions rise to the category of moral lapses, and what role these lapses play in identifying sources of injustice and oppression and in widening relations of

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recognition. This text seeks to understand how these expressions are identified as moral offences, if they contribute to recognition or if they reinforce crystallized conceptions of prejudice, also damaging subjects' self-esteem.

To this end, the first section will examine how the visibility of identities and attitudes of intolerance is addressed by theories of recognition in view of uncovering moral consensus. Based on the idea of moral lapse, the centrality of the concept for a possible moral transformation of society will be discussed. Then, we point to the need for these issues not only to become public, but to be widely discussed (MAIA, 2013; WARREN, 2006).

In the third part we will analyze the impact of two moral lapses that circulated in the media in 2012. In the first, journalist J. R. Guzzo compares homosexuals to goats and spinach in a text published in *Veja* magazine. In the second, columnist Walter Navarro, from *O Tempo* newspaper, from Belo Horizonte, ridicules the Guarani Kaiowá indigenous peoples' struggle for survival. Lastly, it is argued that moral lapses may be important in struggles for recognition of subjects as long as they are open to public questioning and debate.

## 2 The centrality of visibility in the theories of recognition

It is consensus among authors of theories of recognition, in their most varied strands, that the

public unveiling of issues once invisibilized is a basic condition to identify issues of oppression, for overcoming them and for the expansion of relations of recognition between the subjects (GALEOTTI, 2002; HONNETH, 2003; MARKELL, 2003; TAYLOR, 1992). Despite the many differences among these theories about how justice should be achieved and on the very concept of recognition, the need to make visible and to shed light on injustice is a point of agreement between them. They disagree, however, on the means by which these injustices must come to the surface.

For Honneth, visibility reveals a double movement: the formation of social movements, and the unveiling of moral consensus in order to expand the recognition patterns. The core notion of struggles for recognition is the possibility that the subjects have to name the suffering as injustice through a common vocabulary, made public, which characterizes a given situation as typical of a whole group. The sharing of experiences, strong enough to characterize a collective identity and the social movements, would be what Honneth called collective semantics (Honneth, 2003). The disrespect and intolerance suffered, when shared, uncurtain and expose the moral consensus guiding the conceptions of social justice.

To shed light on individual experiences of suffering, making them collective, points to the identification of a "normative injury of this tacitly effective consensus" (Honneth, 2003, p. 263), promoting an analysis of this moral consensus

that “regulates in an unofficial way how rights and obligations are distributed between rulers and ruled” (Honneth, 2003, p. 263). To publicly question the backdrop governing social relations, individuals reach the possibility, by means of social struggle, to establish new and fairer relationships of recognition and moral grammars, which include respect for differences.

Taylor (1995) also believes in the revealing of the moral consensus in seeking intersubjectively constructed recognition. The author works with the idea of disclosure, or unveiling, for which the condition of being in the world would take place from the bringing-to-light. The unveiling would not be an individual action, a subject or object waiting to be discovered, with the intrapsychic drive to introduce itself to others, but a process that occurs in the space shared by humans and that which configures these spaces.

Although Taylor and Honneth argue that recognition can only be achieved when different ways of life become visible, they also believe that disrespect and offense trigger damage to the subjectivity of the subjects. This is because expressions of intolerance can stimulate an “internalization of one’s own image of inferiority” (Taylor, 1992, p. 44), which itself becomes the most powerful instrument of oppression itself.

In Honneth’s work offense and moral degradation not only oppress and restrain political action, but also undermines subjects’ self-esteem. The normative self-image of every human being depends on the possibility of a constant reassurance from the other; the recognition that, when refused, is “can bring the identity of the person as a whole to the point of collapse” (HONNETH, 2003, p. 214). Disrespect generates a negative practical self-relation, jeopardizing subjects’ self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. If shame, anger and indignation can, on the one hand, lower the feeling of self-worth and generate guilt, on the other, they can lead to indignation and action itself. One realizes, therefore, that the paradox around public expressions of intolerance remains in the work of Honneth and Taylor.

