Chilean Gays and Lesbians Watching Television:
TV Representations and the Construction of Sexual Identifications

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

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CHILEAN GAYS AND LESBIANS WATCHING TELEVISION: TV REPRESENTATIONS
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Looking at the ways in which different programmes produced in Chile since 1990 have depicted homosexuality, this thesis explores the relationships between televisual representations and the lived experiences of participants who identify as gays or lesbians, trying to comprehend how they interpret these images, interact with them, and create meanings that inform the ways in which they articulate their sexual identification.

Drawing on a qualitative content analysis of over 100 TV figures and a thematic analysis of interviews and focus group with 28 individuals, I argue that all through participants' lives, the ways in which national television has made homosexuality visible have played a mostly detrimental role in their processes of sexual identification. Participants state that the stereotyped and simplified representations that Chilean TV has shown have contributed to further marginalise gay and lesbian lives. These images strengthened damaging feelings that fed into a ubiquitous sense of shame, thus having a negative impact over respondents' processes of self-recognition and self-acceptance. Participants have then articulated their sexual identification by disassociating themselves from these images and establishing a clear difference in regard to them, which has implied the foregrounding of their identification as "normal" gays or lesbians. This is also what they want to see represented on TV.

I provide a contextual reading of this situation, understanding television as one of many other discursive institutions and texts through which homosexuality has been placed in an unfavourable position within Chilean society, thus shaping how participants understand their positioning within it. I, therefore, do not reveal "media effects", but elucidate the role that TV has had in the lives of a group of self-identifying gay/lesbian individuals who understand television as an institution that, although is not the place where fixed ideas about homosexuality are originally produced, has the power to spread these meanings into broad sectors of the population and stabilise them into common sense.

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Contents

Introduction

Television and Self-Policing: Wanting to "Be Good"

Television is both highly intimate and undoubtedly public. We can watch it alone, absorbed in our thoughts and feelings, moving constantly from the images on the screen to the fantasies in our heads. At the same time, however, we are conscious of the fact that the same content is being – or will be or has been – watched by many others. It seems to me that gays and lesbians are particularly aware of this duality, especially when we are faced with the representation of our own sexual identification. Those particular images can tell us something about our lives or about the lives of others with whom we share something important. We have, however, grown up watching these representations mainly in the company of *others*, such as straight parents or siblings, which has made us acutely aware of the fact that these images are showing to the mainstream public a version "of ourselves" that will have consequences, not only on how we are treated as individuals in our everyday lives, but also on how we are understood as a community, however broadly defined that community might be. How TV shows us is then enmeshed in how we see ourselves and how others see us, two elements that are, nevertheless, intimately connected.

As a child growing up in Chile during the 1990s, I do not remember homosexuality being discussed in a *direct manner* in any of the contexts in which I spent most of my time. My family would not talk about it; my teachers would not talk about it; and since we were not a particularly religious family, any negative mention emerging during a religious ceremony was not part of my consciousness. I did not know the word; I did not know it was

something you could "be". A similar effacement was taking place on TV, which I consumed avidly, still deprived of the entertainment the Internet would provide a couple of years later. I know now that it was explicitly mentioned on the news, although rarely, for instance every time the discussion about the decriminalisation of homosexuality reappeared in Congress[1]. But I was not watching the news; I was watching *telenovelas*, chat shows, and variety shows, already fascinated by melodrama, showbusiness, and our local divas. And there, homosexuality was not *named*, which, however, does not mean that it was not *present*. Indeed, it was present, although in more or less veiled ways that mainly mobilised effeminacy as the principal signifier of masculine sexual dissidence, while any sign of lesbianism continued to be almost completely ignored within televisual narratives. I then remember a few very small male characters in *telenovelas*, who in their sweet-natured intentions seemed innocuous. I also remember a couple of humorous characters that would appear on entertainment or variety shows, swishing and lisping, looking suggestively at the straight presenter. I remember everyone laughing at them while they were being placed in a position of ridicule that they accepted cheerfully. These same characters would then imbue the social lingo; they were not *explicitly* gay, I was *not sure* that I was gay, but their names were used to mark the deviancy of my behaviour: not wanting to play football, what a Cochiguaz[2] thing to do! I also remember Gonzalo Cáceres, a larger-than-life hair stylist and make-up artist who would constantly be on chat shows talking about fashion and good taste; I was not sure "what" he was, but I did know that he produced a rare fascination on those watching him. It was as though they were watching someone strange; beloved, but, above all, pitied.

I, too, had intense feelings for these and other similar figures: they certainly interested me, as maybe I saw something of me in them; but they also scared me and gave me the idea that what they "were" was not something good, as their lives were marked by secrecy, deviancy, and ridicule. Needless to say, I did not want any of that for me. Through these images, then, and the pointed ways in which they were negotiated in public, television was clearly not giving me any sort of beneficial tool for the journey I was going through. As a consequence, I, just like many others, found in other places assistance in

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[1] As will be explained in detail below, this was achieved in 1999.
[2] Cochiguaz was a humorous character that appeared in several variety shows during the 1990s. He represented a highly effeminate bartender.

the task of understanding what I felt, negotiating "who" or "what" I was, and devising acceptable life possibilities in which being gay was indeed an option. But then, in the middle of this, alternative televisual images appeared. These images showed me that other possibilities existed: there were professional gay men, there were gay men who were in love and wanted to form a family; and, most importantly, there were gay men who were socially accepted, who my family could see as an example of the life I could lead. They were helpful when I came out; I was quick to point my similarity to the socially accepted gay men and my difference in regard to "the other ones". I recall talking about one of these "other ones" with a friend and telling him: "please don't think that we're all like that". Using Medhurst's (2009) words, I can see now that I was measuring myself with "inappropriate yardsticks", policing myself "with the anxious wish not to offend" (p. 85). But, for me, back then, that was the only option: not wanting to be laughed at, pointed at, and disrespected implied aligning myself with what seemed *accepted*, even if not *ideal*, which meant, of course, heterosexual.

How I perceive those images, however, has changed tremendously. I still recognise how helpful they were *to me* in that particular moment of my life and how beneficial they were *socially* in a context in which many were still convinced that we were abnormal creatures that had to be either cured or locked up. I can see now, nevertheless, how restrictive those representations also were, showing a version of us that was stripped of all the vibrant things queer life has to offer. That is why I long now for images that show the wide variety of options that I see around me: gays and lesbians who want to get married and form a "conventional" family; gays and lesbians who explore alternative sexual, social, and identity-making practices, envisaging ways of inhabiting the world that go beyond the limits of acceptability; and gays and lesbians who, because of their class position, gender performance, or any other identity marker, lead lives that are more vulnerable to marginalisation. I want stories of all of them, while they explore their lives, the possibilities they hold, failing or succeeding, and trying again. It seems to me that presenting a wide array of possibilities is the best way to disrupt social discourses of normality, showing young people who are exploring their sexuality that other options are indeed possible and that letting shame convince us of the need to self-align with only one mode of living is not the only path.

It is in these discussions where the origin of this project can be found. It is therefore not only marked by an intense intellectual motivation to understand how television is integrated into the identity-making processes of gays and lesbians, but also by my personal attachment to the topic and a definite political aim, as I wish to contribute to the production of social conditions that allow for the construction of more diverse representations and stories on TV. This, because I think that this change would be beneficial not only for people who identify as gays or lesbians, but also for Chilean society more broadly, as it would potentially contribute to disrupt the rigid sexual norms that are expressed in manifold forms of marginalisation and precarity. In this way, then, this project follows a tradition of feminist research that places the change of the *status quo* as the starting point of the scientific quest (Mies, 1983).

Armed with these motivations, this study looks at representations of gays and lesbians that have taken place on Chilean TV since 1990 in different types of programmes produced in the country, in order to analyse how members of the audience, who identify themselves as gays or lesbians, interpret these images and "use" them in the process of constructing their sexualised identities. This research thus explores the ways in which 28 Chilean gays and lesbians of different ages and social classes relate to television, focusing on how they make sense of the televisual representations of homosexuality and on the relations between their interpretations and their processes of sexual identification. Through these discussions, ultimately, this study aims to create new ways of understanding the role of TV in everyday life, particularly in a social group that, as Aaron (2009) states, has not been regularly stressed in studies of television audiences.

