

GLBT Character Design
*in Telenovelas: Approaches
to the complex issue of Inclusion*

Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro

Nilton Gonçalves Gamba Junior

gambajunior@gmail.com

**Professor Assistente do Programa
de Pós-Graduação em design da PUC-Rio**

Coordenador do Dhis - Laboratório de Design de Histórias do Programa de Pós-graduação em Design do Departamento de Artes e Design da PUC-Rio. Possui graduação em Desenho Industrial com habilitação em Programação Visual pela Escola de Belas Artes da Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (1994), mestrado em Design pela Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (1999) e doutorado em Psicologia (Psicologia Clínica) pela Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (2004). Atualmente é professor assistente do Departamento de Artes e Design da Pontifícia Universidade Católica. Tem experiência na área de Artes, Design e Psicologia, atuando principalmente nos seguintes temas: narrativa, mídia, pós-modernidade, tecnologias, circo e teatro.

Abstract

This article describes part of the doctoral field research titled: Identity Commonplaces of Mexican Minorities in Telenovelas. The methodology of this field approach is based on the theoretical framework established by Pasolini. We present here the construction of a set of categories that allows a first organization of the history of the representation of GLBT characters in the telenovela. We applied the methodology in a comparative study between the Brazilian and Mexican soap operas as a way of demonstrating the pertinence of the categories elaborated in the study.

Keywords: identity, inclusion, telenovelas, GLBT, characters

Resumen

Este artículo describe parte del campo de la investigación doctoral titulada: Lugares Comunes de Identidad de las Minorías Mexicanas en las Telenovelas. La metodología utilizada para el enfoque de campo se basa en la referencia teórica de Pasolini. Presentamos aquí la construcción de un conjunto de categorías que permite una primera organización de la historia de la representación de los personajes LGTB en la telenovela. Aplicamos la metodología en un estudio comparativo entre las telenovelas brasileñas y mexicanas como forma de demostrar la pertinencia de las categorías elegidas en el estudio.

Palabras clave: identidad, inclusión, telenovela, LGTB, personajes

It will be impossible to create, at this moment in history, an argument that considered inclusion, in a negative way. Inclusion is a legitimate demand and a social responsibility. Nevertheless, the enthusiasm over terms that involved an infinite amount of variables, and demand a profound analysis, tend to lessen their action potential, and locate them, as mere regulative ideals, that in the long run, become utopias. At this point in time, society demands a more reflective approach to all those terms that we use as commonplaces, most of the times involving a black and white morality. Inclusion, in order to work, must "...entail not mere zero-sum gain and loss but multiplication of cultural possibilities in the construction of a resilient, elastic, multicultural self that expands to include the other. An encounter with the other can have a multiplier effect on the self. We may eventually contain multitudes." (Adams, M. V. 1996, p. 6). This paper contains different approaches to the complex subject of inclusion, through the analysis of the gay, lesbian, transgender and bisexual (GLTB) character design in both Brazilian and Mexican "telenovelas". We believe that the study of how this characters have been designed in this popular Latin American television gender, as well as the way the media has included the GLTB population, opens important venues of analysis for the complex subject of inclusion.

Language works as a mirror of reality. To each thing and concept, described through the use of language, corresponds a "reality". From this viewpoint, whatever is constructed in history, is constructed in language. Repetition through history, through performative acts, is, according to Judith Butler, what allows us to affirm "reality".

Butler argues that performative acts are statements which also produce that which they say. Her classic example is that of the midwife cry of "it's a girl!" which is not merely a reflection of a biological given but a performative act, binding a gender onto the body (Butler 1993). In other words it produces that which it names (Butler 1993, p. 7)...These regulatory ideals are indeed fictions (Haraway 1991). The baby girl is not a girl until the midwife declares her so, and thus curtails the possibility of other genders being created and explored...As

Butler herself points out "these regulatory schemas are not timeless structures, but historically revisable criteria of intelligibility which produce and vanquish bodies that matter" (<http://www.har-dav.co.uk/MA%20-%20HTML/chapter%202.htm>, 1993, p. 14)

Our construction of the concept of homosexuality is linked in Western Culture, to the Scriptures, and most of our "moral" reading of the world, was built between the years 30 to 450 bC. A culture based on good and evil, black and white, that did not allowed any shades of grey, became a total or wholesome history, that did not allowed divergence.