For Markell (2003),<sup>1</sup> public outrage can be explained by the unpredictability of human action pertaining to social interaction, which may elicit expressions of disrespect, but also the possibility of social transformation. Markell supports the idea of *disclosure*, mainly based on Arendt’s work. Making it public is, in itself, an act that constitutes social reality, as it propels what was hidden into existence. Appearing in the public scene brings the possibility of social transformation, always open and unpredictable,

<sup>1</sup> He understands that recognition, both in Taylor and in Honneth, is the search for a final end, for a result with views to sovereignty, while acknowledgment would be the case in political activity.

subject to contingencies and vicissitudes of social interaction, such as conflict, hostility or misunderstanding ( MARKELL, 2003).

Markell proposes an alternative understanding of justice not based on the recognition of identity, but on the reconfiguration of one' own attitude before the other. The *acknowledgment* policy he proposes would be a form of reconciliation with the other that involves dealing with these practical limits imposed by the unpredictability of human action, including expressions of intolerance.

The spontaneity of social interaction coupled with the discourse of freedom of expression is also one of Galeotti' premises (2002, p. 147, our translation) to explain the emergence and possible acceptance of public outrages. For her, considering injuries as something that brings harm to the subjects is "a matter of inherent uncertainty, and yet intrinsically always contestable *a priori*". What matters is that the differences present themselves in the public sphere so as to arouse tolerance and symbolic acceptance. It would be the first step towards cooperative pluralism for political inclusion of the subjects and for the attenuation of power asymmetries. In the case of public expressions of racism, for example, what must be taken into account is the result of the offense and not the intention.<sup>2</sup>

Concrete harmful effects would be physical assault, deprivation of liberty and open attitudes of discrimination in which there are clear distinctions made on the basis of race/ color, in access to basic rights. Regardless of the motivation, these attitudes should not be tolerated, because the outcome implies an obvious violation of human rights. In the case of verbal abuse or propaganda, consequence may or may not violate human rights, may or may not have an impact, for example, when hiring a black person. "In practice, it is very difficult to draw a line between the possible risks that should, in theory, arise as a result of propaganda and a real risk" (GALEOTTI, 2002, p. 146, our translation).

Galeotti is concerned about the possible limits of free speech in a liberal society with minimal government intervention.<sup>3</sup> While this text does not intend to discuss this issue, the fact remains that a greater or lesser exposure to the risk of intolerance directly reflects how possible it is to problematize this issue, thus reinforcing the prejudice or dissolving it. The author' contribution is to differentiate between episodic racism not problematized by the victims, on one hand, and racism as a political problem, on the other, in which the perception of risk and damage leads target groups of racism to "raise their voices against oppression, discrimination

<sup>2</sup> She does not consider cases like Brazil where the expression of racism, in itself, is a crime.

<sup>3</sup> Miguel (2012) presents similar concerns when discussing the possibility of imposing limits on freedom of expression in the case of sexist advertisements and jokes that incite hatred.

and humiliation” (GALEOTTI 2002, p.146, our translation), this gaining wide social adherence. Public reaction to racism would reveal that this is a social problem and for that reason, should be taken into account. There must be a perception of risk, the identification of racism as a political issue and the problematization of it as real harm to the subjects. So, the moral lapses that we intend to investigate only make sense as such from the public discussion.

We define as moral lapses public expressions that reveal consensus rooted in daily life and that sound offensive to certain groups, as these expressions uphold conceptions of good life that are different from those tacitly agreed under a value-based moral background. In other words, in order to be considered a moral lapse, a certain expression should embody tension between established values and values that seek to establish themselves as important in the moral hierarchy. For this tension to achieve a certain degree of validity in the expansion of relations of recognition, we argue that it should not only be made public, but that it should trigger discussion processes to convene distinct values.

Tully (2000) argues that struggles for recognition in practice are ways of seeking political participation that involves an argumentative process always open to review and disagreement. The exercise of political freedom, the heart of democracy, is what struggles should seek. He uses the terms disclosure and acknowledgment

to identify unveiling processes of distinct ways of life that lead to the contestation of intersubjective standards. While response to differences can be negative, as in cases of moral lapses conveyed by the media, it also reveals a way to trigger dialogue, to allay resentment, to empower oppressed groups and to overcome psychological and social effects generated by non- recognition (TULLY, 2000).

