

The influence of child advertising on the construction of stereotypes of Gender

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Abstract:

Children's advertising is part of children's daily lives and is a powerful cultural instrument that produces and reproduces knowledge and values. By transmitting symbols on genres, she acts as the constituent of the identities of the little ones, producing representations of masculinity and femininity that will be desired and imposed. Therefore, there is much that reflect on how children interpret and assume for themselves the gender stereotypes conveyed by the advertising message, stipulating limiting and rigid modes of being that fall on the way infancy is experienced.

Keywords: *Gender; Childhood; Advertising.*

1 INTRODUCTION

The media channels a number of cultural investments to socialization and education, where the means of survival is the commercial contribution of such brands wishing to communicate products and services to viewers. Therefore, it is necessary to reflect on the role that advertising, in particular that intended to children, plays in contemporary society. Understand the mechanisms that aim for an adult life within binary, heterosexual and sexist normality and that seek both to impose standards and to set forth how childhood should be experienced, thereby producing gender inequality from an early age. This is why the aim of the research is

to understand whether the elements exposed by children's advertising will influence children to construct rigid and limiting gender stereotypes about the ways in which sexual bodies should express themselves.

Such investments assume the widespread notion that children not only do not have their cognitive functions well developed but are much less able to make choices based on logic and are innocent and pure and inferior beings. To this end, adults are assigned to become the great guardians of childhood and must, therefore, decide what is best for the little ones, basing all the cultural efforts directed at them on adult narratives centered and impregnated with moral values - standardized ways of coexistence in society and self-expression, causing a blank screen to be gradually stained with various inverted values, prejudices and censures about their bodies.

Not talking about gender is equal to not talking about rape culture and about being the country that kills the most LGBTQI population (...). Not talking about gender is equal to not talking about femicide; to not talking about all girls and women whose bodies are marked by violence; to not talking about the symbolic violence of the standards of femininity and beauty, which eventually result in self-flagellation. Not talking about gender is equal to not talking about those people whose existence and dignity are at risk due to gender. Being at risk due to gender is not natural. It is rather cultural. (BURIGO, 2016).

This research is divided into three parts, and the first section is aimed at both childhood and the understanding about the contribution of social relations and culture in the process of education and cognitive development of the child. In this regard, culture is understood as the ability of individuals to attach meaning to the world around them (Rohden 2009). How, from these frameworks that teach so much to the little ones, will they understand their social role and the world around them?

The forefront of this analysis offers a brief rescue of child history, as described by Ariès (1960), enabling to explore the origin and the conditions that make childhood possible, thus initiating the demarcation of the narrow border between this period of human development

and adulthood. The context in which the changes in relation to the feeling of childhood have occurred and how the child has gone from mere miniature adult to the center of the dynamics of the family widely protected by the state, at least in theory, is well understood. The protection of infants is highly sought after in society, with the result that there are several debates about the little ones, and the most relevant to this research is the supposed disappearance of childhood due to uncensored access to the knowledge made available by the media (Postman, 1999) .

The understanding of childhood according to Araújo (2010), has a cultural and social basis, as opposed to the idea of being purely natural and biological. Seeing that the "international historiography can serve as an inspiration, but not as a compass" (PREIORE, 1991 p. 11) it encourages an investigation about child reality in Brazil and thus ensures a more realistic study that can covers the particularities of childhood as it exists here. It exposes the reality of inequalities where children are exposed, in a country where some 2.5 million children and teenagers are out of school (PNAD, 2017)

In the second section of the research, gender will be discussed as a topic of discussion with the purpose of addressing the definitions provided by contemporary feminist thinkers around the term "gender," which was drafted within the context of the movement and which has been outlined, its emergence both in the USA and France, as well as its developments within national territory, from the suffrage of feminism to the enactment of such laws favoring an egalitarian society that will protect especially the female gender.

Contextualization will help make explicit such power relations embodied in the semantics of the word and the patterns it carries when analyzing the socially accepted forms of expression for sexed bodies. In constructing critical thinking about it, reference is made to the social mechanisms that generate and replicate this thinking as a dichotomy that stigmatizes, immobilizes and creates stereotypes about "being a woman" and "being a man," consolidating differences, generating inequalities and violence against woman, limiting the manifestation of human individualities. It has also been pointed to the limiting view that defines the binary system as the only form of expression of the individuals, anchored in an outdated view that leads to biological determinism as absolute truth and means to guide behaviors.

The third and final section addresses the discussions around the controversial media-childhood relationship, presenting both visions, the first of which going against the exposition of children to media narratives under the justification that they will thus become early consumers prone to be subdued by other evils; the second strand, in turn, addresses the subject in a more positive way in favor of educational measures so that they will know how to critically analyze the messages that affect them. One of the targets of the research addressed in the following article is the pedagogical character of the media and the ways of educating through the media.

