



**FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION ON GROUNDS OF SEXUAL
ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY IN THE BROADCAST
MEDIA. RECOMMENDATIONS**



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A number of studies show that approximately 10% of men and 6% of women have a preferentially or exclusively homosexual orientation (Alfred Kinsey, 1948, subsequently confirmed in 1979 and 2000), and that 1.7% of the world's population is born with some kind of intersexuality¹ (Anne Fausto-Sterling, 2006). A revealing comparison about these figures is the fact that albinism is much more well-known than intersexuality, even though it is estimated that only 0.005% of the world's population is albino (Anne Fausto-Sterling, 2006).

Although in recent years significant progress has made in the presence of gays, lesbians and bisexual and transsexual men and women (hereinafter LGBT) in the media, these portrayals are still made mainly from a heterosexist standpoint that is closely linked to stereotypes, stigmatizations, exclusions and invisibilities. These stereotypes make it difficult to describe the vast diversity of ways of living and being that exist in society, and they have also produced an image of gays, lesbians and transsexuals which has little to do with a reality which is much richer and more diverse.

From an anthropological and social point of view, it is culture and socialization that explain human sexuality and emotions (indeed, the cultural conception of sexuality and emotions in ancient cultures – Egypt, Greece, Rome, Mesopotamia, etc. – was much more tolerant and diverse than today). From the anthropological standpoint, sexual desire is not fixed but rather there are several kinds of sexual desires. Finally, it is also based on the fact that sex does not necessarily determine the sexual identity of the subject; in other words, it abandons the conservative and biologicistic conception that men have to feel sexual desire for women and women for men.

The drawing up of these recommendations seeks to help make the broadcasting portrayal of the LGBT community more positive and prevent the discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity that still exists in the media today. What the media broadcast is often a reflection of an ideological construct that tends to coincide with the dominant and majority one, which in our society is heteronormativity. Given that the media are transmitters of values, and that often if something does not appear in the media it seems as though it does not exist, it is important to try to overcome this invisibility because otherwise it will become, albeit unintentionally, a repressive mechanism.

We are aware that often little is known about this subject, so we have included here some terminology clarifications that will enable

¹ Presence in an individual of male and female morphological characteristics.

professionals to use language referring to LGBT people with greater appropriateness and accuracy.

Terminological clarification:

Sex: refers to a biological description of men and women, to physical traits, and does not necessarily determine the behaviour of the person.

Gender: refers to the identity, conditions, roles and responsibilities assigned to the sexes as they have been constituted and defined by society and culture. Gender is not static or innate but rather is a socio-cultural construct that has varied and may vary over time.

Sexual orientation: implies a lasting emotional, romantic, sexual and affective attraction towards another person. People usually talk about three different sexual orientations: heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality.

Gender identity: the sense of belonging to one sex or another. It does not necessarily coincide with the biological sex of the person, and has nothing to do with sexual orientation.

Heterosexual: person who feels sexual attraction towards people of the opposite sex.

Homosexual: person who feels sexual attraction towards people of the same sex. This term has a medical origin, appearing in the 19th century when homosexuality was classified as a mental illness, so that today part of the LGBT community does not like to use it and prefers the words "gay" or "lesbian". In addition, it is felt that the term makes lesbian women invisible.

Gay: man who feels sexual and affective attraction for other men.

Lesbian: woman who feels sexual and affective attraction for other women.

Bisexual: person who feels sexual and affective attraction for people of both sexes.

Transsexual: person who feels they belong to the sex opposite to the one they are biologically part of. Being transsexual does not entail having any particular sexual orientation (a transsexual person can be homosexual, heterosexual or bisexual).

Transsexual man: person who at birth has female genital and biological organs, but psychologically and vitally feels identified with the male gender.

Transsexual woman: person who at birth has male genital and biological organs, but psychologically and vitally feels identified with the female gender.

Transvestite: someone who acts as and dresses in the clothes of the opposite sex but who does not necessarily want a sex reassignment, as they may feel fully identified with their birth sex.

Gender reassignment: process through which people who feel the opposite sex to the one to which they biologically belong acquire the appropriate sex based on the felt gender. The process may or may not include genital reconstruction surgery. Sex reassignment does entail surgery.

Transgendered: person who, despite not feeling identified with their biological sex, does not want complete adaptation to the opposite sex. A

transgender person wants to live a role other than the one assigned to them by their birth sex, but wants to keep their body unchanged or only partially changed.

Lesbian family: formed by two lesbian mothers and their children.