Moral lapses would trigger, thus, not a struggle for recognition of a minority, but a struggle about recognition, mutually reconfiguring the entire political community and, ultimately, their own identities. It is a demand for a different order of recognition. At the same time that it unveils identities and makes them recognized, it elicits new demands for recognition which are successively transformed through dialogue and interaction, which pertain to the nature of struggles (TULLY, 2000).

Hence, a deliberative and discursive conception of recognition (MAIA, 2013; MENDONÇA, 2011; MENDONÇA; MAIA, 2009; TULLY, 2000), puts the public debate as a central dimension of the struggles for recognition. The moral lapses that we deal with here only reveal tacit consensus and moral damages to the extent that they trigger public discussion. Although the authors of recognition disagree on the effects generated by the offenses, they agree that public expression of injustices unveil injustices and expose normative consensus.

### 3 The debate as a condition for new moral grammars

While they bring some embarrassment for public viewing, prejudice against groups like indigenous peoples or gays is widespread in daily life. The deliberation theories uphold, in general, the need to critically mobilize the society. For this purpose, it is necessary to call citizens to discussion and stimulate reflection, which can result in destabilization of crystallized discourses. In order to destructure ways of understanding rooted in people's lives we must call them to discussion and dialogue with their understandings of the world, anchored in tacit moral consensus.

However, public debate can also entail risks in the struggle for recognition. Some authors believe that deliberation is not always the way out of controversial issues. Bell (1999), states that deliberative process might be counterproductive, since there is the possibility of intensifying disagreement. The author argues that, in some cases, "just" discussing can take you nowhere. Thus, a more effective measure for policy advocacy with focus on excluded people would perhaps be to put the issue as a requirement and without much opening to discussion. In this sense, we can consider building laws, such as the one criminalizing homophobia.

Complementarily, Simon (1999), states that decision can be a "waste of time", because subjects would not be willing to reflect. To give space to prejudiced statements may entail the risk of providing reasons

to those who justify as legitimate prejudice against gays and indigenous peoples, for example. Medearis (2004) also states that on certain issues, it really makes no sense to even hear the voice of the "bad guys" since it is generally them who represent crystallized positions and hold power.

If, on the one hand, deliberation involves tensions and risks, on the other hand, doing away with it is not enough to avoid confrontation and public demonstration of prejudice. Dryzek (2000, p. 160, our translation) argues that: "A model of deliberative democracy that emphasizes contestation of discourses in the public sphere allows you to challenge sectarian positions, as well as all sorts of oppressive discourse". Dryzek (2000, p. 168, our translation) also states that there is no need to censor discourses beforehand in the name of what would be "politically correct" as the most important would be "to convey, as far-reaching as possible, mechanisms that are endogenous to determination itself in order to positively transform visions and attitudes."

Gomes (2001, p. 12) also strongly believes in the clash between discourses as what can define what is morally valid and capable of expression. For him, if we assume human dignity as the only absolute value, freedom of expression

is ethically legitimate only so long as its exercise does not produce acts whose effects are contrary to the dignity of others. [...] It may well happen that a singular act of free speech would be perfectly immoral. Certainly offensive, vile, defamatory and humiliating publications and acts of speech are of this nature.

The main question is: if these discourses are to be avoided, who should be responsible for judging what is morally valid? For Gomes (2001, p. 16), value judgment, “is only valid when the norm that guides it has been the subject of practical discourse”. So what should or should not be published must be the subject of discussion itself. The very definition of what is a lapse or what is politically correct can only be achieved through debate.

The problem is when expressions of intolerance simply disregard beforehand the arguments of those who are the target of the offence. For Warren (2006), some themes may generate public insult because they overwhelm the validity of the others’ arguments. These are issues in which “the content of the discourse is directly revealing of who is the interlocutor”. In a discussion about homophobia between a homophobic and another person who presents himself as being gay, if the former expresses prejudice concerning the latter, they are speaking directly about a characteristic of the interlocutor. Thus, he can disregard beforehand the arguments of the gay participant, simply for his being gay, which would undermine the possibility of deliberative exchange.