2 CHILDHOOD

2.1 What childhood is all about

In examining the role played by children throughout the Middle Ages, Ariès (1960) says the child was for a long time seen as a pure instrument of ideological manipulation by adults and, in order to ensure children's usefulness to society, they used to be quickly inserted into the adult universe as soon as they would reach some level of physical independence. According to the author, there would be a lack of concern and perception of childhood which used to be expressed by a lack of care in preserving the child from certain matters and situations. The knowledge and values transmitted to any individual child throughout their existence would be acquired from daily relationships with adults, since either the family or the school would not yet have power over the education of the little ones.

The child population only came to play a prominent role in society as of the seventeenth century, when this population was segregated from coexistence with adults in schools following a dynamics named by Ariés (1960) as the "call to reason" within a man's moralization movement, promoted by both the church and the state. With a focus on moral education, pedagogical literature started then to embrace such themes linked to this human life phase, culminating in a new feeling towards childhood (BARBOSA, 2013). This new perception about childhood emerges in modernity alongside with the idea of behavior in the social environment and the understanding of child particularity as a result of the continuous distinction between adult's universe and children universe.

This process of differentiation between one and the other will entail a correlative process identifying of what belongs to children and what belongs to adults, in order to create two distinct categories, marked not only by biological age but by a series of

visible cultural investments in clothing, habits and daily activities. (ARIÈS apud RAMOS, 2013, p. 1).

Following child displacement within society, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries families started to get organized around the child and the latter takes a leading role in the domestic environment. The distinction, through dress, speech and access to information is always clear, and this stage of human life is always oriented towards those behaviors expected in adulthood, "the child is not, but will become" (KRAMER, apud ARAÚJO, 2010, p. 5), adult identity would be not only "an" identity, but "the" absolute identity to be achieved.

Postman (1999), a leading US communication theorist, states in his book, "The Disappearance of Childhood," that childhood is a phase in human development, which, rather than being governed by biological imperatives, is demarcated by the culture of society and the time in which it is produced. Age is evidently the main childhood's defining element, which, together with other identity categories such as gender, race and social class, establishes manners of acting, thinking and experiencing this chronological stage of life and "(...) they set out cultural investments that would seek to establish and subjectivate children's identities "(RAMOS, 2013, p. 12). He points out that the feeling of fear and especially the feeling of shame are essential for the rupture between the two universes to occur, and childhood will be protected and ensured by concealing the secrets that involve adulthood. These elements are part of a symbolic administration mode, also referred to by Marchi (2017), which is the array of legal and symbolic provisions that regulate childhood in certain periods of history.

Yet, according to the notion widely spread by common sense, the inherent characteristic of childhood is incompleteness; the child is seen as a being that is at a time naïve, innocent and pure, just as it is constantly subjugated, placed in the position of incapacity and inferior in relation to the adult .

(...) Rousseau's ideas, for example, which affirmed the piety, kindness, and sociability of the natural man, implied the project of making the child a "natural being par excellence, a supremely pious, good, and sociable being. (BENJAMIN apud SCHLESENER, 2011 p. 132)

In this context, Ramos (2013) points out that childhood is built as an abstract, always linear and universal category, taking as a reference the interpretive demands of adult society as it rejects the little ones as active and imperative beings of their experiences and their interactions with the world. Although Schindhelm (2013) reiterates that under the justification

of not having the necessary tools to understand the world of adults and not holding enough maturity to deal with certain situations of life, even in contemporary society there is still the intention to reassert the child as a being of lack and incompleteness. This statement is harshly challenged in the twenty-first century, in a society based on the rapid and intense exchange of knowledge (without great filters) made possible through communication technologies such as television and the internet, in which children are exposed to all kinds of content . According to a study by *Nickelodeon Kids & Family GPS's Connected Kid* carried out with children aged 4 to 11 from 10 countries around the world, 72% of children consider watching TV and video content their preferred entertainment activity, and 78% prefer platforms like Youtube to access videos, that is, the media are not only ways of transmitting knowledge, but also popular entertainment platforms among the younger. They are gently claiming their space as agents of their own education and as beings increasingly capable of understanding what was previously denied to them to the detriment of their lack of capacity (SALGADO apud Avancini, 2014). The legacy notion of childhood from past ages has become limited, as discussed below:

... child demands clear and intelligible explanations from adults, but not childish explanations ... child will perfectly accept serious things, even the most abstract and cumbersome ones, provided they are honest and spontaneous " (BENJAMIN apud SCHLESENER, 201, P. 132).

A child will find all the information that is necessary to satisfy their child's curiosity from other sources of knowledge other than a direct relationship with adults. Some will say that this rapid and intense access to information and the way contemporary adults live would be turning childhood into something obsolete in an old-fashioned culture as there is an increasingly imperceptible border between adults and children. (ADATTO, 1998 *apud* NASCIMENTO & BRANCHER & OLIVEIRA, 2008).

In order to conceive the child in modernity, it is necessary, beyond the mere stage of life that every individual must experience, to understand it in its specificities, to see their present arrangement and modes of operation, and not as they should be.

2.2 *Childhood in Brazil*

For introducing child's situation in Brazil, it is necessary to contextualize that the Brazilian society has throughout history been marked by a stratification of society as inherited from colonial times and slavery. Marked by a great influence from Europe and the church, from the

earliest time child was imposed domestication under the command of the Jesuits, who were in charge of indoctrinating the children in name of faith,. "Thus, from a religious order, the company began establishing itself as a teaching order, establishing a rigid, disciplined type of training and formation crowned by punishments and threats" (DAROS & PALUDO, 2012 p. 2).