Discursive Approach to Media: Representations and Viewers' Identities

Rather than offering a *reflection* of reality, media are actively involved in the *construction of meanings* regarding the world around us. At least from the 1970s, when, according to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), media studies went through a behavioural-to-critical paradigm shift, media have been mainly discussed as "meaning-making" institutions through which reality is routinely *narrated* and *made sense of.* Media, in this sense, have been understood as spaces where *representations* of reality are constructed or, in other words, where meanings about the world are assembled and put forward for others to

apprehend (S. Hall, 2013). Films, TV programmes, and newspaper articles – among many other devices and institutions – are then constantly making available representations through which we can make sense of ourselves and the contexts we inhabit, understanding how things *are* and how they *should work,* as representations do indeed "shape, inform and orient the way we see and judge the world, others and ourselves, and how we imagine real and possible lives" (Orgad, 2014, p. 32). In this sense then, and following Antezana (2013), I understand that media functions as a *board* that teaches, warns, suggests, and normalises; and as a *mirror* that, although distorted, presents an image that allows for the recognition and identification of those who look at it.

Out of all forms of media, one that has been particularly discussed in terms of its involvement with "the fashioning and refashioning of norms" (Chambers, 2009, p. 89) is television. It has been argued that, partly as a consequence of its inherently economic imperatives that imply seeking broad audiences, network TV tends to articulate and reproduce dominant social values (Bourdieu, 2012; Buonanno, 2008; Gross, 2001). Television has then been conceptualised as "one of the most powerful agents in the construction of our sense of 'reality'" (Thornham & Purvis, 2005, p. xi), as it is routinely making available representations that articulate ways of understanding the world which ultimately acquire the value of what is "culturally mainstream", "common sense", or "*normal*" (Chambers, 2009; Gauntlett, 2002; Gitlin, 1986; Joyrich, 2014). This perspective does not negate the possibility of television and other forms of media contributing to the *disruption* of norms, but it highlights that, through their constant production of meanings, they are a fundamental part of how a "common culture" is constructed (Fiske, 1987; S. Hall, 2013; Kagan, 2017; Kellner, 2003), including its accompanying expectations and presumptions regarding how social life is structured: "what things are, how they work (or should work), and why" (Gross, 1991, p. 22).

These sets of meanings, which are articulated in systems of representation and integrated into norms, are encompassed in Foucault's classic concept of *discourse.* As authors such as Hall (2013) and Halperin (1995) explain, discourses can be understood as clusters of ideas and practices through which forms of knowledge associated with particular topics or social activities are produced, rendering "certain statements truthful and meaningful, and others false, marginalized and deviant" (Orgad, 2014, pp. 65–66). Discourses then make available what Willig (2013) calls ways-of-seeing the world – i.e.,

ways of *understanding reality* – and ways-of-being in the world – i.e., *subject positions* to be taken up by individuals – which establishes discourses as directly implicated in the social exercise of power. Foucauldian conceptualisations, according to Halperin (1995), are thus teaching us to not only look at discourses in terms of what they *say* – their content – but also in terms of what they *do*, paying particular attention to "the power-effects they produce or the manner in which they are deployed within particular systems of discursive and institutional practice" (p. 31).

Following these theorisations, this project is guided by a discursive approach to media (S. Hall, 2013), as representations and the knowledge that is articulated through them are discussed as sites where things are made possible – where illusions, fears, and ways of relating to and understanding ourselves and others are constantly articulated, making visible the forceful associations that exist between how social groups are treated in popular culture and how they are treated "in real life" (Bourdieu, 2012; Dyer, 2002b; Orgad, 2014). This approach is then especially concerned with the *consequences* of representation, what Hall (2013) calls, its "politics", paying attention not only to how meaning is produced but particularly to the ways in which the knowledge that is articulated by a discourse "connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or constructs identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are represented" (S. Hall, 2013, p. xxii).

None of this, however, means that the representations that television and other forms of media make available *determine* meanings, conducts, or identities. They are part of "discursive formations" (S. Hall, 2013) that are assembled across different texts and institutional sites, being crystalised into norms that define what is expected or presumed, but that, nevertheless, can also be resisted and challenged. Audiences, in this sense, face media representations equipped with the normative values of their culture, but also with their potentially divergent interests, motivations, expectations, and subcultural belongings, which *can* destabilise the ways in which these meanings have been constructed.

The interaction between audiences and different forms of media, including television, can then be characterised as a "struggle", a site of "negotiation" (Livingstone, 1998) where the meanings that media make available are put into conversation with the "different and always unequal voices that audiences will encounter in everyday life"

(Briggs, 2010, p. 10). This, according to Livingstone (1998), can be seen as a point of encounter between "two semi-powerful sources" (p. 26): texts, on the one hand, limiting the sense that audiences can make and audiences, on the other, bringing to the encounter a variety of experiences and social determinations that make the texts meaningful *to* them. This potential complexity at the point of reception, however, does not erase the marks that the dominant culture's discourse leaves, the salience of the viewer's sociocultural milieu and its normative values, or the ways in which representations relate to the social context that engender them. As Dyer (2002b) explains, all of us are restricted by "the viewing and the reading codes to which we have access (by virtue of where we are situated in the world and the social order) and by what representations there are for us to view and read" (p. 2). In this way, through these theorisations, this project follows a tradition of cultural studies that departs from an understanding of media and audience as separate and opposite entities and that rather conceives the consumption of television and other forms of media "as a site of cultural struggle, in which a variety of forms of power are exercised, with different sorts of effects" (Ang, 1996, p. 35).

This implies conceiving audiences not as a "mass of people who are all essentially identical" (Fiske, 1987, p. 16) nor as simply formed by isolated individuals, but as consisting of complex and interconnected social groups and subjects who do not merely respond to media messages, but interact "with it in a variety of different ways" (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998, p. 5) that are, furthermore, always "historically specific and context-bound" (Ang, 1996, p. 32). Consequently, throughout this text, I use "members of the audience", "viewers", and "consumers" synonymously, as all these words allow me to highlight the diversity of people who are interacting with television in multiple ways while located in a specific social context. Members of the audience, in this sense, are here conceived as socially located subjects who coexist with media-produced meanings that are "firmly anchored into the web of culture" (Bird, 2003, p. 3), which makes it then impossible to isolate the "effects" that one specific form of media could have. We, in other words, "live *with*" discursive formations that are not only (re)produced through one form of media, but through manifold texts and institutions that are simultaneously shaping the "web of culture" in which we participate. My goal, then, is not to reveal "media effects", but to explore the relationships between subjects' lived experiences and TV representations, trying to comprehend how people interact with these images and create

meanings that inform the ways in which they understand themselves and negotiate their place in society.

To achieve this aim, I understand media as being "intimately bound up with the construction of the person" (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998, p. 37). This means, in other words, that television and other forms of media are closely involved with the construction of *identities*, which can be conceptualised as the positions that "the subject is obliged to take up while always 'knowing' (the language of consciousness here betray us) that they are representations" (S. Hall, 1996, p. 6). This does not only imply a subject who is *positioned,* but one who also *invests* in their positioning through a constant *process of articulation* in which categories are made significant *to them*. Thus, I understand identity construction not as a "closed" project, but as a continuous negotiation, a constant process of *identification* that is carried out by "making use of cultural sources of meaning production" (Hermes, 1999, p. 71). In this way, as Orgad (2020) explains, identities are fashioned by drawing on the discourses that are available to us, including the meanings that are made possible through media representations. Media are then constantly producing and making available social scripts that help individuals position themselves in society, think through their relationships, reflect on their past, and envisage possible futures (Allan, 2007; Fuenzalida, 2007; Gauntlett, 2002; A. Gray, 2003; Porfido, 2009; Press, 1991; K. M. Ryan & Macey, 2013; Thornham & Purvis, 2005), consolidating "radio, television, film, and the other products of media culture" as some of the main providers of the "materials out of which we forge our very identities" (Kellner, 2003, p. 9). Within these discussions, some authors (e.g., Fejes & Petrich, 1993; Gorton, 2009; Haslop, 2012; Jackson & Gilbertson, 2009; van Zoonen, 1994) have focused specifically on the ways in which media open up spaces that allow us to think about and negotiate our gendered sexual identities, highlighting that "the ideas and images of the sexual which permeate our everyday world through popular culture are of considerable importance in framing the cultural imaginaries within which people lead their lives and construct their identities" (Roseneil, 2000, p. 63).