As a solution, Warren (2006) suggests two possibilities: the deliberative diplomacy and the deliberative agonism. The first one seeks to create a ground of minimum understanding where the exchange of arguments about sensitive issues does not extinguish the possibility of discussion between the interlocutors. Basic good manners

would ensure the necessary recognition to the deliberative process when the conditions of discourse are far from being ideal. The counterpoint is the deliberative agonism, in which the best would be the sincere expression of all the arguments involved in the matter to jolt false consensus. However, Warren (2006) warns that publicly opening space to prejudiced stances can be a difficult situation to be “repaired” and that the agonist determination would only make sense where the rights-culture is secured. This proposal is very close to risks pointed out by Bell (1999), Medearis (2004) and Simon (1999) and somewhat distant from Dryzek’s (2000) idea that there should be no ban on public statements but rather strengthening of mechanisms endogenous to deliberation aimed at changing values and beliefs in a positive sense.

At this point it is worth going back to our original question: can public outrage contribute to struggles for recognition or ultimately promote injustice? From the analysis of empirical cases we will try to shed light on the issue.

#### 4 Methodological Procedures

The cases analyzed had great repercussions in November 2012 on the internet. In the first case, journalist J. R. Guzzo compares homosexuals to goats in the text published by *Veja* magazine and in the second, columnist Walter Navarro, in the online version of the *O Tempo* newspaper, from Belo Horizonte, ridicules the struggle for survival

of the Guarani Kaiowá indigenous peoples. Although published in vehicles of different expressions -a national magazine and an online regional newspaper-, these two texts were in well established columns, by renowned columnists in their vehicles, with strong authorial component.

As part of the data collection procedure, we conducted an exploratory study on debates on social media (Face book and Twitter) about the two articles. We found that the majority of posts and comments would redirected to blogs that had already expressed their stance on the issues. Based on this, we mapped the blogs during the two weeks following publication of the articles. Reactions to the *Veja* article were collected by the combined keywords “goat” and “gay”, as well as by the title of the column *gay parade, goat and spinach*. 34 blogs (27 authorial texts, 4 reprints of the *Veja* text and 3 reprints of the answer from Mr. Jean Wyllys to *Veja*) were found. Among the authorial texts, two were for

Guzzo’s stance and 25 criticize it. Comments analyzed were from the five most commented blogs: The reactions to Navarro’s text were smaller in number compared to the reactions to the *Veja* text, due to the circulation *O Tempo* newspaper and the little time it remained posted. Using the keywords “Walter Navarro”, “índio”, “Kaiowá Guarani”, “jornal *O Tempo*”, we conducted the search using filter for blogs over the two weeks we studied. We found 12 texts in 10 blogs, one of which reprinted the column in full, another reprinted the criticism of the BHaz blog and others were authorial. The analysis of the comments were made in the two most popular blogs: *Tropa dos Lanternas Verdes* (89 comments)<sup>4</sup> and *BHaz* (175).<sup>5</sup>

We considered the arguments used by columnists, bloggers and blog commentators with the aim to identify; a) what are the moral consensuses and values reflected by them, b) if they try to confirm consensuses or uncurtain

Quadro 1: Blogs analyzed – Guzzo case

Blog	Amount of comments	Position
Perca Tempo	275	Reprints text from <i>Veja</i>
Blog do Miro	197	
Jean Wyllys (deputado federal)	469	Against the article
Escreva Lola, escreva	166	
Carlos Orsi	260	

Source: Data from the survey.

<sup>4</sup> <http://tropicalanterverde.blogspot.com.br/2012/11/guarani-kaiowa-walter-navarro-e.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.bhaz.com.br/apos-repercussao-nas-redes-sociais-jornal-o-tempo-afasta-colunista-walter-navarro/>

injustices, and c) if they promote an expansion of injuries, reinforcing prejudice.

## 5 Moral lapses: public outrage

*Veja* magazine issue of November 14, 2012, devoted three pages to the column J. R. Guzzo. While upholding freedom of expression, Guzzo (2012, p. 117) says it's not a crime to say you do not like gays, because the law "does not require any citizen to like homosexuals, or spinach, or whatever."

The columnist argues that marriage exists only between men and women because they produce children, but anyone can have a relationship with whoever they want. "A man can not marry a goat either; for example, he can even have a stable relationship with it, but he cannot marry it" (GUZZO 2012, p.117). The comparisons were seen as a way to "reifying and dehumanizing" gay people, denying them human general condition. (MACHADO, 2012). *Veja* magazine did not take a stance on the matter.