The scars left by the asymmetry between slaves and masters contributed to the immense discrepancy in the distribution of resources and access to education until today, segmenting the population among those who have nothing and those who have, only aggravated children's situation. Based on Ariès' thinking (1960) about the correlation between childhood feeling and class feeling, a more complete analysis can be made of the institutionalization of children in Brazil, a country that presents different pedagogical models which apply in virtue of class differences. Thus, the education of those children belonging to the affluent classes was focused on the cognitive, educational and moral aspects, whilst the education delivered to the popular classes was "marked" by a welfare character and based on submission and designed to prepare the poor for the submission to social exploitation of labor (DAROS & PALUDO, 2012 p. 5). And up to present times in Brazil it is possible to find this clear and sad distinction between the input made available to the rich and the poor.

Another factor highlighted by Priore (1991) to understanding the child in Brazil is that, unlike European societies, the emergence of private life, schooling and especially industrialization came late to the country and, together with the lack of a State policy aimed at school education for poor children, culminated in distortions that are still present today.

The understanding of childhood in the country is also in line with the emergence of the Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA) in 1990; for Lopes (2007), it has contributed to make evident to Brazilian society the need, not only to differentiate adulthood from childhood, but also to safeguard the child as a subject of law, individuals in a stage of broad cognitive formation and vulnerability. The State has a critical role in preserving the fundamental conditions for the sustainable development of the little ones and the society's views turns to the child.

Although there are today laws advocating the maintenance of the feeling of childhood, children's reality in Brazil raises a questioning regarding the disappearance of childhood. In his documentary "The Invention of Childhood," Sulzback (2000) provides a narrative on the

reality of Brazilian children as they increasingly perform tasks and have to cope with adult's responsibilities, and the idea that the child should only dedicate to the pleasure of playing is becoming outdated. Middle and upper class children are getting more and more burdened with activities for the sake of a thriving adult life, whilst lower-class children are deprived of the privilege of childhood because they often have to work to help support the household. In contrast to the history of European children, in Brazil the history of childhood is subjugated to that of the adult, who lived in their shadow,

(...) institutions such as schools, churches, orphan asylums and later, Febens and Funabens, the very legislation or the economic system itself, have caused thousands of children to become grown-up people too early. It was the voice of the adults who recorded, or rather fell silent, about the experience of the little ones. (PRIORE, 1991, p. 14)

Therefore, when examining the reality of the Brazilian child, it is possible to perceive the silence of such institutions as the school, the State and even the family. Conditions are imposed upon it in order to at times guarantee survival and discipline and at other times prosperity and civility.

2.3 Building knowledge in childhood

The child will assimilate the knowledge and the values of past generations through social relations. Vygotsky (*apud* COELHO, 2012) classifies teaching as a social process and emphasizes that in childhood they gradually appropriate psychological functioning modes, behavior and culture. Therefore, children, who are considered to be vulnerable because they are in the stage of great cognitive and psychosocial development, are absorbing meanings to build their knowledge, that is, culture is at the heart of human nature, since human mental development is not indifferent, let alone autonomous, to historical development and to the social forms of life.

The entire learning process, in which culture and biology are key players, is one of the most important parts of the individual from their birth and it only takes place when there is interaction between people. Thus, childhood is an important stage of assimilation and learning, all aspects of the behavior of the little ones are fixed in the social. It also uses the pre-sociological images of childhood, studied in *Theorizing childhood* (2007) and pointed out by Ramos (2013) as images and representations of childhood imposed by adults to help in understanding how the relationship between adults and children will contribute to the

production of a myriad of practices, although they are images from a limiting and "adult-centric perspective of childhood" (RAMOS, 2013). It is with Piaget (*apud* Ramos, 2013), in the approach of a naturally developed child based on its genetic epistemology, that one finds a great contribution to understanding how the child is built in the social fabric.

Piaget revisits, on the one hand, two classical conceptions of human sciences - innatism/apriorism (the subject is equipped with endogenous structures that will be imposed onto the medium: $S \rightarrow O$); and empiricism (knowledge is given through the exogenous information provided by the medium: $S \rightarrow O$) - to say that the acquisition of knowledge is a relational process ($S \leftarrow \rightarrow O$) that occurs in the interaction of the subject with the object. (*apud* RAMOS, 2013, p. 7)

According to Dantas, Oliveira & La Taille, (1992), Piaget was the first to delineate more concretely the notion of "social being" and also to investigate how social factors contribute to elucidate human development. Reason and intelligence, as well as the formation of concepts, are developed with social determinations as a means to become solidified, also taking a few biological factors into account.