Some of the basis for building Western Culture have their origin before the age of Christ, thus becoming important basis in the construction of Christianity and the Christian Western World. Among them is the affirmation in the Leviticus 18:22: "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination." Through this affirmation, Jewish people established a concept of differentiation with their surrounding neighbors, thus, constructing their own identity. Many affirmations condemning same sex relation will come from this primary statement, constructing moral commonplaces that conform group identity. The fact that for more than 5000 years, we have repeated that same sex relations are an "abomination" makes us ask ourselves whether we are living in reality or in the discourse of reality.

Luhmann, adds that society seem to look for progress and inclusion, but what actually exist is exclusion. For Luhmann, western society has not been able to recognize any other than itself, that is why it has insisted through history to differentiate or distinguish. Inclusion, therefore, appears to be more of an assimilation process that one that incorporates difference into a more diverse reading of reality and all those involved with it. GLTB inclusion, seem then, a way to stigmatized certain sexual activities and lifestyles, unless they conform to the values of society. This affects radically the vision of what everyone considers the most important earnings of the GLTB agenda: gay marriage and gay adoption. For Pasolini:

Tolerance, you must know, is only and always purely nominal. I do not know a single example of real tolerance...The fact that someone is 'tolerated' is the same as saying that he is 'condemned'. Indeed tolerance is a more refined form of condemnation. In fact they tell the 'tolerated' person—let us say the negro whom we have taken as an example to do what he wishes, that he has every right to follow his own nature, that the fact that he belongs to a minority does not in the least mean inferiority, etcetera. But his 'difference'—different or better, his 'crime of being' remains the same both with regard to those who have decided to tolerate him and those who have decided to condemn him. No majority will ever be able to banish from its consciousness the feeling of the 'difference' of minorities. I shall always be eternally, inevitably, conscious of this...

He can leave it only on condition that he accepts the point of view and the mentality of those who live outside the ghetto: that is to say, of the majority. (Pasolini, P.P. 1987, pp. 20-21)

Warner explores in depth the paradox of GLTB inclusion in his book *The Trouble with Normal*.

Almost all children grow up in families that think themselves and all their members as heterosexual, and for some children this produces a profound and nameless estrangement, a sense of inner secrets and hidden shame. No amount of adult "acceptance" or progress in civil rights is likely to eliminate this experience of queerness for many children and adolescents. Later in life, they will be told that they are "closeted", as though they have been telling lies. They bear a special burden of disclosure. No wonder so much of gay culture seems marked by a primal encounter with shame, from the dramas of sadomasochism to the rhetoric of gay pride, or the newer queer politics. Ironically, plenty of moralists will then point to this theme of shame in gay life as though it were a proof of something pathological in gay people. (Warner, M. 2000, p. 8).

Pasolini has the proposal to denaturalize both

events: the tyranny of society over the individual and the true interests when actions of liberalism are performed proposing answers to these tyrannies. In order to denaturalize these social actions is fundamental the critical reading of the image, a semiology of reality that includes not only conventional media, but life as a whole—gestures, habits and conventions. Pasolini understands that ideologies, power and subversion will not take further by written manifestos with clear and articulated principles. What he observed in the context of consumer capitalism is that the codes that define both: the rules and its transgressions are imagetic and behavioral. The image, according to the author, has its own syntax—different from textual language, that he will call disjointed. Disjointed because, while producing senses, it has a less linear lexicon and is less easily understandable. For no other reason, that time, ruled by the image, will have the more disjointed rules. Instead of laws and manifestos: the fashion, the design, the language of cinema and others forms of entertainment and consumption, will govern this new era. Its principles, its values, its ethical codes and their freedoms or tyrannies are produced by a profusion of images. In order to make this semiology so important and so broad, Pasolini proposed a permanent and procedural criticism. Pasolini, also highlights the contemporary images, specially, the Cinema. He sees in the audiovisual language a unique power to perform these manifestos of reality, because of its ability to represent, image, movement and sounds, as in everyday perception of reality. Through this article, we can see a strong affinity of Pasolini's work with the possibility of analysis of audiovisual content of soap operas. This image should be analyzed taking into account their movement, plans and frameworks, along with the textual content, which for the author, composes the complexity of reality and the great instrument to produce sense of reality, nowadays. In this paper, we study data that provide visibility to the form of representation of