Gay family: formed by two gay fathers and their children.

Homomaternity: relationship between two lesbian mothers and their children, arising from the legal relationship entailed by maternity.

Homopaternalty: relationship between two gay fathers and their children, arising from the legal relationship entailed by paternity.

Homoparentality: relationship between two lesbian mothers or two gay fathers and their children, arising from the legal relationship entailed by parenthood.

Homophobia: aversion to homosexuality or homosexuals. Homophobia was condemned by the European Court of Human Rights in 1981 and by the Council of Europe in 1984.

Lesbophobia: aversion to lesbianism or lesbian women. Often included in the term *homophobia*.

Transphobia: aversion to transsexuality or transsexuals.

1. To enable appropriate visibility

• Avoid certain associations

- Avoid systematically associating LGBT people with a festive, nightlife atmosphere.
- Avoid presenting the condition of being gay, transsexual, bisexual or lesbian as if it is inherently connected with promiscuous or squalid situations or ones involving illness, death or suffering.
- Avoid associating promiscuity with LGBT people as the fact that a person may have sexual relations other than with their partner is independent of whether these relations are with someone of their own sex or of the opposite sex.
- Avoid associating a person's way of dressing with their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Avoid the use of the image of lesbian women as eroticized figures and sexual objects.
- Avoid associating a person's sexual orientation with HIV/AIDS, as HIV/AIDS can affect anyone.
- Avoid associating transsexual women with prostitution, as this association may lead to mistaken generalizations.
- Avoid associating lesbian women with infertile women, because nowadays a woman can be a mother regardless of her sexual option.
- Avoid discussions that denote confrontations between gays, lesbians, bisexuals or transsexuals and heterosexual people.

- **Overcome stereotypes**

- A plural and diverse image of gays should be presented. Often the image given of gays is that they are young, attractive, well-off white men living in big cities. This is an exclusionary image that does not take into account the fact that there are gays of all ages, social classes and ethnicities.
- A plural and diverse image of lesbians should be presented, because even though there is no established stereotype, there is a tendency to imagine a lesbian either as a woman who is unattractive, coarse and looks like a man, or alternatively as a very attractive and graceful woman. These two images need to be expunged.
- A diverse and pluralistic image of transsexual men and women must be reflected. Transsexual men have been made almost completely invisible and transsexual women suffer from a stereotypical, often disrespectful, image linked to social exclusion, prostitution and medicalization.
- Generalizations should be avoided, such as "transsexual men have a very virile appearance and lots of hair", "transsexual women always wear a lot of make-up and high heels", "gays are young and attractive", "lesbians are ugly", etc.
- The media should be encouraged to explain that gender identity (feeling male or female) and sexual orientation (feeling attracted by men or women, that is to say, being homosexual or heterosexual) are completely different aspects of human beings.
- It should be shown that sexuality is just one area of the lives of LGBT people, along with family, work, personal and other experiences which everyone has.
- An image of LGBT people that only revolves around their sexual orientation and/or their gender identity should be avoided, as LGBT people have life pathways that are as diverse as any heterosexual person, but must also live with the stigma that has been socially attached to this group.
- It should be shown that the children of lesbian or gay families are lesbian or gay in the same proportion as those of heterosexual families.
- The image should be disseminated that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual people are "just like everyone else", that they have no more flaws or qualities, and that they are to be found in all professions and social classes.
- People's privacy must be preserved and it must be borne in mind that "coming out of the closet", i.e. publicly stating that one is gay, lesbian, bisexual or transsexual, is an individual and voluntary choice, and that those who do not want to do it must be respected.
- Making a spectacle of and arousing morbid curiosity about lesbian, gay and especially transsexual people should be avoided.
- News items about homosexuality and transsexuality should be illustrated with appropriate images, not with photographs of performances or ones that are erotic, pornographic, morbid, isolated,

etc. Such images do not properly portray the LGBT community and feed existing social prejudices.

- It is important to present transsexuality naturally and avoid a vision that is compassionate, sensationalist, paternalistic, morbid, frivolous, over-protective, etc.
- News and information sources must be selected, challenged and diversified and qualified specialists and/or groups with proven expertise should be consulted when releasing news about LGBT people.
- The broadcast media should train their professionals who cover issues related to LGBT people, as it is important that they are aware of LGBT reality. Media professionals need to cast off any prejudices and stereotypes they may have about LGBT people.