Television and Everyday Life

Several authors (e.g., Bonner, 2003; Briggs, 2010; Fuenzalida, 2007; Gorton, 2009) have stated that, out of all forms of media, television stands out for the particularly strong connection it holds with the intimate and the quotidian. So much is so that it has been affirmed, for instance, that "television [...] is everyday life. To study the one is at the same time to study the other" (Silverstone, 1989, p. 77). It is not only that television sets are everywhere (certainly at least one in most households), but also that the images and stories that are produced *for* television circulate profusely in our everyday contexts, being consumed in different types of devices, imbuing discussions that take place in other forms of media, and providing "much of the conversational currency of our daily lives" (Silverstone, 1989, p. 77).

It is undeniable, however, that the ways in which many members of the audience consume televisual images have clearly changed. Technological advances have certainly altered viewing patterns, making it possible to accommodate them to individual routines in an easier way. Now, through on-demand and streaming services, it is possible to watch many programmes whenever and wherever we want, in an expanding number of different devices (Ashley, 2019; Buonanno, 2016; Curtin, 2009). This has made "appointment television" (Gorton, 2009) an increasingly outmoded form of consumption, also turning TV viewing into a more personal activity. None of these changes, however, implies that television has lost its ubiquitous position within viewers' everyday lives. The ways in which we consume televisual images might have changed, but we have not stopped watching them, thinking about them, and talking about them. Quite the contrary, other forms of communication – particularly digital ones, as for instance McNicholas (2020) has shown – provide increasing opportunities for these images to be further discussed, thus even boosting their social presence. Television, in this sense, is then "neither 'beating' nor 'losing' to new media in some cosmic clash of technology; rather, television is an intrinsic part of 'new' media" (J. Gray & Lotz, 2012, p. 3).

Vassallo de Lopes and Orozco (2015b) and Orozco and Miller (2016) have analysed the ways in which these changes have come about in Latin American contexts, explaining that local audiences are also making use of the diversified technological opportunities, consuming televisual images in multiple devices and at the times of the day that fit their

own personal routines. According to these authors, the increasing spread of diverse options for watching TV has certainly translated into lower rating and share figures in most countries of the region, which, however, should not be interpreted as a sign of Latin American audiences' reduced interest in television. In fact, as Orozco and Miller (2016) state, thanks to the diversification of the possibilities for consumption, "what we might call the televisual world of Latin America is expanding, not contracting, as audiences experience different screens and audiovisual possibilities" (p. 101).

Viewers' continuing strong relationship with television has also been discussed in the Chilean context, where this research is placed. According to the last figures published by the Consejo Nacional de Televisión[3] (2017), 89% of the Chilean population say that they watch television regularly, showing that the habit of consuming TV images persists in the country. This strong presence is further confirmed by studies that have stated that television is *central* for Chilean viewers' daily lives (Arriagada et al., 2014); that it continues to have a markedly strong impact not only over people's everyday topics of discussion, but also over broader issues of construction of public opinion (Amigo et al., 2014); and that Chilean viewers hold an intimate relationship with TV, as it is closely linked to their daily routines (Antezana et al., 2016). Furthermore, and even with multiple changes, television has been present in Chilean people's daily lives over many decades, an element that is particularly relevant for this project.

TV's strong relationship with the quotidian and its preferred location in the intimate space of the household position it as an interesting device for exploring the ways in which people interact with representations and "use" them for making sense of their place in society and crafting personal identities. Furthermore, enjoying what TV has to offer does not demand that viewers stop doing other tasks: television is generally consumed more distractedly than other forms of media, as an activity that can be – and usually is – done amidst other activities (Aaron, 2009; Alasuutari, 1999; Fuenzalida, 2002; Silverstone, 1994). This pattern of use further establishes TV as a productive site for understanding the relationships between subjects' lived experiences and media representations, as it makes

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[3] The Consejo Nacional de Televisión (CNTV) is the government agency whose function is to oversee the operation of television services.

possible the existence of fluid and continuous transitions between "real" and "fantasy" (Buonanno, 1999).

Several authors have reflected about the implications that TV's positioning in everyday life has on the experiences of non-heterosexual members of the audience. In general, it has been explained that young people usually find in media their first encounters with non-heterosexual imagery (Aaron, 2009; Bond et al., 2009; Dyer, 1984a; Kama, 2003; Kielwasser & Wolf, 1994; McInroy & Craig, 2017; Raley & Lucas, 2006). This has been explained as a consequence of LGBTQ issues and identifications' uncomfortable or plainly hostile position within heteronormative families, schools, and other primary socialisation agents, where heterosexuality is not merely assumed but upheld "as an organizing principle of social organization as well as personal life" (D. Richardson, 2018, p. 16). It is in media, then, where we find some of the initial information that can help or hinder the understanding of our feelings and our sense of difference, confirming that, when it comes to our gendered and sexualised selves, "media images are very powerful in helping one develop a sense of identity" (Fejes, 2000, p. 115). This relationship, however, extends well beyond those "initial" years; even when other forms of socialisation do appear and are sustained, television and other forms of media continue to play a significant role as providers of representations that are "used" for making sense of ourselves and the world around us (Orgad, 2014). As Kama (2003), for instance, states:

> The gay man who looks at the public discourse as if it were a mirror reflecting social reality, yet sees that his image is not reflected or distorted, feels utter insignificance. In contrast, when he sees an undistorted reflected image, it enables him to realize that his identity is validated (p. 86).

An increasing number of studies have analysed this area over the last few years, after decades of it being highly underdeveloped from a theoretical and empirical point of view. As, for instance, Haslop's (2012) account showed almost a decade ago: "surprisingly, [...] within audience studies the subject of sexual identity and sexuality both in terms the audience's own identity/sexuality and how they relate to identities/sexualities figured in the text, has rarely been addressed" (p. 19). The overwhelming majority of these more recent studies, however, have focused on audiences located in the Global North. This area of enquiry, therefore, continues to be underdeveloped from an empirical perspective in

other locations. In Chile, particularly, no studies have analysed the possible relations between representations and gay and lesbian viewers' processes of sexual identification.

In fact, and despite TV's popularity, television audience studies have not been a widespread research field in Chile (Villarroel et al., 2011)[4]. This is actually the case in all Latin America, where communication studies, especially before the 1990s, were principally focused on the critical analysis of media as institutions (Lozano & Frankenberg, 2010). Inspired by Dependency Theory, during the 1970s, the predominant approach was to analyse media messages as ideological structures that were shaped by cultural imperialism and determined certain reading positions. Here, audiences were mostly conceptualised as passive receptors of cultural industries' hegemony (Dorcé, 2015; Focás, 2014; Sunkel, 2006). Influenced by British Cultural Studies, a more focused attention to audiences' reading practices started developing during the 1980s, when a perspective that conceptualised audiences as critical and active took centre stage (Cabalin & Antezana, 2016; Escosteguy, 2001; Focás, 2014; Sunkel, 2006). In Chile, because of the absolute control that Pinochet's dictatorship (1973-1990) had over universities[5], this critical perspective was mostly developed in non-governmental organisations, such as the Centro de Indagación y Expresión Cultural y Artística (CENECA). From the 1990s onwards, with critical media studies' tepid return to universities, analyses of audience started expanding, albeit slowly (Lagos, 2018; Lozano & Frankenberg, 2010; Villarroel et al., 2011). During these years, the perspectives that were first developed over the past decade were settled: not only in Chile but also broadly in the region, audiences were then generally talked about as active and engaged in the process of decoding media messages; however, empirical studies remained limited. The different reviews conducted (Focás, 2014; Lozano & Frankenberg, 2010; Orozco, 2003) highlight Latin American scholars' tendency to produce analyses that, from textual readings, only speculate about members of the audience's interpretations. According to these reviews, this is principally due to practical

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[4] Over the last years, some researchers have broken this tendency. For instance, Amigo et al. (2014), Antezana et al. (2016), and Arriagada et al. (2014), who have studied Chilean audiences' general practices of TV use.