sexual diversity in Mexican and Brazilian soap operas, through the design of GLTB characters. It makes a historical synthesis of both, and selects from this data, the most significant events. These selected events, form the material used to apply the reading of the images, proposed by Pasolini. The analysis puts special attention to the expressions of liberality and maintenance of taboos, simultaneously, understanding that there is no wholly or absence of any of both poles, but complex and disjointed ranges, such as defined by the author in the design of these characters, as well as the plots they live.

Are Pasolini and Warner assertive views neglecting the possibility of inclusion? How are we to approach inclusion in Western Culture? Are gay marriage and gay adoption just regulatory ideals to conform diversity into mainstream lifestyle? This paper addresses the issue of inclusion of sexual diversity, by means of a comparative analysis of the representation of GLTB characters in the media in both Brazilian and Mexican “telenovelas”.

Telenovelas

We understand by “telenovela” a “...continuing fictional dramatic television program, presented in multiple serial installments each week, through a narrative composed of interlocking storylines that focus on the relationship within a specific community of characters.” (Stavans, Kindle Ed.). “Telenovelas”, according to most academic literature on the subject, originated from American “soap operas”. These televised romantic stories, were developed during the 1930’s, with the goal of merchandising home products and were especially targeted to the female audience. Both Latin American and us soaps had a strong influence of radio “novelas”. Some Latin American authors, claim that the “telenovela”, comes from the 19th century feuilleton, a serial story that became quite popular at the time. Three factors need to be stressed when addressing “telenovelas”: 1) they are multi meaning products, everyone in the audience may understand them

in his or her own terms 2) the perception, valorization and production of the gender differs through out Latin America, and 3) They are produced by a transnational, globalized industry, which mains concern is the commercial value of the product. Due to the nature of the gender; its length, the definition of “telenovelas” as melodrama, the “work in progress” style of the text and, the “rating” oriented production style, the gender is difficult to define accurately.

Field Methodology

This article describes part of the doctoral field research titled: *GLTB Character Design in Mexican telenovelas. Construction, Representation and Inclusion of Sexual Diversity in National Television*. The methodology of this field approach is based on the theoretical framework established by Pasolini, already described, and makes a historical survey of gay soap opera characters in Brazil and Mexico. From this historical survey, we used a random sampling to analyze the character types and some categories were prepared to enable a dialogue between the concepts of Pasolini’s and the field, itself. These categories were used in all listed characters and suffered minor adjustments to the final format presented here.

The categories were divided into five groups: masculinity; representation of sexuality itself; model of sexual relationship; types of dilemmas narrated; and hierarchy in the narrative. Each group has four categories of analysis. The masculinity group has the categories: effeminate; effeminate caricature; manlike and transvestite/transgender. The representation of sexuality has: indication of asexuality; Indicated sexuality, but without representation; sexuality represented by experiences with partners or places, but without physical acts; sexuality represented by physical acts. The sexual relationship model set includes: monogamous couple; love triangles; bisexuality; promiscuity. The group of dilemmas was organized in: dilemmas; psychic and personal dilemmas, family dilemmas; social and political dilemmas. Finally, the hierarchy within the novel is: the protagonist categories; villain; secondary; peripherals.

This table, allowed us to classify the “timeline” by

Masculinity	Representation of sexuality	The sexual relationship model	Dilemmas	Narrative's hierarchy
effeminate	indication of asexuality	couple	no dilemmas	protagonist
effeminate caricature	indicated sexuality, but without representation	love triangles	psychic and personal dilemmas	villain
manlike	sexuality represented by experiences with partners or places, but without physical acts	bisexuality	family dilemmas	secondary
Transvestite/transgender	sexuality represented by physical acts	promiscuity	social and political dilemmas	peripherals

Table 1. The table at the left describes this division.

these categories, so that we can see exceptions, recidivism, evolutions and regressions. An analysis of all the characters listed, was enable by having these observation variables. This paper does not include the full history of “telenovelas” and characters, instead, it presents synthesis that holds the most important facts of this trajectory.