In the case of the online edition of *O Tempo* newspaper, published on November 8, 2012, the text attempts an irreverent criticism of the demonstrations on social media in favor of the Kaiowá indigenous people but ended up ridiculing the plight of indigenous people. Navarro's column entitled *Guarani Kaiowá my a..., My name is*

*not... (Guarani Kaiowá é o c... Meu nome agora é Enéas p...)*, had negative repercussions leading to the removal of the article from circulation and the dismissal of the columnist five days later.

Navarro mocks mobilization on social media, calling those who engaged in it "Face book environmentalists" and supporters of "Mirrors & Beads"<sup>6</sup>. The major point of controversy was the phrase "a good Indian is a dead Indian":

Is there anything more annoying, hypocritical, tacky and a waste of time than this Face book people adopting the name Kaiowá? [...] One of those annoying Face book women complained about my mockery saying that every Brazilian is a Guarani Kaiowá. I am not! [...] As Marshal Rondon and the Villas Boas brothers, anthropologists, would say, "a good Indian is a dead Indian"! "Kill, if need be, die, never!" ( Navarro 2012, p. 1).

The columnist ridicules the indigenous way of life, concluding that "the Guarani Kaiowá loitering is at least profitable", since he managed to exchange a fake Swiss army knife for several mahogany logs.

They are pygmies, they look like giant ants and are characterized by unbearable *pneumosis intestinalis*, which makes them absolutely unpleasant company. [...] Therefore, Brazil is thus a mixture of flatulent Indians and Portuguese criminals [...] (NAVARRO 2012, p. 1).

Unlike the *Veja* magazine text, argumentative from start to finish, the nature of Navarro's text is a

satire. Social media saw his text as an offence and incitement to hatred. In both cases there is, from the onset, a disqualification not only of the demands, but of the very existence of these two social groups (“being gay” and “being indigenous” was the very object of the offence). This kind of argument, sustains Warren (2006), can undermine the debate in that it disregards the “who” of the interlocutor, though, as Warren points out, the agonistic manifestation of stances can help overcome prejudice and socially rooted positions. The analysis of this cases shows that the offense triggered debate. While many homosexuals spoke for themselves, no indigenous person expressed him/herself as being directly affected. Still, there were protests in their favor. Social movements also played an important role in contesting it.

## 6 Tensioning tacit consensus

The mediated public debate ignited by Guzzo’s text elicited several arguments and requests for answers from social movements, as well as accusations and mutual offences. Among these, the claim that *Veja* magazine’s text had been misunderstood, that comparisons with spinach and goats were just teaching examples, that data was being distorted or used in “bad faith” or “intellectual dishonesty.” Rhetoric games put aside, we point out three major consensuses rooted in the social fabric mobilized by Guzzo’s text and the arguments for and against the *Veja* magazine article which add tension to these understandings.

The first is linked to the idea of homosexuality being a private matter and therefore a choice, an individual “gay lifestyle”, which would deny the very existence of the LGBT movement. According to Guzzo (2012, p 116), the effort to reduce homosexuality to its true nature, “a strictly personal matter,” does not succeed: “The first serious problem when talking about ‘gay community’ is that there is no such a thing as a ‘gay community’ – and, consequently, as the ‘gay movement’ or its ‘leaders’.”

Among the arguments that strengthen this tacit consensus, some blogs claim that the issue of homosexuality is restricted to sexual intercourse itself, thus not being a matter of choice.” Just as there are dragonflies who decide, voluntarily, to stop being gay, there are real macho guys, that on a beautiful and flowery day, decide to get out of the closet” (GUSTAVO 2012).

Such moral consensus is challenged by arguments for the existence of an LGBT community made up of different people, but that “share a sense of belonging to a group whose base identification is becoming a victim of libel, defamation and denial of rights” (Wylls, 2012). This belonging generates “the drive to act politically on behalf of the collective,” which originated the LGBT movement. Many blogs uphold the argument that this sense of belonging is the same that moves struggles of afro-descendants and feminists and forms communities as neighborhood associations or trade unions. Another argument is that Guzzo

replicates the conservative discourse which credits successes and failures to individuals, not taking into account the history of struggle, contexts and social conditions (ARONOVICH 2012). It is argued that the achievements of homosexuals were the fruit of the struggle and not a “natural progression of societies on the path of freedom”, as Guzzo says. The individual-based discourse would be an attempt to weaken the collective.