Not only psychology, but other fields of knowledge as well, such as anthropology, discuss the child formation process as subject. In the book *Anthropology of Child*, Cohn (2005) brings an understanding on how culture influences a child's constitution and states, "[...] what does it mean to be a child?, or when childhood ends, it can be thought very differently in diverse sociocultural contexts "(COHN, 2005, p. 22). He also points out that the child's internalization of social skills is so intense that it can present aspects of society that hitherto were hidden, but not absent. Studying the child, its education and behavior through its own perspective is of utmost importance for the construction of an ethnology of society. The author also points out that the process of child socialization and development cannot be seen as a process with a predetermined purpose. Just like Piaget and Vygotsky (*apud* Koll, 2010), Cohn (2005) sees the child as an active subject throughout the development process, differently from the traditional view that would see it as a passive being, unless it is a wrongdoer.

Instead, Mead (1931), an American cultural anthropologist, who also devotes part of his work to the child, in *The Primitive Child* comes to the conclusion, based on research, that nothing is natural and everything is cultural. She does not dwell on a cultural pre-determinism in itself, since Mead (1931) tries to reconcile biological issues with cultural signifiers, articulating with the assumption that "culture" will shape "individual dispositions" (PIRES, 2010).

The main point in this analysis is to understand, just as Vygotsky (apud Koll, 2010) defines in his socio-historical-cultural theory, that the transformations undergone by the human being during their development process is subjugated to the culture that is between the individual and their interactions with society, in addition to all learning opportunities and situations.

3 GENDER

3.1 *Gender conceptions*

The term "gender", from the English language, was first used to refer only to masculine and feminine words and was appropriated by the Portuguese language to also designate the separation between the sexes - designates the natural and immutable - and gender - notions socially constructed. In the article "Gender, what is this?", Guedes (1995) provides an analysis about the different meanings that one same word can have within the Portuguese language. The author establishes a priori that meanings are nothing more than "representations of dominant cultures" (1995 p.5). And culture is, according to Rohden's definition (2009), a fully human phenomenon linked to the ability of individuals to attribute meaning to the universe of elements and actions that surround them. Contrary to common sense, culture is an apparatus of dynamic society, for it absorbs the influences of the people upon whom it falls, and also from such external influence from more distant spheres. Human intervention is the structural quality of any cultural process. Thus, the author states that it is from such meanings constructed in a given culture and mediated by the bourgeoisie, which holds the power and the monopoly of the means to disseminate knowledge, that we come to know the reality and we will establish unquestioned assumptions on diverse matters by assigning them absolute values.

The several meanings presented by Guedes (1995) for the word gender include: any gathering of individuals, objects, ideas that have common characters; or also a category which indicates, by means of endings, a division of names based on such criteria as sex and psychological associations. This last meaning comprises the masculine, feminine and neutral genders, which is attributed to inanimate beings. Still in the sphere of meanings, the author discusses the meanings given to man, always related to virility, power and strength, with no pejorative term, and to woman, related to either reproduction or promiscuity, and the social function of

the term "woman" is nonexistent outside these categories, evidencing a relation of power between the subjects belonging to these groups.

The construction of the term gender within social movements occurs mainly through the feminist movements started in the 70's, movements that lay claim to respect for women's rights and gender equity. This came out of the need to bring visibility to the woman and to understand her as a subject so as to build a feminine identity. According to Consolim (2017), the first wave of the movement appeared in the United States and the United Kingdom in the late nineteenth century beginning of the twentieth century, led by liberal currents based on ideals of individual freedom and equality. The movement consisted only of middle-class white women who demanded "legal equality, the right to vote and access to education and the liberal professions, besides opposing to arranged marriages and the property of married women by their husbands." (CONSOLIM, 2017). In the 1960s and 1970s feminist ideals making up the second wave of the movement emerged, especially in France and the USA.

Having gender discrimination as a motif, "There thrived for a policy of respect for differences and equal rights founded on the recognition of equivalence between the genders, not superiority" (CONSOLIM, 2017). It was at this point in the history of the movement that women managed to realize that machismo was rather structural, and they became aware of such aspects of their personal lives as being too politicized and reflecting the dispositions of sexist power. Only in the 80s sex began to be understood as a concept also socially constructed by culture and history (CARVALHO, 2011). The positive resolution of the second wave of the feminist movement is that now the old female model has come to be questioned, and new ways of expressing the female gender begin to emerge. The third wave of the feminist movement formed in the 1980s and continues to this day, where the main issue is the change of stereotypes in the representation of women as portrayed by the media and in the terms used to refer to women.

The target evolved to recognizing the various feminine identities and the abandonment of the ideology of "victim feminism," as applied to second wave's feminism, in a post-structuralist interpretation of gender and sexuality. (CONSOLIM, 2017)

According to the feminism.org portal, the seed of the movement was planted in Brazil in 1832 with the book "Women's Rights and Injustice of Men" that delated the myth of male superiority. Subsequently, the history of feminism in Brazil was marked by some other

achievements, such as the right to vote, in 1932, the right to work without requesting authorization from the husband, achieved in 1962, the Maria da Penha law, enacted in 2006, which fights violence against women, until the year 2015, when feminicide became a crime. (FAHS, 2018)