2. To overcome invisibility

• Give a voice

- To LGBT people as the main players so it is they who give their opinions about their lives. Also make it possible for them to be the main players in their discourse, as often lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transsexuals appear in the media as objects about which heterosexist society gives its views.
- To people who represent LGBT organizations and associations on news and discussion programmes.

• Topics and areas

- News programmes should positively reflect the activities and demands of LGBT groups, and not talk about the community only when there is demonstration commemorating Gay Pride Day or a similar event, or when there is a homophobic or transphobic attack.
- LGBT people and families should be portrayed in any and all everyday situation (e.g., advertisements can show two mothers giving their children tea, while series and news programmes can show a gay couple in a retirement home, etc.)
- The media should report instances of homophobic attacks and discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity and explain how to report them to the authorities and what can be done to deal with them.
- The media must report cases of homophobic harassment in context to avoid simplification, trivialization and decontextualization. The information and contextualization needed to understand and think about the problem must be provided.
- News about the LGBT community should not only be placed in the society and people and/or accidents and crime sections.
- The image of LGBT people needs to be made more positive, showing them to be people who are as valid as anyone else and not only providing information about their sexual orientation or gender identity.

A good way of achieving this would be to highlight the fact that some famous people in history were gay or lesbian, or that in the cultures of the ancient world (Rome, Greece, Egypt, Mesopotamia, etc.) relations between men, or even marriage, were allowed and approved of, or showing the historical persecution of the LGBT community by different religions and totalitarian political regimes.

- Visibility must be given to the specific problems encountered by LGBT people in various spheres of life: the added difficulty that older people have when they go into a residential home, transsexual men and women who are turned down for jobs due to their gender identity, the obstacles young people face when they want to "come out of the closet", etc.
- It is recommended that the media should publicize the resources and services specifically for LGBT people provided by associations, government and private initiatives.

3. Verbal and iconographic language

- Instead of talking about homosexuals or the homosexual community, it is preferable to talk about lesbians, gays and bisexuals, as the use of a term that seeks to include all three groups will often lead to lesbians and bisexuals becoming invisible.
- When referring to transsexuals, it is recommended to talk about transsexual men and women as otherwise transsexual men will be made invisible.
- When talking about transsexuals, the media often refer to a transsexual man or a transsexual woman by their sex of birth, instead of doing so based on the gender with which the person identifies. Gender must be determined by the person concerned through their own choice and not by the sex of their birth, independently of medical and legal considerations.
- Iconography referring to bodily expressions and gestures accompanied by a series of symbols (attire, colour, tone of voice, etc.) that is used to mock someone or to suggest that they are gay or lesbian should be avoided.
- Efforts must be made to eliminate homophobia from the language used on television and radio, especially in entertainment programmes where it is particularly common.
- The use of terms *homophobia*, *lesbophobia* and *transphobia*, meaning aversion to gays, lesbians and transsexuals respectively, should be made more widespread.
- There are numerous homophobic expressions embedded in everyday language that the media should not use so as not to reinforce stereotypes or stigmatize the LGBT community. Below are some examples:
 - The expression *up your arse*, as a way of demeaning someone.
 - The expression *gay*, to say that something is lame or insubstantial.

- The expression *poof*, to say that a person is not able to do something.
 - The expression *nancy boy* or *gay boy*, to refer to a man who behaves in a feminine way or has feminine or gestures.
 - The expression *bull dyke* or *butch*, to refer to a woman who appears to be more masculine.
 - The expression *transvestite* or similar to refer to a transsexual person.
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- Avoid making jokes which may be offensive or might reinforce stereotypes, or which mock or call into question sexual options as a way of attacking or undermining someone.
 - Talk about "sex or gender reassignment" and not "sex change" as a transsexual person believes they have always been a man or a woman.
 - Avoid using the term "sexual reorientation treatment" when what is meant is "sex or gender reassignment treatment". Sexual reorientation treatments (also known as reparative therapy or conversion therapy) refer to medical efforts to change a person's sexual orientation; in other words, they see homosexual sexual orientation as a disease and want to cure it. This concept comes from the 19th century and was spread by the Nazis. In addition, medical practices that were used – and are still used – involve electroshock reparative therapies which are now rejected by the scientific community.