The following synthesis lists the name of the novel, the year, the broadcaster, time, brief description of the character and categories of research analysis. There are several difference between the two historical descriptions related to the model of production in Brazil and Mexico. The Brazilian history stress the importance of the author of the novella, while in Mexico, the producer is given more importance. This is due to the different production models in both countries. In Mexico the producer sets the style of the novella, while in Brazil, the author establishes styles, preference issues and, often, choose the production team, including directors and actors.

From this overview of the timeline and the specific cases classification, some significant moments were selected to further the analysis that includes the image in re-

lation to the context. The image may reiterate or deviates from the presented categories. The method is based on the image reading proposed by Pasolini.

Brazilian “Novellas” and Sexual Diversity: The History Synthesis

The Brazilian historical included 40 soap operas and more than 60 characters. The record of the first GLTB character is in the 1970 at the 22h soap opera, *Assim Na Terra Como No Céu*, by Dias Gomes. It was a costume designer, Rodolfo Augusto, played by actor Ary Fontoura, the first gay character portrayed in Brazilian “novelas”. The character already had the features that will be dominant in the representation of gay character in the beginning: effeminate caricature; indication of asexuality; and no dilemmas peripheral to the plot. Brazil was slow in incorporating within “novella” plots, references to sexual practice, non-stereotypical or effeminate characters, and, especially, the representation of social and political dilemmas. Building effeminate characters, with Platonic sexual-

lity, where there is no questions that involved the analysis of prejudice, seemed less risky than starting a process of reflection over taboos.

In 1978, on the prime-time of Rede Globo, a new history in the portrayal of sexual diversity began. Actor Everardo Butler, in *Dancing Days* by Gilberto Braga, plays the villain of this story. Effeminate, ugly, slavish, affected and in love with Greta Garbo, were some of the characteristics that construct the character, in order to make clear to the audience, his sexual orientation. There is no references to a real sexual or an affective life. Her emotions were platonic, realized in the idolatry of two divas: his mistress and the actress. His pathetic behavior had a comic tone, that characterized, along with effeminacy and platonic relations, the majority of gay characters in Brazilian television at that time. Another milestone on Gilberto Braga's *Brilhante*, 1981, address sexual diversity once more. Brazil was still then ruled by a military dictatorship. The telenovela had an audacious plot, which showed the relationship between a mother and his gay son, Ignácio, as well as, the social barriers the character faced by being gay. The subject was approached in a subtle way, without clear evidences and formed by a variety of subtexts that allowed the audience certain degree of comprehension on the sexual orientation dilemmas faced by Ignacio. Nevertheless, the dictatorship interfered in the plot prohibiting the use of the word gay and more evident dialogues. Again, there is no representation of physical acts, but it sets a precedent of a male character without stereotypes and played by an actor who usually played heartthrobs, thus, breaking another taboo in the representation of gays in Brazilian Telenovelas.

The last interference of the dictatorship in gay characters in soap operas, was in 1985, the year the military rule end. *Um sonho a mais*, a comedic Telenovela, has a transvestite character, he was not gay, but cross dressed as part of a disguise to enhance the plot. Even so, the plot includes a same sex kiss scene, probably a break through in the representation of this type of affection between two men. Even though the telenovela was a comedy, the other characters in drag were censored. Although some level of rejection was perceived by audience research, the Dictatorship censorship soften through the transmission of the

telenovela. This allowed us to see that from 1985 on, the representation of combined elements, such as, no stereotypical gays, social issues regarding prejudice, the love life of GLTB characters and physical acts, were already a cultural possibility. Nevertheless, the representation of physical acts, became the last frontier, by finding the most cultural barriers.