Many battles are still to be fought in the way towards gender, class and race equality. New tendencies emerge in the movement, like black feminism, which encompasses such issues suffered by black women, as they were silenced for a long time in history, widely accepted in underemployment and excluded from intellectual activities, victims of great violence because of their color. They claim their place in society and also give visibility and open spaces for the debate about the gap between the reality faced by white and black women. Joice Berth, urbanist and black activist points out,

If we pause to think that while white feminists were fighting for the right to vote and for the right to work without asking their husband's permission, whilst black women were being enslaved and were supporting these individual struggles that remained individual throughout the history of feminism, we arrived to the conclusion that it is time for this white, elitist woman, who has attained some degree of autonomy and social recognition, to be willing to be ally in our individualities by opening space, showing interest, by not feeling threatened with our protagonism, and refraining from trying to steal it. (Berth 2015)

Taking advantage of the post-structuralist perspective, which emphasizes language as the central symbolic set in communication, interpretation and representation of gender and which abandons the moorings imposed by biological pre-determinism, the concept of gender rests under a relational sphere that comprises such elements that go beyond the functions inherent in sexed bodies and encompass the cultural meanings assumed by such bodies (Scott *apud* Sabat, 2001). Therefore, gender is the means by which we give meaning to the ways of expressing the identity of sexed bodies and it is through gender that we normalize such behaviors associated with female and male genders and we realize the biological differences between such bodies. These are archetypes socially constructed to frame the differences between genders.

(...)the term 'gender' becomes a manner of indicating 'cultural constructions' - the entirely social creation of ideas about the roles that should be appropriate to men and women. It is a way of referring to the exclusively social origins of the subjective identities of men and women. "Gender" is, according to this definition, a social category imposed on a sexed body. (SCOTT, 1995, p. 75)

In this context, the sexed body is placed as a passive medium on which the knowledge of culture will act, assuming certain meanings and giving life to representations relative to both

sexes. The body is a subject construct of gender marks that evidence biological differences. The being that is formed from this overlapping of meanings is a junction of specific and historically convergent cultural relations. Thus, it is evident that people can only be understood from the acquisition of a gender according to recognized standards on gender, otherwise the very understanding of "person" is denied

(...) by the cultural emergence of such beings whose gender is either "incoherent" or "discontinuous," which seem to be people, but do not conform to the gender standards of cultural intelligibility under which people are defined. (SCOTt, 2003, p. 39)

More than differences between the genders, understanding the term gender means "to understand processes of construction/reconstruction of social relations practices, which men and women alike develop/experience in the social" (Bandeira & Oliveira *apud* Guedes, 1995 p. 7)

In gender discussions there is no way to eliminate such issues of gender and the distinction that some authors like Beauvoir (1949) make between sex and gender. The former would be an element linked to the biological factor, nature, referring to the constitution of the human body, and the latter would be a cultural and social construction of gender behavior patterns, i.e., being a man or being a woman is not a natural fact, but something that is performative and social (Beauvoir, 1949).

By positioning sex as an element attached to nature and therefore immutable and static, we assume and "perpetuate the idea that there is a "nature" that can be grasped apart from any knowledge that we produce about it" (SCOTT *apud*, SENKEVICS , 2013). The rupture between the terms sex, coming from unquestionable nature, and gender, a discursive construction, does not make any sense, for it is a product of the culture itself, so the term sex is inserted in the conception of gender. From this analysis, it is established that both are primarily configured as means of knowing.

The difficulty is that certain domains of social life have been systematically associated with nature and are therefore removed from human action: childhood, family, sexuality, women are some cases. Part of the effort of gender theorists has been precisely to denature these domains, building their history, affirming their variability and their insertion in the field of culture. (CARVALHO, 2009, p. 103)

Rubin (1993) discusses in her research on the gender-sex relationship associated with economic forces. Then there comes what she calls "Sex Gender System," which are the means by which society places meaning in the biology of sexed bodies for the sake of human activity, shaping and satisfying sexual needs.

In addition, Guedes (1995) raises important points regarding the categorization of gender theories, the first in which the term becomes synonymous with women, referring to women without naming them, ignoring the power relations that exist in the term and the efforts of the feminist movements, another one retakes the idea that it is only possible to carry out the study of women from man, since one only exists as a consequence of the other, so it makes reference to Scott's (1995) definition of gender as "a social category imposed on a sexed body".

In Scott's analysis (1995) of the definition in question, it implies 4 elements related to each other: "Culturally available symbols that evoke symbolic representations (and with contradictory frequencies); "Normative concepts that express interpretations of symbols' meanings, which try to limit and contain their metaphorical possibilities ... They take the typical form of a fixed binary opposition (...)" (SCOTT, *apud* GUEDES, 1995, p.10).

Here the author refers to such elements that comprise being male and being female and reflect the accepted ways of expressing masculinity and femininity. She questions the lack of a political approach to Social Institutions and Organizations, which comprises gender and its regulation by laws, to which women have been subject due to their invisibility in history, and finally the notion of subjective identity that comprises such symbolic elements that imprison individuals to normative structures to operate their subjectivity.