LIST OF ENTITIES, ASSOCIATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS IN THE FORUM

1. Agència Catalana del Consum (ACC)
2. Atenció i Investigació de Socioaddiccions (AIS)
3. Asociación de Usuarios de la Comunicación (AUC)
4. Associació Promotora de l'Orientació del Consum de la Gent Gran (PROGRAM)
5. Associació Canal Comunica
6. Associació Centre Català d'Addiccions Socials (ACENCAS)
7. Associació Cultural Fallaires d'Isil
8. Associació de Consumidors de la Província de Barcelona (ACPB)
9. Associació de Disminuïts Físics d'Osona (ADFO)
10. Associació de Jubilats i Pensionistes 1978 de la Província de Tarragona
11. Associació de Mestres Rosa Sensat
12. Associació de Realitzadors i Productors Audiovisuals de Girona (ARPAGI)
13. Associació per a la Informació dels Consumidors (ASSIC)
14. Associació Món Comunicació
15. Associació Sant Tomàs (PARMO)
16. Associació Tarraco de Protecció als Consumidors i Usuaris de la Província de Tarragona (ATPCU)
17. Associació Veus Diverses
18. Càtedra UNESCO Dones, Desenvolupament i Cultures de la Universitat de Vic (UVIC)
19. Centre d'Estudis Interdisciplinaris de la Dona de la Universitat de Vic (UVIC)
20. Col·legi de Pedagogs de Catalunya (COPEC)
21. Col·legi de Periodistes de Catalunya (demarcació de Lleida)
22. Col·legi Oficial de Psicòlegs de Catalunya (COPC)
23. Col·legi Professional de l'Audiovisual de Catalunya (CPAC)
24. Confederació de la Comissió Obrera Nacional de Catalunya (CCOO)
25. Consell de Col·legis de Diplomats en Infermeria de Catalunya
26. Consell Nacional de Dones de Catalunya (CNDC)
27. Consorci Digital Mataró - Maresme
28. Coordinadora d'Usuaris de la Sanitat: Salut, Consum i Alimentació
29. Departament d'Educació. Direcció General de l'Educació Bàsica i el Batxillerat
30. Departament d'Estudis de Comunicació de la Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV)
31. Departament de Comunicació Audiovisual i de Publicitat I de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB)
32. Departament de Filologia Catalana i Comunicació Audiovisual de la Universitat de Lleida (UdL)
33. Departament de Pedagogia de la Universitat de Girona (UdG)
34. Departament de Pedagogia de la Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV)
35. Departament de Comunicació de la Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF)
36. Departament de Psicologia i Pedagogia de la Universitat de Lleida (UdL)
37. Drac Màgic
38. Escola de Ciències de la Salut de la Universitat de Vic (UVIC)
39. Escola Superior de Cinema i Audiovisuals de Catalunya (ESCAC)
40. Escola Universitària de Realització Audiovisual i Multimèdia (ERAM)
41. Estudis d'Educació Social de la Universitat de Vic (UVIC)
42. Facultat d'Educació de la Universitat de Vic (UVIC)
43. Facultat d'Empresa i Comunicació de la Universitat de Vic (UVIC)
44. Facultat de Ciències de l'Educació de la Universitat de Lleida (UdL)
45. Facultat de Comunicació Blanquerna de la Universitat Ramon Llull (URL)

46. Facultat de Psicologia, Ciències de l'Educació i de l'Esport Blanquerna de la Universitat Ramon Llull (URL)
47. Federació d'Associacions de Gent Gran de Catalunya (FATEC)
48. Federació d'Associacions de Pares d'Alumnes de Catalunya (FaPaC)
49. Federació de Cooperatives de Consumidors i Usuaris de Catalunya (FCCUC)
50. Federació de Moviments de Renovació Pedagògica de Catalunya (FMRPC)
51. Fundació del Món Rural
52. Fundació Museu del Cinema. Col·lecció Tomàs Mallof
53. Grup d'Entitats Catalanes de la Família (GEC)
54. Institut de Ciències de l'Educació de la Universitat de Barcelona (ICE)
55. Institut Municipal d'Educació i Treball (IMET)
56. Lliga contra el càncer de les comarques de Tarragona i de les Terres de l'Ebre
57. Mitjans. Xarxa d'Educadors i Comunicadors
58. Observatori de les Dones en els Mitjans de Comunicació
59. Observatori Europeu de la Televisió Infantil (OETI)
60. Observatori sobre la Cobertura de Conflictes als Mitjans de Comunicació
61. Òmnium Cultural (Delegació Ponent-Lleida)
62. Organització de Consumidors i Usuaris de Catalunya (OCUC)
63. Productora d'Emissions de Ràdio, SL
64. Programa per al col·lectiu gai, lesbià i transsexual del Departament d'Acció Social i Ciutadania
65. Ràdio Municipal de Vilablareix
66. Sies.TV
67. Sindicat de Periodistes de Catalunya (SPC)
68. Spectus. Educació i Mitjans de Comunicació
69. Teleduca, Educació i Comunicació, SCP
70. Telespectadors Associats de Catalunya (TAC)
71. Televisió de Girona
72. Televisions Locals de Catalunya (TLC)
73. Unió de Consumidors de Catalunya (UCC)
74. Unió General de Treballadors de Catalunya (UGT)
75. Unió Intercomarcal de les Comarques Tarragonines de CCOO
76. Unió Sindical Obrera de Catalunya (USOC)
77. USTEC-STEC
78. Vilaweb Mollerussa
79. Xarxa Audiovisual Local (XAL)