In the category 'sexuality represented by physical acts', the representation of the first gay kiss created a lot of controversy in Brazil. The first gay kiss in a "telenovela" took place in 2010 in a SBT's production with smaller audience, *Love and Revolution*, and with two female characters. The interesting aspect of this event is that the scene took place a week after the approval of civil unions for same-sex couples by the Supreme Court. A few years earlier, in 2005, Globo produced Gloria Perez's "novela", *America*, whose gay characters generated great expectations in relation to the first gay kiss on Brazilian television. The kiss was written by the author, recorded by actors but due to the low receptivity of the public, in focus group research, the scene was never shown. The first gay kiss on Rede Globo had great impact in Brazilian audience. On one hand, Rede Globo has the largest audience in the country; on the other hand, Brazilian society has changed during the last years. Social changes, along with the charismatic personality of the actor portraying Felix, the gay protagonist, allowed the rise of interest in the plot in, *Amor à vida*, written by Walcy Carrasco in 2013, and a huge success.

But what are these social changes in Brazil? What our historical time line shows, is that until a few years ago, the controversies about the representation of homosexuality in "telenovelas" was registered only in the ratings of broadcasters or little notes in the specialized media. For instance, the death of the gays characters of *Torre de Babel* (1996) was a script change to cater the audience rejection of the representation of gay characters in the plot. Due to the discreet manner in which the issue was addressed, it never generated social controversy. However, during the last ten years, but more significantly in the last five, in addition to focus group findings, society has expressed their opinion making every portrayal or plot regarding GLTB characters, controversial. The different sectors of society has

responded passionately, both in support for GLTB rights, or against them. Some religious groups have divided public opinion and move society, as a whole, into a vivid discussion. Some factors can be thought of as agents of this increased mobilization: the change in the types of characters represented; increased relevance of these characters, who had become protagonists; the growth of fundamentalist religious groups of Pentecostal matrix with increasing political participation; and the advent of social networks that allowed greater visibility of social issues. Compared to Mexico's GLTB history in the media, described as follows, which contains all these variables—except for the relevance on the rise of fundamentalist religious groups—it is possible to think that the differential factor in Brazil, truly is the rise of this conservative religious groups which incite a movement of total rejection of GLTB rights and agendas. The climax of these controversies happened in 2015, with Gilberto Braga's, *Babilônia*. This “novela” innovates on three aspects: it portrays a couple of older lesbians rather than young ones; the soap opera opens with a lesbian kiss during the first episode (It is the second “novela” to show a gay kiss, but this time in the opening episode); and, an evangelical nucleus that explicitly rejects homosexuality its part of the plot. So Babylon is almost a meta-language in the recent history of “novela so” in Brazil, generating, of course, a lot of controversy in social networks—including the proposal of a boycott from sponsoring brands of this “novela” and the sudden end of its transmission.

Mexican “Telenovelas” and Sexual Diversity

The inclusion of plots about sexual diversity in Mexico's TV screen is related to different contextual changes in society that have allowed all networks to start discussing this subject openly, regardless of a long tradition of homophobia, sexual repression and conservative family values. Several reasons enabled this. The proximity with the United States and the evolution of gay rights in the U.S., through the Stonewall Rebellion of 1968, had an impact in nearby Mexico. In 1973 in Jacobo Zabłudowsky's news journal, the most viewed show at the time, director Nancy Car-