3.2 *Stereotypes imposed on sexed bodies*

According to Rohden (2009), stereotype is a mechanism that mediates relations between individuals and provides a means to define and generalize, a priori, who people of certain groups are and how they should behave, in this case men and women, attributing them values and judgments. Usually the stereotype is given the biological character, since it is based on the anatomy that the standards of a certain group will arise. Prejudices are reaffirmed through stereotypes, for they justify natural inequalities, which results in behaviors that deny humanity to whoever fails to fit in the pre-established patterns and designate as anomaly whoever fails

to fit the standard of normality. Ethnocentrism is part of the set of social apparatuses that support such stereotypes, it clarifies, since the behaviors and the world views of other groups are judged as "right" or "wrong", "normal" or "abnormal" based on this practice based on their own cultural standards.

In a very subtle and almost imperceptible way the places of men and women are demarcated in the social substratum, going side by side with a set of machista and ethnocentric ideals that exercise power over society and deny equal opportunity in order to exclude various minority groups.

Such movements have evidenced to which extent discriminations have occurred in combined and overlapping forms, thereby reflecting a social and economic model that denies rights and considers women, gays, lesbians, transsexuals, transvestites, blacks, and indigenous women to be inferior. The denaturalization of inequalities requires a transdisciplinary look (...). (Rohden 2009, p. 28)

The main discussion at this time is the constructions of femininity and masculinity as they are taught since childhood and which, as stated earlier, stigmatize and immobilize both "woman being" and "man being," consolidating differences, generating inequalities and limiting the manifestation of human individualities.

Recalling the definition of childhood provided in the previous chapter, Postman (1999) describes it as the phase in human development that, rather than being governed by biological imperatives, is marked by the culture of society and the time in which it is generated. The main indenitory categories that indicate who is entitled this title include age and gender, followed by race and social class as they delimit the expected behavior of the little ones.

Through toys, games, plays and mainly through dressing children of both genders distinguish themselves and we make choices since childhood based on such distinction between male and female. Thus, it is normal for girls to receive thumbnails of household items and dolls as presents in commemorative dates, thereby being given private space, household chores and caring for their children as their responsibility within the family; an alternative to girls is that life style exalted by a Barbie doll or similar - wearing their fashionable clothes that perfectly fit their slender bodies, always in luxurious cars and accompanied by their friends, giving them, this time, the universe of futility and consumerism and advocating a beauty pattern to be achieved. In contrast, boys' toys include cars, electronic games, war and fighting props,

which reaffirms to them that the use of the body as a means to express force and aggressiveness is natural, almost of its own nature and that public life and work are in store for them.

Amid the various forms of imposing on children the division of genders, a new fever is spreading around the world, namely the gender revealing tea parties are another mechanism for early validation of estrangement between the genders and child stigmatization, as the baby has not even arrived in the world and has no control over their experience, based on their genitals into a universe of behavior patterns and props that will be imposed on them. The parents have the hard task of asserting such elements in the daily life of the child so that it will be accepted, first and foremost in their own family. Educational institutions also have a great responsibility in disciplining and indoctrinating the little ones, who already have clear definitions built on them by the families regarding the female and the male roles, so that they will be conformed according to their gender and the expectations that society imposes. Rohden (2009) argues that through the hidden curriculum that educators contribute to the perpetuation of such relationships, such as the set-up of boys' and girls' queues, the plays in teams segmented by gender, as well as the fact that girls are expected to take food in parties and boys, the drinks.

As adolescence arrives the demands become increasingly harsh and complex, since it is at this time that they rehearse their entrance into sexuality and all the notions learned in childhood are consolidated. Rohden (2009) stresses that girls are required to refrain as much as possible and that their initiation into sex life should be delayed, that they should not take any initiative when they wish to relate to the opposite gender so as not to run the risk of being misinterpreted and judged, where maternity and marriage should be feelings inherent in their existence. For boys, sexual initiation is precocious and often does not happen naturally; there is the encouragement to intense sexual appetite as the proof of their virility, which is often justified by their "nature" as well as contempt for loving feelings and relationships. It should be noted that a possibility of same-gender interest or non-identification with their biological gender is not placed as an option for these bodies. As a result of extremely restrictive structures,

Such models of sexual and social behavior can become real prisons or sources of acute distress when boys and girls do not fit the previously designated gender stereotypes. Any mismatch or misconduct runs the risk of being severely criticized or discriminated against socially. (ROHDEN 2009, p. 52)

Because escaping completely from human experiences, the ideals of man and woman will establish barriers to human living and will drive the actions of each individual. The opposition regarded as universal and timeless between female and male universes is embedded in this analysis, as well as the relation that both establish in which one will not exist without the other. Rubin (1993) warns that, in confronting men and women, we disregard the existing differences in both categories and the result is that where there is no difference there would be no gender.

4 MEDIA

4.1 Discussions on Media and Childhood

It has been previously argued that writing about advertising/media and childhood without linking these two players to criticism of children's consumption becomes a challenge, since much of the literature on the topic has purposefully discussed the legality of children's advertising, based on the influence on the construction of a consumption culture and, therefore, consumer children. Buckingham (2007) argues that such criticism is based on a dubious view of childhood, in which the child is the focus of fears and is increasingly under threat and danger, for in modernity we do not know where else to find it; from another perspective they are more and more seen as a threat to the rest of society; they are construed as violent and undisciplined, resulting in various harms to society.