1. Catalan Consumer Agency
2. Social Addictions Care and Research
3. Communication Users' Association
4. Association for the Promotion of Consumer Guidance for the Elderly
5. Communicate Channel Association
6. Catalan Social Addiction Centre Association
7. Fallaires d'Isil Cultural Association
8. Barcelona Province Consumers' Association
9. Osona Physically Handicapped Association
10. Tarragona Province Retirees and Pensioners 1978 Association
11. Rosa Sensat Teachers' Association
12. Girona Audiovisual Producers and Directors Association
13. Association for Consumer Information
14. Communication World Association
15. Sant Tomàs Association
16. Tarraco Association to Protect Consumers and Users in Tarragona Province
17. Various Voices Association

18. UNESCO Women, Development and Culture Chair at the University of Vic
19. Centre for Interdisciplinary Women's Studies, University of Vic
20. Teachers' Association of Catalonia
21. Journalists' Association of Catalonia (Lleida Province)
22. Official Association of Psychologists of Catalonia
23. Professional Audiovisual Association of Catalonia
24. Confederation of Workers' Commissions of Catalonia
25. Council of Nursing Associations of Catalonia
26. National Council of Women of Catalonia
27. Mataró - Maresme Digital Consortium
28. Coordinating Committee for Health Users: Health, Consumption and Food
29. Ministry of Education. Directorate General for Basic Education and the 'Batxillerat'
30. Department of Communication Studies at Rovira i Virgili University
31. Department of Audiovisual Communication and Advertising at the Autonomous University of Barcelona
32. Department of Catalan Studies and Audiovisual Communication at the University of Lleida
33. Department of Education at the University of Girona
34. Department of Education at Rovira i Virgili University
35. Department of Communication at Pompeu Fabra University
36. Department of Psychology and Education at the University of Lleida
37. Drac Màgic
38. School of Health Sciences at the University of Vic
39. School of Cinema and Audiovisuals of Catalonia
40. College of Audiovisual and Multimedia Production
41. Social Studies Education at the University of Vic
42. Faculty of Education at the University of Vic
43. Faculty of Business and Communication at the University of Vic
44. Faculty of Education at the University of Lleida
45. Blanquerna Faculty of Communication at Ramon Llull University
46. Blanquerna Faculty of Psychology, Educational Sciences and Sport at Ramon Llull University
47. Federation of Associations of Senior Citizens of Catalonia
48. Federation of Associations of Parents of Students of Catalonia
49. Federation of Consumers and Users' Cooperatives of Catalonia
50. Federation of Educational Renewal Movements of Catalonia
51. Countryside Foundation
52. Cinema Museum Foundation. Tomàs Mallol Collection
53. Catalan Family Organizations Group
54. Institute of Education Sciences at the University of Barcelona
55. Municipal Institute of Education and Employment
56. Tarragona and Terres de l'Ebre League Against Cancer
57. Media. Educators and Communicators Network
58. Women in the Media Observatory
59. European Observatory on Children's Television
60. Media Conflict Coverage Observatory
61. Òmnium Cultural (Ponent-Lleida office)
62. Organization of Consumers and Users of Catalonia
63. Productora d'Emissions de Ràdio, SL
64. Programme for the Gay, Lesbian and Transsexual Community in the Ministry of Social Action and Citizenship
65. Vilablareix Municipal Radio
66. Sies.TV
67. Union of Journalists of Catalonia

68. Spectus. Education and the Media
69. Teleduca, Educació i Comunicació, SCP
70. Associated TV Viewers of Catalonia
71. Girona Television
72. Local Television Stations of Catalonia
73. Consumers' Union of Catalonia
74. General Workers' Union of Catalonia
75. Workers' Commissions Tarragona Province Inter-county Union
76. Workers' Trade Union of Catalonia
77. USTEC-STEC teachers union
78. Mollerussa Vilaweb
79. Local Broadcasting Network