denas came out to the nation. Two years later, writers Carlos Monsiváis and Luis González de Alba, along with Ms. Cardenas published the first homosexual manifesto in one of Mexico's most important magazine: *Siempre*. The late 70's showed an interesting turning point. *Un Lugar sin Limites* (1977), directed by Arturo Ripstein, became an international acclaimed film. The dramatic portrayal of homophobia set in a brothel of a small and decaying town, where a transvestite, the *Manuela*, ends up murdered, set the mood for reflecting on the subject of sexual diversity. One year later, Luis Zapata wrote *El Vampiro de la Colonia Roma*, initiating what has been called the gay literary movement, which include many novelist, poets and playwrights. The story is an honest and clear account of gay life around the Colonia Roma, an area frequented by gays. From cruising to nightlife, the novel displayed the secret core of gay lifestyle in Mexico City, discovering, a then, unknown world. The first Gay Pride March took place in 1978, and sex comedies refer to as *Cine de Ficheras*, an unique gender of film related to sex and brothels, became very popular in the 70's and 80's incorporating tons of gay and transvestite characters in supportive roles. Most of them portrayed in an effeminate and comedic way. On the other hand, intellectuals, since the 1930s had included gay rights in their agendas, the official political party in power demonstrated to be tolerant about the subject, the separation between church and state and secular education facilitated the discussion of GLTB issues, and both, literature and film where already discussing sexual diversity. All this seem to have imprinted a tolerant mood in Mexicans regarding certain issues on sexual diversity, or at least ignoring them. This allowed “telenovelas” to include gay characters, most of them portrayed as the effeminate butler (Eduardo Alcaráz, *Viviana*, 1978), decorator (Luis Bayardo, *Los ricos también lloran*, 1979), hairdresser (Radamés de Jesús, *Volver a empezar* 1994) or fashion designer (Franco, *El privilegio de amar*, 1998), Loreto, Rub, 2004); Luigi Lombardi, *La fea mas bella*, 2004). Like Brazil, cartoony characters with over exaggerated effeminate traits were the norm in those decades. None of the gay characters within the period from 1970 to 1995 seem to have a life of their own. They existed devoid of a personal life and neglected as sexual beings. It was until the 90's when inclusion as part of the “teleno-

vela” narrative began to appear. Gay and Lesbian characters suddenly became persons and characters with psychological depth and real lives. The raise of a new TV network, Argos Television, directed by leftist journalist Epigmenio Ibarra, inaugurated a new kind of reflective “telenovela” concerned with gender issues, “machismo”, and homophobia. Two “telenovelas”, produced by Argos, set the basis for the inclusion and portrayal of GLTB characters in TV. *Nada personal* (1995), with two policewomen lesbian characters, Alma (Claudia Lobo) and Soraya (María Rene Prudencio), and *La vida en el espejo* (1999). Although, Alma’s and Soraya’s, sexuality was acknowledged, it was not openly discuss. The “lesbian issue” was addressed with caution. At the end of the story, Alma and Soraya are shown living together in a monogamic relation, openly admitting their sexual preferences. In 1999, and for the first time, a gay character became a principal in Argos production: *La vida en el espejo*. Impeccably dressed and groomed, manly, Mauricio (José María Yazpik), a young student living in an affluent neighborhood of Mexico City, that seemed to have a perfect life, discovers he is gay. For the first time in Mexican television the audience, followed a gay character that went through a long process of negation, desolation, rejection, and acceptance in front of a camera. We saw the disenchantment of his father upon knowing his son was in love with a man, the rage and hysteria of her girlfriend, when their wedding was cancelled, and the social shame faced by Mauricio during the whole acceptance process. Director, Antonio Serrano, created and unique character, which addressed the audience, not only his fellow actors and express his thoughts and anxieties. In some of these scenes, Mauricio, speaks directly to the camera, thus addressing the audience, forcing them to get involved in his dilemmas. Following the success of *Mirada de mujer* (1997), this new Argos project exhibited by TV Azteca and written by Bernardo Romero, revealed a new level of maturity of Mexican audience regarding the portrayal of sexual diversity. From then on many gay, lesbian and transgender characters will be part of the many plots of “telenovelas” in the several TV networks the nation has.

Regardless of a paradoxical coexistence of traditional and modern values, from 2000 to 2005, Mexican society experienced multiple changes in the way sexual diver-

sity was perceived. Inclusion, as a concept linked to sexual diversity, took relevance after the Federal Law for the Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination was approved in 2003 and the CONAPRED (National Council for the Prevention of Discrimination) was founded. This, by no chance means the end of centuries of “machismo” and homophobia in Mexico. CONAPRED published in 2010 a statistical research that stated that more than 60% of Mexicans rather not live close to a gay person, and the country, still is rated at the top of the list for homophobic crimes, in Latin America, following Brail. The polarity between big cities, specially Mexico City, and the rest of the country, regarding the perception of GLTB issues also needs to be considered. Mexico City has been ruled for more 18 years by the PRD (Partido de la Revolución Democrática), a socialist party, with a clear agenda on sexual diversity. This has an important impact on the behavior of Mexico City inhabitants. In the United States, the radial group Act Up, lost its strength at the end of the 20th century, and the GLTB movement entered in full its own paradox regarding the concept of inclusion.