[5] About this, Lagos (2018) explains: "the development of the social sciences and the humanities in Chile was seriously hindered by the authoritarian regime (1973–1990). New authorities appointed by the dictatorship controlled the universities and fired faculty, students, and staff members, many of whom went into exile. They also cut budgets and closed programs and research centers [...] resulting in the destruction of critical research in the field" (p. 3256).

shortcomings; audience studies tend to be longer projects that implicate bigger research teams, which can hardly be conducted with the limited funding that is available in many research organisations of the region. Reviewers also highlight that, among the researchers that have indeed been able to take an empirical approach to the analysis of audiences, a critical and qualitative perspective has been prioritised, with quantitative and/or administrative approaches being rarely used. The latter perspectives have mostly been used in analyses conducted by TV stations' research units or, in Chile, by the Consejo Nacional de Televisión (Fuenzalida, 2006; Lagos, 2018).

Within this context, the published studies usually utilise categories such as gender, age, or class to highlight the specific ways in which members of the audience relate to and make sense of television and other forms of media. None of the published studies, however, has paid attention to how sexual identifications are integrated into and/or articulated by practices of media consumption. In fact, both generally in the region and specifically in Chile, the intersection between sexuality and media is one that has not been widely addressed in any of its possible interpretations. There are, in this sense, not many published studies that focus specifically on issues such as LGBTQ media representations or how, from an industry-related perspective, these images have been incorporated to the narratives[6].

This project, therefore, tries to cover this area, focusing on answering these two main questions:

- *What roles do the televisual representation of homosexuality have in the articulation of the sexualised identities of a sample of Chilean viewers who identify as gay or lesbian?*

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[6] Some exceptions to this are: La Pastina's (2002) and Nogueira Jones's (2013) analyses of LGBTQ representations on Brazilian *telenovelas*; Marentes's (2017) study of gay love in two Argentinian *telenovelas*; Rodrigues Lima and Cavalcanti's (2020) analysis of fan practices relating two fictional lesbian couples; Tate's (2011, 2013, 2014) analyses of the representation of gay men in Mexican, Peruvian, and Venezuelan *telenovelas*; and the 2015 report of the Observatorio Iberoamericano de Ficción Televisiva, OBITEL (Iberoamerican Fictional Television Observatory) (Vassallo De Lopes & Orozco, 2015a), in which some national chapters – although not the Chilean one – succinctly discuss LGBTQ representations in fictional programmes. In Chile, on the other hand, some exceptions are: Amigo et al. (2014), who make a succinct review of gay characters in six fictional programmes; Bravo et al. (2018), whose work mostly reflects on the absence of gay and lesbian people in non-fiction programmes; the edited collection *Medios y diversidades sexuales: política, cuerpo e identidad* (Dodds & Brossi, 2017), in which different forms of media are discussed; and two reviews conducted by the Consejo Nacional de Televisión (2015, 2016).

- *How are these roles classed, gendered, sexualised, and aged?*

In order to answer the above, the following sub-questions are explored:

- *How has homosexuality been represented on Chilean television since 1990?*
- *How do participants make sense of national TV representations of gays and lesbians?*
- *How do their interpretations relate to their sexuality, class, gender, and age positions?*
- *What kind of affects are mobilised through these images?*
- *What role does the immediate context in which they consume televisual images (for instance, with whom they watch them) have in their interpretations?*

As is revealed in these questions, I will focus only on Chilean programmes, since the majority of shows that are aired on national TV are locally produced. These productions, furthermore, tend to be favoured by audiences, having a stronger impact and enhanced popularity[7]. This is, in fact, typically the case in all Latin America, where audiences tend to prefer television programming from their own country and in their own languages (Sinclair, 2004; Sinclair & Straubhaar, 2013; Vassallo De Lopes & Orozco, 2015b).

I have decided to focus on the historical period that starts with the end of Pinochet's dictatorship in 1990, as this also implied a profound change over the ways in which the industry of television was structured in the country. One of the last laws "approved" after the end of the regime, in 1989, was the Law 18,838 – later slightly modified, producing the Law 19,131. This piece of legislation allowed for private companies to enter the television industry, which was until then reserved for universities. With this change, television in Chile would radically modify its logics, stimulating competition between channels through audience measurement. Upon the adoption of this model, university channels had to adapt their modes of functioning, which proved difficult to achieve. As a consequence, by 1993 the Universidad de Chile channel had become Chilevisión; a year later the university would lose its last ties to it, becoming a completely private station. The

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[7] Historically, in Chilean TV, there has also been a great presence of shows produced in other Latin American countries, particularly *telenovelas*; however, international programmes rarely have the same impact or popularity that Chileans do. Over the last couple of years, Turkish *telenovelas* have also become a constant presence on Chilean TV stations; this is, however, a very recent phenomenon.

other "big" university channel survived longer: *Canal 13* remained at least partially owned by the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile until 2017 when Andrónico Luksic, a Chilean billionaire, bought the last 33% of the station that the university owned. On the other hand, the country's "public station" – Televisión Nacional de Chile, TVN – is anything but public as it does not receive constant funding from the state but mainly from advertising, as any other commercial channel. In this context, the biggest five free-to-air TV stations in the country are: 1) Televisión Nacional de Chile, public television broadcaster that is owned by the State of Chile but is independently funded and operated; 2) Canal 13, part of by the Luksic Group, business consortium owned by the richest family of the country; 3) MEGA, part of the Bethia Group, owned by the Solari, one of the richest families of Chile; 4) Chilevisión, owned by the American conglomerate ViacomCBS; and 5) La Red, owned by Albavisión, a Mexican media conglomerate. These five stations compete in a system that "operates according to the laws of the capitalist market economy" (Ang, 1991, p. 21) where audiences can be offered to advertisers for revenue.

Likewise, it has been decided to focus only on the experiences of people who identify themselves as cisgender gays or lesbians because the media presence of the other identifications contained under the LGBTQ denomination is notably scarce in the case of Chilean television, making difficult to establish connections between representations and viewers' identity-making practices, which is this research's main aim. I then focus on the experiences of cisgender gays *and* lesbians, as these identifications, although clearly not equal, have followed in the country similar patterns in terms of televisual visibility and also broader social presence and political discussion. Likewise, as has been discussed, this research is strongly imbued with my own experience; I have thus decided to focus on those experiences that can potentially be closest to mine. As a cisgender gay man, I do not feel qualified or justified in speaking for or about the lives of trans, bisexual, and/or queer individuals, whose self-identifications have had a markedly different televisual and broader social presence in Chile.

Finally, this research focuses on programmes in which gay/lesbian figures and themes are more or less *openly* present; it is, in this sense, a review of "gay/lesbian television" and not necessarily of "queer television", understood as the one that, notwithstanding the identifications of the individuals depicted, "suggests a relational

understanding of (sexual) identity and/or [...] resists or subverts normative heterosexuality" (Chambers, 2009, p. 21).

Articulating Sexual Identifications in the Chilean Context

Becker (2006) argues that sexuality, as an identification, is a markedly complex and elusive categorisation that exists "somewhere between desire, behavior, and identity – between how people feel, what they do, and who they are" (p. 45). In this sense, it has been profusely argued (e.g., Ariza, 2018; Carrillo & Fontdevila, 2014; Corrales & Pecheny, 2010; Herrera, 2007; Insausti & Fernández, 2020; Jones, 2020; Meccia, 2006; Silva, 2017) that gay and lesbian sexual acts or aims do not *necessarily* imply the articulation of a gay/lesbian identification – or as Jenness (1992) succinctly puts it: "a 'doing' is not a 'being'" (p. 65). Sexuality, then, does not just allude to the repetition of a certain set of practices nor only to the attraction an individual feels for another, but also to the ways in which subjects *interpret* and *give meaning* to those experiences, producing as a result a way of understanding themselves. Following this differentiation, in this research I focus on the experiences of subjects who, regardless of their acts and feelings, have indeed developed an identification *as* gays or lesbians: at the time of the interviews, all participants considered themselves *to be* gays or lesbians, which furthermore allowed them to feel part of a community.