In other blogs, social problems arising from the non-recognition of homosexuals, such as the respect for social names of transvestites and transsexuals, the freedom of expression of affection in public, discrimination in the labor market, among others, were mentioned.

The second point of great controversy was the statement by Guzzo that homophobia does not exist and would be a “campaign against imaginary prejudices and for dubious rights” (GUZZO 2012, p. 117). In this sense, the criminalization of homophobia would be unnecessary because, for him, any type of violence is already tackled by Brazilian law, which cannot force anyone to like homosexuals, spinach, or whatever.

Along the same lines, the blog Do Contra, when criticizing the stance of congressman Jean Wyllys, points out that the criminalization of homophobia would be a step to enforce the obligation to like gays. The supposed existence of homophobia “is part of the gay victimization discourse.” The 300 murders per year would be a “negligible number,

less than 0.001% of the total.” It concludes that Jean Wyllys “will never admit the obvious: that **we are not homophobic**” (GUSTAVO 2012).

Counterarguments suggest that these high figures are strictly related to hate crimes due to sexual orientation; that research indicates most crimes happen at home, being difficult to measure, that violence against gays is not just the killings and that gays do not want to be liked, but respected. “You do not see people out there being beaten up for being straight. I never read about corrective rape of heterosexual women. No child is kicked out of home for being straight” (GOES 2012).

Finally, the third moral consensus deals with the impossibility of marriage between people of the same sex. “The law cannot (and should not) be modified to satisfy the political agenda of a ‘movement’, especially a movement whose criterion for existence is so subjective” (GUSTAVO 2012).

The comparison between gays and goats made by Guzzo was the most criticized point in social networks. A contrary argument is about the current family structure and the logic of reproduction. “It’s been at least a hundred years since the goal of marriage is no longer to produce children. Otherwise, hetero couples who cannot have children (like elderly people, for example) would have to be separated” (GOES 2012).

It was argued that marriage between people of the same sex would also be a guarantee of equal rights

and that such unions will be considered families since the Supreme Court decision in 2011. The argument is that the Supreme Court heeded the fact that the law says marriage should be celebrated between a man and a woman and this “does not mean that the law would have prohibited marriage between people of the same sex, but only regulated hetero-affective marriage without banning homo-affective marriage” (Vecchiatti 2012).

The main moral consensus driven by Navarro was the article which talks about the way of life of indigenous peoples considered lazy, flatulent, lecherous and dishonest. The argument revolved only around the recognition or not of indigenous culture and its demands: “Why can´t Indians drink, work, pay taxes? Are they not Brazilians like us? [...] And, yes, it is possible for them to have their culture preserved while collaborating with the growth of the country” (NAVARRO 2012, p. 1).

The dishonesty of the indigenous peoples was another argument against the recognition of their demands. They were accused of “selling their land at a bargain price for large farmers” and smuggling illegal wood, according to comments in BHaz blog. While its advocates uphold freedom of expression and confirm the depreciation of indigenous lifestyles by considering them lazy and dishonest, the counter arguments, with few exceptions, accuse Navarro of hate crime, inciting genocide and public humiliation. The debate is not about the need to unveil crystallized understandings of indigenous culture. Just one

comment tries to tension the imaginary according to which indigenous peoples are lazy and undeserving of respect: “To say that indigenous are backward is to have an anachronistic stance, because their conception of life and society is different from ours” (FEDERICI 2012).

The BHaz blog posted a link to a letter signed by civil society organizations, claiming that the article is irresponsible and further worsens the situation of indigenous peoples, who are murder victims and “confined in overcrowded reservations without access to basic resources, or left to live on roadsides, in canvas tents, persecuted by ranchers and gunmen in Mato Grosso do Sul”.