In this regard the media is seen as the bad guy who takes children from their immaculate universe and exposes them to images of violence and sex, stimulating hostile behavior and sexualizing them. They are further charged with "marketing" childhood and bringing precepts of the consumer society to the little ones' lives. Bauman (2008) sets out the conditions imposed on such children born in a consumer society, increasingly seen as the subject of their choices and desires, so this is the basis for the idea that the right to universal consumption should also encompass childhood, turning them into small consumers. He further argues that, in a consumer logic, children's rights are anchored in the potential they have to consume, they are not restricted to the role of consumers, yet they also become a commodity to the advertising market. As such, he sees small potential consumers as major influencers within the household. The forbidden fruit that emerges is the desire for what children would not need

and which is interpreted by them as a way of reaffirming their identities. Within a contemporary society the assumption that having is worth much more than being perpetuates.

Bombarded from on all sides by suggestions that they need to equip themselves with one or another store-supplied product if they are to be able to achieve and maintain the social position they want, fulfill their social obligations and protect their self-esteem - as well as being seen and recognized for doing all this - consumers of both genders, all ages and social positions will feel inadequate, deficient and substandard unless they respond promptly to such appeals. (BAUMAN, 2008, p. 56)

Some radical authors, such as Postman (1999), discuss in their theses the disappearance of childhood as a result of the development of the media that, by providing a more democratic and uncensored access to information, cause children to have access to content that they do not should have. The great secrets hidden by the adults disappear along with the feeling of shame about them. The result of this combination of factors is the dissolution of the fine line separating the adult world from the child's world. This perilous theory serves as the basis for such currents that seek to fully protect the child against the seductive narratives of advertising and the media, charge against overworking parents who transform the television into a nanny for their children, thereby collaborating to dissolve the family and harm society.

(...) television breaks the dividing line between childhood and adulthood in three ways, all of them related to its undifferentiated accessibility: first, why it does not require any training to learn its form; second, because it makes no complex demands on either mind or behavior; and third because it does not segregate the public. (POSTMAN, 1999, p. 94)

In contrast to this view on children's occupation space and their relationship with the media, Buckingham (2007) brings up a new, much more positive perspective on the subject. The little ones are no longer seen as passive victims of the media and, since they always have been immersed in the world of technology and media, they are seen as endowed with powerful 'media literacy', 'new media technologies in particular are considered to be capable to offer children new opportunities for creativity, community, and self-fulfillment "(BUCKINGHAM, 2007, p. 30). This view suggests a relationship between adults and children that depart from the classical hierarchy in which the elders have power over the younger ones, advising those who listen to them and then there is a relationship of equality and mutual aid.

A curious interpretation coming from more liberal writers, such as Don Tapscott (1997 *apud* Buckingham, 2007), which covers the discussion of new technologies and says that power is not in the media, but rather in the children who use them as a means to acquire this power.

Today, children seem to be construed as agents of change in a society. All this analysis has a perspective in which the television would be a means of communication that assumes the passivity of the interlocutor, to the point that the Internet becomes a space where the children gain voice, "television is the antithesis of the Internet" (BUCKINGHAM, 2007). . 34). This distinction is often reaffirmed as a form of construction of a discourse that is faithful to the particularities of each medium and its reflection on children.

Still in his analysis on the most positivist strands on the subject at hand, Buckingham (2007) quotes Jon Katz (1997) who condemns moralistic authoritarianism in the discussion about youth. To his mind, the content that Postman (1999) refers to as a focus of extreme concern does not necessarily have a negative connotation when it comes to children, and he thinks that blaming the media as a source of violent crime is only a means of taking the focus from those causes that in fact will result in such dysfunctions in a society. By reaffirming children's rights to access to knowledge and information, as well as to media culture, and by understanding the child as the subject of their own history, he proposes, "Our goal, he argues, should not be to prevent children from having access to such materials, but to enable them to deal with them."(KATZ *apud* BUCKINGHAN, 2007, p. 36).

4.2 Child advertising as a means of disseminating patterns

At this point the analysis turns to the social role represented by advertising. McLuhan (1969 *apud* Ruivo, 2007) finds that, when used beyond its commercial purposes, this powerful tool appropriates symbolism within a culture that disguises its use as an important means of diffusing patterns, moral values and aesthetic perceptions. For this Canadian theorist, the target of the advertising message is to conceive a social homogenization starting from the use of stereotyped characters so that the spectators will identify themselves or will aspire an identification with such references exposed in highly attractive images and texts. Accordingly, advertising creates new ways of being and reaffirms those that already exist.

The promotion of such functional attributes of the product itself takes second place, it acquires symbolic value by exposing unconscious desires and promoting the identification of the public with the lifestyle it represents, aiming for a connection between the aspirations of the interlocutor and the brand. The great question posed is, would advertising be a reflection of society or is society a reflection of advertising? From his speech there is no way to reach a conclusion.