None of this, however, implies an understanding of sexual identities as "givens" that are somehow "discovered" by individuals to be then necessarily settled as essential parts of their subjectivities. As was already explained, I understand identity construction not as a "closed" project, but as a continuous process of identification in which individuals are not only positioned in respect to certain socially available categories, but also actively invest in these positionings. These belongings, in this sense, can thus be re-interpreted during any individual's lifetime, while also new categories are made socially possible. Indeed, building on the premises established by Foucault on *The History of Sexuality,* several authors (e.g., D'Emilio, 1993; Gamson, 2000; Halperin, 1990) have explained that the category "homosexual" itself is not a transhistorical position, but a discursive construction that was crystalised during the second half of the nineteenth century, making possible the "existence" of people who are identified and identify themselves as

such. In this manner, "being" gay or lesbian can be understood as a social experience: "it's neither a natural condition nor an individual peculiarity, but a collective phenomenon, a consequence of social belonging" (Halperin, 2014, p. 323) that is lived by many individuals – among them, the participants of this study – as an important part of their lives: a basis for pleasure, empowerment, and political organisation, and also as a form to articulate their feelings within social settings that refuse to acknowledge their full legitimacy.

Therefore, while I recognise and engage with Queer theory's "poststructuralist critique of the unified autonomous self" (Gamson, 2000, p. 348), according to which identities – including "sexual identities" – are multiple, unfixed, and fluid, I highlight the relevance of sexual categories in my participants' daily lives. In this way, I do not discuss sexual categories as *inherently* stable, but as identifications that *become* "stabilized through various social processes" (Gamson, 2000, p. 349) – my aim is then to explore the role that the televisual representation of homosexuality has had in how this process of stabilisation is lived by a group of individuals. I, then, do not focus on how a "true self" is revealed, but on the ways in which individuals, through the construction of narratives interpreting past and current televisual experiences, articulate a particular sense of (sexual) self, even if this positioning is potentially temporary and contingent. Through this strategy, I seek to highlight the particular experiences of my participants, for whom their identification as gays or lesbians is indeed a fundamental part of *who they understand themselves to be*.

As was already mentioned, the development of a gay/lesbian identification has also been discussed as a basis for resistance, activism, and political organisation (Gamson, 1995; Meccia, 2006; Plummer, 1992), which makes them particularly salient and important in contexts where non-heterosexual lives are markedly susceptible to different forms of precarity and marginalisation. One such context is Chile, where political gains regarding LGBTQ rights have been slow and hard to achieve. As will be recounted in detail below, the country decriminalised consensual same-sex sexual activity as late as 1999, enacted an anti-discrimination law only in 2012, allowed civil partnerships in 2015, and still does not recognise marriage equality[8]. This broader context of un-recognisability also translates into everyday experiences of stigmatisation. Barrientos and Bozon (2014), for

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[8] Advances particularly directed at other identifications contained under the LGBTQ denomination have been even slower. As Galaz et al. (2018) explain, for instance, trans and intersex people are still especially marginalised within the country's legislation.

instance, report that 75.9% of the gay men and lesbians who were part of their study's sample have experienced "perceived discrimination events" and 78.8%, "victimisation events". Among experiences of perceived discrimination, the most frequently reported ones are being segregated from a religious environment (36.9%), being discriminated against at school (33.3%), and being excluded by relatives (33%). Likewise, the most frequently reported victimisation events are mockery (64.6%) and insults or threats (63.3%), which regularly take place in public places (44.1%), the school (25%), and home (15.1%), and are thus mainly perpetrated by unknown individuals (38.5%), schoolmates (19.9%), and family members (10.9%). Similar experiences of both, institutional and individual discrimination, have been described in several other studies (Barrientos et al., 2010, 2014, 2016; Herrera, 2009; Herrera et al., 2018; Lyons, 2004) and reports published by LGBTQ organisations (Agrupacion Lésbica Rompiendo el Silencio, 2018; Movilh, 2011, 2013, 2019). Other studies (Cárdenas & Barrientos, 2008a, 2008b) have also described the existence of more "subtle" and less explicit ways in which sexual prejudice is expressed, revealing that, in Chile, gays and lesbians are continuously vulnerable to experience discrimination and violence in many and enduring ways.

At the same time, however, the social support for a number of "emblematic" LGBTQ political aims has increased significantly over the last decades. According to the *Encuesta Bicentenario* surveys, conducted by GfK and the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, the percentage of people who say that they are in favour or strongly in favour of marriage equality has risen from 32 to 61 percent between 2006 and 2019; likewise, the percentage of people who say that same-gender couples should be allowed to adopt children has risen from 33 to 48 percent between 2014 and 2019. An even stronger support is shown by *CADEM-Plaza Pública*, who in June 2021 reported that 74 per cent of the surveyed population was in favour of marriage equality and 65 per cent was in favour of same-gender couples adopting children.

This apparently conflicting data can be read as an indication that, in the country, only certain "ways" of being gay/lesbian, and their accompanying specific set of interests and goals, are the ones that have become socially acceptable over the last years. Several studies (Astudillo, 2015; Gómez & Barrientos, 2012; Herrera, 2009; Herrera et al., 2018)

indicate, for instance, that some features such as gender nonconformity[9] or a "too visible" non-heterosexuality are factors that "can greatly impact the likelihood of discrimination and/or victimization" (Barrientos & Bozon, 2014, p. 331), which leads gays and lesbians to have to be constantly and carefully negotiating the limits of their public visibility. Similar arguments can be made when analysing gay/lesbian identifications in intersection with other identity markers that are highly stigmatised within the Chilean context, such as a working-class belonging (Astudillo, 2015; United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2017).

In the country, then, political advancements and the mainstream social support for certain gay/lesbian rights are placed within an environment where homophobic violence, particularly in the public sphere, is a constant possibility. As will be explained in detail below, the reasons for this contradiction can be found, among other factors, in how rights and identifications have been mainstreamed by the country's bigger LGBTQ organisations, such as the *Movimiento de Integración y Liberación Homosexual* (Movilh) and *Fundación Iguales*, which have been built from a discourse of normalisation, equality, extension of rights, and integration into the political decision-making spheres (Garrido & Barrientos, 2018; Núñez, 2010; Obando, 2017; Robles, 2008; Simonetto, 2017; Sutherland, 2009). Through an emphasis on equality over difference and the possibility of a "normalised" homosexuality, these institutions have mostly followed an *homonormative* strategy "that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture" (Duggan, 2002, p. 180). As a result, just certain identities have been deemed "worthy" of rights and social respect, making homosexuality "acceptable" only when it is associated with certain values that are already defined as respectable, then further marginalising those who do not comply with these norms. *Some* gay and lesbian lives, in this sense, have been allowed to become freer and more open, which is of course a welcomed change, but this has not implied a destabilisation of the norms of heterosexuality, which continue to set clear division lines between those who are accepted and those who are not. Seidman's (2004) reflections about

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[9] Gender nonconformity is, according to Sandfort et al. (2007), "the expression of characteristics that are socially and culturally associated with the opposite gender" (p. 182).

the United States can then also be applied to Chile, as in this country too, "gay life today is defined by a contradiction: *many individuals can choose to live beyond the closet but they must still live and participate in a world where most institutions maintain heterosexual domination*" (p. 6).

This is an assemblage of historical conditions that have been identified and described in similar ways in many other national contexts (D'Emilio, 2000; Ghaziani, 2011; Rimmerman, 2000; Stein, 2012). In some of these contexts, attention has also been paid to how these possibilities are expressed and reproduced by media, questioning the ways in which the homonormative has been integrated into media representations. In general, it has been argued that after several decades in which gays and lesbians were routinely ridiculed and denigrated, depicted as victims, villains, or objects of laughter, current representations mainly focus on figures that reproduce normative values of "good citizenship" (i.e., family life, monogamy, participation in the neoliberal-capitalist labour market and consumption practices), conflating "acceptable" gay/lesbian identifications with privileged identity markers, such as whiteness, ablebodiedness, and an upper-class belonging (Jackson, 2012; Kagan, 2017; Kerrigan, 2021; Lovelock, 2019; Marshall, 2016; Seidman, 2004). These images have been interpreted as devices that offer a vision of homosexuality that is, above all, "very acceptable to heterosexual audiences" (Fejes, 2000, p. 115). As was already mentioned, this is an area that has not been profusely analysed in the case of Chilean TV, nor any other form of national media; however, the few studies that have briefly looked at it point in a direction similar to the international analyses. Amigo et al. (2014), for instance, show that the representation of gay men in national *telenovelas* has moved from a "traditional" paradigm (highly effeminate and isolated characters) to a "progressive" one (characters who fall in love and have meaningful relationships with others).