Like in the United States, gay characters start emerging on the small screen with more frequency. In 2002, and as a subplot of the story, Argos for Telemundo, present their first transgender character in *Daniela*. Alexandra de la Mora, play Renata, formerly Roger, confronting the situation of announcing her sex change to her family. A histrionic mother and a rigid, conservative father add some kind of humorous approach to the situation, regardless of the seriousness in addressing the topic. In 2003 Televisa produced for its adolescent audience, *Clase 406*. The “telenovela” talks about a quite “problematic” group of high school students, among them a gay and a lesbian couple. The soap was directed for youngsters and the characters were regular kids on their way to adulthood.

By 2009 several newspapers around the country published articles discussing the amount of gay characters in “telenovelas”. The headings of *El Siglo de Torreón* are an example: “Gays take Telenovelas”. At the moment the article was written, six “telenovelas” with gay characters were being shown in TV, not counting those transmitted within the same year: *Los exitosos Perez*, *Sortilegio*, *Hasta que el dine-*

ro nos separe, Tierra de pasiones, Pasion de gavilanes, Mas sabe el Diablo y Yo soy bety, la fea. Two “telenovelas”, both from Televisa, differ from the usual patterns of inclusion by showing closeted marriages, bisexual relations, and parental approval of homosexuality. In *Los exitosos Pérez*, the main character is gay (Jaime Camil) has a boyfriend (José Ron) and is openly accepted by his father. Actors, Marcelo Córdoba and Julian Gil, played a couple of bisexual very manly and muscular men in *Sortilegio*, creating one of the most adventurous subplots in the “telenovela” world. Not only do they sleep with one another, but sleep with the same women. This is probably one of the very few “telenovelas” to portray promiscuity, and non-monogamic relations as part of their plots. This approach came as a surprise since Televisa has a long tradition of family programming. Physical contact goes on in most of this productions, although kissing is only common in Argos Television “telenovelas”. José Carlos Colombo, co-protagonist, in *Alma de Hierro*, responded in an interview about his work in this project: “Television must be open to include all kind of characters, regardless of their lifestyles, behaviors; sexual, ideological, political or moral preferences. It must cover every kind of people, so people can recognize themselves in television” (*El Siglo de Torreón*) The story includes a subplot of an elderly man (Rafael Inclán) and his much younger boyfriend (Luis Gattica), story that ends when they take advantage of the recent Civil Union Laws and get married.

Between 2010 and 2015, and along with the approval of laws in favor of Gay Marriage and adoption in several states of the country, the number of “telenovelas” with

GLTB characters increased, most of them aboard intimacy naturally. More important that visibility, which has been positively received by the GLTB community, is the depth in which gay topics have been address. From comedy approaches (*Que pobres tan ricos*) to the clear intention of reverting gay stereotypes and create gay social heroes (*El sexo debil*), sexual diversity has been explored with the intention of humanizing this minority groups. During the five last years, the Mexican prime time audience had have the chance peek into the lives of many Mexicans that form part of the GLTB community. The audience had have the opportunity of watching how they suffer, fell in and out of love, live their difference, stand discrimination, sometimes even from their own families, and fight for what they believe. This has been a great chance for all of us to reflect diversity and inclusion, as well as to revise the historical context that enable this. We have seen lesbian chefs discover their sexuality (*Las Aparicio*), gay politicians (*Infames*), true love emerge between a poor gay guy and a rich one (*Que pobres tan ricos*) and housewives became lesbian lovers (*Las trampas del deseo*), stories that are not only in “telenovelas” but in real life, too. Most of the stories pretend to assimilate the gay community into the standards of behavior of the heterosexual community, hence, stressing the value of family and monogamy, only once in a while, a dissident voice can be heard, making clear than threesomes, multiple partners and other sex activities, are also part of a community whose life style must be respected, too. Assimilation, inclusion, tolerance are still very much concepts to be discussed in and out of the GLTB agenda.

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