Dialoging with McLuhan's conception (1969 *apud* Ruivo, 2007), about the symbolism that advertising carries there is the concept of symbolic power coined by Bourdieu (1989 *apud* BREUNIG, & SOUZA, 2018). The French sociologist addresses such mechanisms of society that symbolically generate inequalities and establish symbolic power as “the way in which the group exercising the power will economically imposes its culture on the dominated group” (BOURDIEU 1989 *apud* BREUNIG, & SOUZA, 2018, p.137). Bittencourt & Barros (2016) clarify that it is through the symbolic power present in the media, culture, religion and education that the social body anchored in the standardization of symbols will be built. The main symbolic system of a society, namely culture, is an ideological instrument that serves the interests of the ruling classes.

This conjuncture brings forth what he calls the symbolic violence that will impose meanings on the dominated class. The media, especially television, is an important player in imposing such referential conduct standards designed to standardize mass culture and maintain the symbolic order, as it is understood that many people still regard television as the only means of information.

"The media, through its content, instills in the social body such feelings previously established by the controllers of power (...) as a way of maintaining the social status quo." (BOURDIEU 1989 *apud* BREUNIG, & SOUZA, 2018, p.139).

In conveying these concepts to the reality of the present research, Bittencourt and Barros (2016) relate the gender stereotypes exposed by the message of children's advertising with a way of promoting the symbolic infantile-juvenile violence that marks the submission and the power structures, which are nothing more than mechanisms aimed at body control. Immersed in an adult-centric and patriarchal culture, children suffer from disagreement between generations and genders, especially disfavoring the female gender and segregating more and more boys and girls.

Based on Foucault's views, who addresses the discursive construction of social subjects and the functioning of discourse in social change, Fischer (2001, *apud* NORMAN, 2008) assumes that media products will act directly in the construction of social subjects and coins the idea of "pedagogical character of the media". She talks about how, beyond the mere function of providing leisure or information, the media will also produce knowledge by transmitting the representations that already circulate in society about masculinity and femininity.

Finally, Moraes and Schmidt (2010) discuss the stereotypes specifically infused into children by child advertising on toys, establishing what is "right" and what is "wrong", aiming at the distinction between boys and girls and conveying standardized concepts. For girls, the search for beauty is always the main element, even leading them to a competition to find out who is the most beautiful. Consumerism, affinity with fashion, and the color pink are largely related to the female universe and placed as the only way to represent the identity of girls, as they seem to return to the symbol of beauty. Masculinity signs, in turn, are the strength, courage and virility that, if absent, can compromise their heterosexuality. In this universe genders won't exist without each other, because theoretically they complement each other, the strong and the weak, the vulnerable and the brave, the delicate and the virile, making woman submission to man to become very clear.

It is possible to establish, then, the important educational role played by child advertising, using symbolic power as a means to convey the social roles imposed on the bodies of boys and girls during the process to create the socialization of the little ones.

(...) is a pedagogy that narrates the subject as independent and free to choose, at the same time as it operates with mechanisms of (self) control and (self) regulation, thereby normalizing social relations and materializing them through images. (SABAT, 2001 p. 14)

Symbolic violence is instituted within the message conveyed by child advertising when it massively transmits the classical representation of femininity and masculinity as the only forms of expression. And children who are in the process of constructing their identities and longing for the sense of belonging, we only have to abide by such rules and references for their behavior, dressing and feeling in relation to the world.

5 DISCUSSION

The material presented so far provides an analysis of how the message conveyed by child advertising can influence children in the construction of gender stereotypes. In addition, the literature review has enabled us to gain a deeper understanding of gender and its power

relations embedded in the semantics of the word and on childhood and the indemnity categories that define it, as well as on advertising as a means of diffusing patterns.

According to Ramo (2013), childhood is defined by several indemnity categories, the main one being age, but there is also gender, race and social class acting as a way to classify children by separating them into distinct groups. In order to reaffirm such categories, the child is exposed daily to "adultised" narratives, always guided by the expected behavior of the little ones in adult life. There is a perception that the "adultification" of the child is something that negatively impacts the little ones.

The research made it possible to prove that the discourse on advertising / media and childhood without linking these two actors to criticism of child consumption, and also to address child advertising without running into the classic discussion of its legality, was a great challenge throughout the research process. Discussing gender is relevant because gender gives meaning to bodies and to the way of expressing identities. It is through gender that the expression of bodies is normalized and immobilized. It is possible to see that the message conveyed by child advertising will only reflect a market where few brands take the risk to embrace the social responsibility to promote change, and communication professionals hide behind the mask that the brand will allow them to take and will exempt them from any responsibility, for the customer will pay the bill.

Starting from the thought that the child will have contact not only with the publicity directed to the child and the existence of other promotion mechanisms, besides child advertising, the prohibition of the child advertising becomes insufficient. Thus, the main question addressed by the research is how child advertising can exist in a way that it is constructive for children and will help them become adults who celebrate diversity and are aware of what they consume.

Seeing the reality of advertising today, the obstacles to be faced if the production of a more diverse advertising has to be fostered include: promoting understanding about gender and overcoming the outdated view of professionals currently in the market that advertising has nothing, or has little, to offer in promoting social change and gender paradigms.

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