In general, these televisual and more broad social transformations constitute a highly contested area of debate within LGBTQ communities, with some praising the positive effects they can have on how gays and lesbians and also mainstream society understand non-heterosexual lives, and others who see them as normative constructions that leave intact the social bases from where stigmatisation and self-deprecation emerge. Among them, of course, many in the middle, experiencing these situations in multiple and changing ways that are shaped – although certainly not *determined* – by their many

identifications and social belongings. That is why from the origin of this project, I considered of the uppermost significance to have a sample of participants that was as varied as possible. In order to achieve this aim, I tried to have similar number of men and women, covering different age groups and class positions, as it has been shown that these are categories of particular salience for the structuring of gay/lesbian lives in Chile (Astudillo, 2015; Herrera et al., 2018; Lyons, 2004). In that way, thanks to the 28 individuals who participated in this study, I expect to be highlighting many of the differences and similarities that exist among the experiences of Chilean self-identified gays and lesbians.

None of this, of course, is to say that I intend to offer a *representative* view of how Chilean gays and lesbians relate to the televisual representation of homosexuality. This is a qualitative project that does not seek to make general claims regarding a population but to obtain insights into a phenomenon "through the experiences of those who have directly experienced the phenomenon, recognizing the value of participants' unique viewpoints that can only be fully understood within the context of their experience and worldview" (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018, pp. 807–808). I see qualitative research, in this sense, as a generative process that does not seek to discover generalisable certainties or truths but to actively produce meanings and interpretations about a certain phenomenon, which we then "present […] for others to consider" (A. Gray, 2003, p. 21). These productions are therefore partial, contextually shaped, and historically located, as they are inherently imbued with the researcher's subjectivity, which is seen as a resource and not a hindrance threatening the production of knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

This project has then to be understood as a venture that has been fundamentally shaped by my subjectivity in each one of its stages. As I already explained, I decided to question the conditions of the televisual visibility of homosexuality and its role in gay and lesbian viewers' experiences of identity construction not only because it interests me from an intellectual perspective, but also because it is something I am directly implicated in. I am, in this sense, not only a participant of the cultural world I am analysing but have indeed been constructed by that world. I, therefore, approached this project from the beginning with ideas regarding how I feel about Chilean TV representations of gays and lesbians and the role they have had in my own process of identification as a gay man. This is, of course, an inescapable part of the interpretations I am here putting forward; however, I have kept throughout the whole project a determination to showcase participants'

experiences and interpretations in an honest way, which have, furthermore, also altered the ways in which I understand myself and my own personal history.

Throughout the next chapters I then present my interpretations regarding what 28 participants kindly shared with me about the impact that the televisual representation of gay and lesbian lives has had on how they understand themselves as self-identifying gays or lesbians. With this, I seek to challenge the conditions of this visibility and explore its possibilities from the perspective of individuals who are deeply engaged with it. All this is ultimately guided by an intention to contribute to the production of conditions that make possible the existence of more diverse stories on TV, as this can potentially help disrupting the sexual norms that have placed non-heterosexual identifications in a marginalised social position. This project is, in this sense, an undeniable part of a "political commitment to promote radical social and political change that undermines oppression and marginalisation" (Nash, 2010, p. 131).

Structure of the Thesis

For answering the politically imbued research questions of this project, I have structured this thesis in eight chapters. In the first chapter, through an analysis of "emblematic" episodes and cases, I offer a reading of how gay and lesbian identifications and issues have been mainstreamed in Chile over the last decades. In this sense, the chapter proposes an interpretation of gay/lesbian recent cultural history that places the Chilean context at the centre, explaining how the particular post-dictatorial conditions of the country have shaped how homosexuality has been publicly framed and the ways in which a gay and lesbian culture has been articulated as a result. As Ang (1996) states, "an analysis of a text must be combined with an analysis of its social conditions of existence" (p. 16); Chapter 1 thus provides an analysis of these conditions for the Chilean context. Then, in the second chapter, the texts themselves are analysed. There, I offer an interpretation of the ways in which lesbian and gay lives have been made visible on Chilean television since 1990. For that, and inspired by Dyer's (2002b) ideas, I propose the existence of five "types" through which homosexuality has been made intelligible in local programmes. Seen together, these two chapters establish the bases of the social and televisual context in which the participants – and I – are located. Then, in the third chapter, I describe the

research methodology, explaining not only the procedure I have followed but also how my project engages with broader discussions regarding knowledge production and research ethics. Once these epistemological bases are laid, I start presenting my interpretations regarding the discussions I had with my interviewees. The first of these analytical chapters, Chapter 4, seeks to explain the ways in which participants relate to the televisual visibility of homosexuality, focusing on the effects they think these images have over how society "sees" them as self-identifying gays or lesbians. This impact is seen as mostly damaging or favourable depending on the specific characteristics of the representations. Chapter 5, therefore, focuses on how participants evaluate these images, proposing an explanation of the interpretative strategies that they utilise when reading gay/lesbian televisual images. Chapter 6 then offers a reading of what participants think is lacking in the televisual presence of homosexuality, which is images of "normal" gays and lesbians. In this chapter, therefore, I offer a focused analysis of the ways in which interviewees engage with this concept and the consequences this has for the structuring of their identifications. Chapter 7 further explores this issue, aiming to explain the role that the televisual images of homosexuality and the manners in which participants have interpreted them have had in their processes of identification as gays or lesbians. In this chapter, I focus particularly on participants' accounts regarding how this was lived during their childhood and adolescence, while their feelings of same-gender attraction were starting to be recognised, acknowledged, and integrated into their subjectivities. Finally, in Chapter 8, I pay attention to how participants experience the relationship between representations and lived experiences of identity construction in the present. After this, in the Conclusion, I highlight this study's main points, the answers I have provided for my research questions, and the possibilities it potentially opens up, both in terms of sociocultural implications and further theoretical and empirical analyses.

Chapter 1 "Decentering" Gay/Lesbian Rights: Chile in the Global and Latin American Context

Introduction

In April 1973, a group of approximately twenty-five working-class gay men held a demonstration against police repression in the centre of Santiago, the capital of Chile. Specifically, it took place in Plaza de Armas[10], in front of the Catholic cathedral and the political and administrative offices of the city. In Chile, it was the first of its kind: never before had a group of homosexuals gathered around their sexual identification and publicly protested against something that they conceived unfair. Robles (2008) explains that the demonstration was led by a group of poor young gay men that would use the square as a place to socialise while offering sexual services and begging for money. According to different accounts (Asalazar, 2017; Díez, 2015; Robles, 2008), the demonstration was organised rather spontaneously around the protesters' demand to live their lives as they wanted, without police violence. The choice of Plaza de Armas as the demonstration's scenario was not particularly well thought out, but only a consequence of the protesters' daily lives. However, the "coincidence" that the first recorded act of homosexual civil disobedience in Chile was in front of the buildings that represent the political and religious powers holds a noteworthy symbolic potential. The demonstration,

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[10] In English, "Weapons Square". It is the name for the main square in many Hispanic American cities. It usually was the first thing built by the Spanish *conquistadores* when founding a new town.

anyhow, was not only spontaneous, but also short and sharp; after a few minutes, it dissolved. The information, nonetheless, did get to journalists' ears. As a result, some of the most homophobic articles of the Chilean history were published in newspapers aligned with the left and the right, indistinguishably (Acevedo & Elgueta, 2012; Robles, 2008).