## 7 Final Remarks

The purpose of this article was to problematize, in the light of two empirical cases, the relationship between public outrages and struggles for recognition. We observe that the moral lapses published by *Veja* magazine and *O Tempo* newspaper revealed tacit consensuses that disqualify the way of life of gay people and indigenous. Many blog commentators stated that columnists said “what a lot of people wanted to say but did not dare”, thus revealing the origin of public moral outrage is the moral background that feeds back media phenomena. Media moral lapses are, thus, inevitable and are a part of unpredictability stemming from social interactions. With Galeotti (2002), Markell (2003) and Tully (2000) we believe that this

unpredictability can cause slander to reveal veiled oppressions and trigger struggles for recognition and opportunities to correct misunderstandings. This does not mean upholding freedom for public outrage, but just recognizing the existence of an uncontrollable public expression.

Tensioning of values, however, occurred differently in these two cases. Both were regarded as public outrages and discrimination, but were also upheld on the grounds of freedom of expression. The difference is that in Navarro's case, hate crime, provided by law, is constantly cited with reference to the phrase "a good Indian is a dead Indian". Thus, the moral lapse in point has the connotations of a crime. While inciting the death of Indians is an expression of severe intolerance, it elicited only disgust, indignation and demands for punishment. Almost nothing has been argued about why the Indians' way of life is worthy of recognition and value.

The existence of debate does not confirm, of course, changed perceptions about homosexuals, but at least publicly problematizes why they seek to be recognized. We believe that this difference in the trajectory of the debate is due to the degree of organization of the LGBT movement, and, consequently, the greater ability to build semantic bridges and frame the article as a moral lapse. Understanding what good life is for indigenous peoples requires establishing new value parameters, a fusion of horizons (TAYLOR, 1992), different from understanding the evolution of urban societies.

In other cases, of course, offences are not even problematized and can bring much more harm than opportunities for debate, entailing losses, including of the identities of the subjects themselves (HONNETH, 2003; TAYLOR, 1992). Curbing expressions of disrespect, however, can contribute to restrain public expressions of this nature and conceal tacit understandings (DRYZEK, 2000), thus generating shallow debate in the name of good manners (WARREN, 2006).

Moral lapses, while not desired due to possible harm they can cause to subjects, can create an opening for public reflection because they uncover tacit consensus and put them in discussion, which could lead to more agonistic questioning of prejudices and stimulate the construction of a more solid ground for recognition as self-fulfillment.

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## Deslizes morais na cena midiática: reprodução da intolerância ou oportunidade para novas gramáticas morais?

### Resumo

Discute-se de que forma deslizes morais veiculados nos media reforçam preconceitos ou desvelam questões pouco tematizadas na esfera pública. Qual o papel desses deslizes morais na ampliação das relações de reconhecimento e na transformação das gramáticas morais que regem a sociedade? A partir de uma aproximação entre as teorias do reconhecimento e da deliberação, analisamos a repercussão, na internet, de dois artigos: um sobre o movimento *gay*, de J. R. Guzzo, publicado na revista *Veja*, e outro sobre os Guarani Kaiowá, publicado por Walter Navarro na versão *on-line* do jornal *O Tempo*. A análise levou em conta: a) o descortinamento de consensos tácitos; b) a possibilidade de discussão acerca de valores com vistas à ampliação de gramáticas morais.

### Palavras-chave

Deslizes Morais. Reconhecimento. Debate Público.

## Lapsos morales en la escena mediática: ¿La reproducción de la intolerancia o la nueva oportunidad para las gramáticas morales?

### Resumen

Se discute cómo lapsos morales transmitidos en los medios de comunicación pueden reforzar los prejuicios o revelar cuestiones que aparecen rara vez en la esfera pública. ¿Cuál es el papel de estos lapsos morales en la expansión de las relaciones de reconocimiento y la transformación de las gramáticas morales que rigen la sociedad? Por medio de una articulación entre las teorías del reconocimiento y de la deliberación, buscamos analizar el impacto de dos artículos en la internet: uno sobre el movimiento *gay*, de J.R. Guzzo, publicado en la revista *Veja*, y otro artículo respecto a los indios Guaraní Kaiowá, publicado por Walter Navarro en la versión online del periódico *O Tempo*. El análisis tuvo en cuenta: a) la presentación de un consenso tácito y b) la posibilidad de discusión de valores con el fin de ampliar las gramáticas morales.

### Palabras-clave

Lapsos morales. Reconocimiento. Debate público.

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