No other similar actions of protest occurred and no "homosexual movement" arose from this episode, notwithstanding the fact that it took place at a time when Chile was going through unprecedented social unrest and mass mobilisation. In 1970, Salvador Allende had become the first Marxist in the world to win the presidency of a country through open elections. His presidency represented an alarming threat to the bourgeoisie and the possibility of a fairer society for the working class. Sexual diversity, however, was not part of the Unidad Popular's[11] socialist government project, which deemed homosexuality a bourgeois deformation (Contardo, 2011; Fischer, 2016; Robles, 2008). After that, any possible attempt to form a "homosexual movement", create coalitions, or organise around revolutionary aims was violently cut off by the 1973 military coup led by Augusto Pinochet.

Other Latin American countries, such as Argentina and Mexico, also experienced intense social mobilisation during these years. In these nations, however, the environment of social unrest did engender forms of political organisation against sexual repression. In Argentina, for instance, an organised movement was already in place in 1967, when a group of 14 working-class gay men, the majority of them union leaders, founded Nuestro Mundo (Our World), Latin America's first gay rights group. In 1971, Nuestro Mundo merged with other organisations and a group of intellectuals to form the radical Frente de Liberación Homosexual, FLH (Argentine Homosexual Liberation Front) (Adam, 1994; S. Brown, 1999; Díez, 2015; Green, 1999). The newly formed group, among whose constituents were left-wing university students and anarchists – the majority of them men – worked to advance civil rights for the Argentine gay community and liberate them from police repression and social stigmatisation. Likewise, because of the political situation in the country, the FLH stressed broader changes, such as liberating

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[11] Unidad popular (Popular unity) was a left-wing political alliance formed by the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, and the Radical Party, among others. It stood behind the successful candidacy of Allende for the 1970 presidential election.

homosexuals from the authoritarian regime and imperialism (Díez, 2015; Encarnación, 2018).

As is known, the 1960s and the 1970s were decades generally marked by social unrest, not only in Latin America, but more broadly in the Western world. Within this environment, in June 1969 a part of the LGBTQ community of the United States – mainly black transvestites and other people of colour – joined the civil turbulences with a series of spontaneous and violent demonstrations against a police raid that took place at the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in New York City. The Stonewall riots are considered the most important event leading to Gay Liberation, a social movement that urged gays and lesbians to engage in radical direct action against discrimination and to "come out of the closet", stressing the importance of public gay pride to fight against social shame[12] (Adam, 1994; D'Emilio, 2000; Seidman, 2004; Stein, 2012).

Notwithstanding the importance of these events for shaping the modern fight for LGBTQ rights in the United States and other parts of the world, it would be a mistake to understand the Plaza de Armas demonstration as a direct consequence of what was happening in the Northern hemisphere. Without means of communication that would cover gay/lesbian stories or an organised national gay movement through which information could be disseminated, it is difficult to think of the demonstrators being even aware of Stonewall or its consequences. In fact, the protesters' main argument for demanding the police to stop repressing them was that homosexuality was a disease and not a crime, therefore something they could not control. According to Díez (2015), this is a good example of how disconnected they were from international ideas about homosexuality, for instance the liberationist discourse used by activists in the United States and the fact that the American Psychiatric Association (APA) had already declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder. In that sense, the manifestation in the centre of Santiago should rather be understood in the context of social unrest that

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[12] Before this, however, a gay/lesbian movement was already in place in the United States. Organisations such as the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis were founded during the 1950s as a response to the extremely repressive environment installed by the anticommunist campaign known as McCarthyism. During this period, the lives of government workers were carefully scrutinised, including homosexuality as one of the "corrupt" behaviours. This gay/lesbian movement – which has been called homophile – was mostly characterised by a low-profile accommodationist stand, thus notably different from Gay Liberation's approach (Adam, 1994; D'Emilio, 2000; Seidman, 2004; Stein, 2012).

characterised the 1960s and the first years of the next decade in the country and simply as a consequence of people being tired of being mistreated. The same principle holds for understanding the emergence of organised groups in other Latin American nations. In Argentina, for instance, the already mentioned Nuestro Mundo was founded following a radical political project in 1967, two years before the Stonewall riots and the alleged emergence of Gay Liberation.

Following Encarnación (2016), framing Stonewall/Gay Liberation as *the* phenomenon that produced the birth of organised homosexual activism in Latin America is misleading, as the most relevant issues that marked the creation of these organisations are linked to each country's national conditions of repression and violence against gays and lesbians. For understanding Stonewall's influence, then, Simonetto (2017) proposes a "dialectic hybridisation" that mixes local and international tendencies and places Stonewall as an event that, in some countries, strengthened already existent national wills and encouraged expectations of a sexual and social revolution. In the continent, therefore, values commonly associated with gay liberation in the Global North, such as challenging conventional sexual arrangements, were profoundly intertwined with local preoccupations, for instance the fight against repressive governments.

Stonewall's influence, however, is only one example of the ways in which advances in gay/lesbian rights in Latin America have been explained as consequences of events taking place in the Global North. Against these interpretations, Encarnación (2016) claims that, in order to analyse the gay/lesbian history of any Latin American country, a framing of "decentering" homosexual politics should be adopted. This means rejecting a centre-periphery dynamic that only understands gay rights in the "developing world" as consequences of the Western experience. According to this rationale, gay rights are spread from the United States and Europe to other parts of the world, where they are received by groups that sustain the same demands and use the same strategies as their "more developed" counterparts.

Notwithstanding the impact that international circumstances can have – and indeed have had – over the ways in which Latin American countries have treated homosexuality, this explanation is not all there is. It is a compelling but flawed approach to Latin America's gay rights advances that fails to understand the history of the continent. As a starting point, therefore, it is important to stress that struggles about gay and lesbian

rights in Latin America "are not a tropical or more sensual version of the American and European experience" (Encarnación, 2016, p. 5). The same principle holds for "gay culture" in Chile, Argentina, Venezuela, or any other Latin American nation. This, however, does not mean ignoring the existence of global trends that have been adapted to the specific realities of every country, but to 1) question the understanding that these trends' exclusive direction is North-South; 2) stress the South-South influences, particularly between Latin American nations; and principally 3) propose a gay/lesbian cultural history of a "developing" country that places the local context at the centre. Only in that way, it can be understood why nations that share similar histories – for instance, Chile and Argentina – have striking differences in terms of how homosexuality has been framed and how "quickly" advances have been achieved.

Over the last decades, the Chilean society has experienced deep transformations as to the ways in which homosexuality is treated in the country. The advances, however, have been slow and very hard to achieve. Chile is still far from a total state of equality in terms of rights and cases of discrimination and violence against gays and lesbians are reported regularly. Following these ideas, this chapter will be devoted to construct a cultural history of homosexuality in Chile, focusing on how it has been framed in the country over the last few decades and the ways in which a gay and lesbian culture has been negotiated as a result.

LGBTQ Organisations' Political Strategies: Legislation vs. Culture

During Pinochet's dictatorship (1973-1990), public political mobilisations were met with extremely violent repression and were thus scarce, particularly during the regime's first decade. Within this brutal environment of authoritarianism, citizens were discouraged from organising to advance social and political demands. Homosexual organisations were no exception of this: the establishment of any type of public political group was absolutely banned, forcing gays and lesbians to continue to live their lives as quietly as possible. During those years, therefore, all kinds of organisation had to occur in the private sphere. In this context, a handful of Catholic gay men founded in 1977 a group that was first called Betania and then Integración (Integration). Each week, the group would meet in a member's house where educational talks about homosexuality were held. Only members

or members' friends could attend these meetings, with the only condition of keeping them as strictly secret (Contardo, 2011; Robles, 2008; Simonetto, 2017). Integración, therefore, was not a group defined by political aims, but constructed privately around the members' Christian orientation and desire for social integration.

Other forms of gathering, nonetheless, did arise. As the government's neoliberal economic model took hold, the process of making homosexuality slightly less hidden was set in motion (Asalazar, 2017; Díez, 2015). From the last years of the 1970s, the regime "allowed" gays and lesbians to socialise in commercial establishments, such as bars and clubs. A milestone of this process was the opening of *Fausto*, the first gay club in Santiago, in August 1979. Homosexuality's movement from mainly private or clandestine[13] to timidly visible, therefore, was boosted by the capitalist drive to satisfy the need for recreational spaces. This tolerance, however, "was limited to social interaction in commercial establishments and constant police harassment did not abate" (Díez, 2015, p. 102). There, between neon lights and transformistas – local drag queens – gays and lesbians would spend the nights, dancing away the environment of police repression and strict curfews. According to Asalazar (2017), this type of socialisation established depoliticised models integrated into capitalist consumption flows in the Chilean gay community. Models that, up until this day, would maintain its validity. It is, however, also compelling to see these places of socialisation as spaces where social networks were being expanded and common experiences were being discovered, laying the groundwork for the emergence of a sense of community and the possibility of political organisation, though clandestine as a consequence of the regime's mighty repressive environment.

In the early 1980s, general social mobilisation raised again in the country as a consequence of economic crises. Massive demonstrations were held between 1983 and 1986 to protest against Pinochet's economic, political, and social policies. Because of the stagnant homophobic environment, however, gays and lesbians' organisation continued to be more private than public. An example of this is the founding of the lesbian feminist group Ayuquelén in 1983 (which means "joy of being" in mapudungun, language of the Mapuche people, the largest indigenous group in Chile). Although mostly organised

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[13] This period has been described by Asalazar (2017), who constructed a "geography" of the places where clandestine social and sexual encounters between men were held in Santiago during the 1950s and 1960s.

privately, Ayuquelén has been described as the first explicitly political homosexual group in Chilean history; organised, furthermore, following feminist aims. Through these women, new possibilities started appearing as available for gays and lesbians in the country in terms of their visibility and political commitment.

In general, gay and lesbian organisations in other Latin American nations came about as consequences of the end of repressive regimes during the 1980s. The dictatorship in Chile, although slightly weakened, was still in place while the Argentinean and Brazilian movements were reorganising. It was also still in place when, in August 1984, the death of Edmundo Rodríguez, who has been publicly identified as the first Chilean fatal victim of HIV/AIDS, was reported. With that, it was publicly disclosed a new phenomenon that would change public and private perceptions of homosexuality in the country. Specifically, according to Contardo (2011) and Pecheny (2010), HIV/AIDS is what made homosexuality widely visible, making discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation a topic of public discussion. Pinochet's regime reacted to the crisis not developing broad public health plans but treating HIV/AIDS as something that only affected homosexuals and that, therefore, could be controlled through their surveillance. As a consequence, "raids on gay bars and clubs intensified with the apparent intention of stopping the spread of the disease through the identification and isolation of carriers of the virus" (Díez, 2015, p. 103). As an effect of the regime's inertia, gay men started organising for the first time in a public manner, propelling homosexuality into the social debate: in 1987, the Corporación Chilena de Prevención del SIDA (Chilean Corporation for AIDS Prevention) was founded with the purpose of carrying out prevention campaigns and giving basic services to people living with HIV[14] (Díez, 2015; Donoso & Robles, 2015).

While the Corporación Chilena de Prevención del SIDA focused its restless endeavours at the grassroots level, keeping a low-profile style, others started making homosexuality visible in an impactful manner, shaking the conservative political establishment and the country's general repressive environment. In 1987, the writer Pedro Lemebel and the artist Francisco Casas created the artistic duet Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis (The Mares of the Apocalypse), whose name mixes the Four Horsemen of the

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[14] Similar situations have been described in other countries, where the social response to HIV/AIDS led "to the growth of new social institutions and to variations in the identities of the gay worlds" (Adam, 1992, p. 175).

Apocalypse, part of the Bible's New Testament, and the word *yegua*, which means "mare" and, in Chile, is used for referring to women and gay men in a degrading manner. This performance duo started intervening all types of events, making surprise and provocative entrances that positioned them as one of the most important countercultural phenomena in Chilean history (Contardo, 2011; Obando, 2017; Robles, 2008; Simonetto, 2017; Sutherland, 2009). In general, their public appearances were directed at queering the leftist political and cultural discourses that were fighting against the dictatorship, while making sexually dissident identities visible.

During those years, however, the Chilean political reality was rapidly changing; particularly after October 1988, when the population decided, via referendum, that Pinochet's ruling days were over. At this point, the social debate about HIV/AIDS, the disruptive strategies used by Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis, and the grassroots level work done by the Corporación Chilena de Prevención del SIDA and Ayuquelén had been mildly successful in establishing homosexuality as a topic of public discussion. The great majority of gays and lesbians, however, were still living their lives secretly, as public homosexuality continued to be equal to the possibility of losing one's family and job. This, furthermore, in a context where gays and lesbians were *de facto* criminals, as the Penal Code's article 365, which penalised same-sex consensual sexual relations, was in full force. With the return to democracy, however, new political organisations emerged and the fight for civil rights was set in motion.

On June 28, 1991, day of the Stonewall riots anniversary and only a year into Patricio Aylwin's presidency (1990-1994), the Corporación Chilena de Prevención del SIDA held a meeting to discuss the possibility of starting workshops about civil rights. The majority of those who attended the meeting were former members of the Communist Party and/or leaders of social organisations. All of them were united by their homosexuality and their active role in fighting against Pinochet's dictatorship (Díez, 2015; Donoso & Robles, 2015; Robles, 2008). Although the meeting was successful in reintroducing the will to organise around common aims, the "participants could not agree on much and a number of them were expelled from the Corporation" (Díez, 2015, p. 103), because its leaders rejected the existence of an organisation focused on civil rights "inside" of an organisation whose main aim continued to be the wellbeing of people living with HIV. As a result, the expelled members formed a new organisation: the Movimiento de Liberación Homosexual, Movilh

(Movement for Homosexual Liberation). Movilh, then, emerged as a result of the political transition that the country was going through (Sutherland, 2009), placing homosexual demands in the complex context of negotiations between the new civilian government and the still mighty military world.

During post-dictatorship Chile's initial years, social erosions that were always on the verge of making themselves visible and turning into potentially dangerous ruptures were persistently restrained, laying the groundwork of a society that was being built over a discourse of consensus and apparent harmony. Specifically, this consensus was associated with forgetting; debates over human rights violations were toned down, arguing that these discussions could destabilise the country and endanger its democratic system and its future. Justice could only be achieved "as far as possible", as President Aylwin infamously said[15]. Accepting this prospect, then, implied taking part in a deal: stability had to be exchanged by silence (Bengoa, 2009; Moulian, 1997). The restoration of civilian rule, therefore, "saw the emergence of a particular type of politics in which the political élites sought policy consensus and the demobilization of society in order to prevent a reversal to authoritarianism" (Díez, 2015, pp. 62–63). Aylwin's administration – and those after him – concentrated on limiting "disruptive" debates and demobilising a civil society that was already discouraged by the remembrance of the dictatorship's brutality. A culture of fear could be felt across the country, as the possibility of dissenting was always met by the threat of the military rule taking over again.

Under these circumstances, placing sexual rights and homosexuality in the national public discussion was extremely difficult (Garrido & Barrientos, 2018), as it was generally considered a topic that had to be avoided for being disruptive and, furthermore, only important for a minority. Chile was still under the authority of conservative right-wing groups and the Army, although now in non-direct ways. Likewise, those who assumed the government in 1990 were part of a profoundly conservative culture that did not include gays and lesbians' wellbeing as part of their political socio-democratic project (Contardo, 2011; Encarnación, 2020). For the mainstream public opinion, therefore, homosexuality continued to be something predominantly invisible; or, when visible, completely abject.

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[15] In Spanish, he said "justicia en la medida de lo posible".

Within this context, in 1993 Aylwin introduced to Congress a series of reforms to modernise laws dealing with sexual offences. The proposal, however, did not include a reform to the Penal Code's article 365, which criminalised same-sex consensual sexual activity. Movilh activists, nonetheless, saw this as an opportunity to place their first political demand: the decriminalisation of same-sex relations. From the beginning, furthermore, this was "the only area in which activists sensed change would be possible given that Chile stood out within a regional context on this front" (Díez, 2015, p. 107), as it was one of the few countries in Latin America that still considered same-sex consensual sexual relations to be a crime[16]. Beyond its main goal, this debate transformed in the perfect scenario for broader public discussions about homosexuality and its place in the national society.

The actual discussion in Congress, however, proved to be extremely difficult. After the end of the dictatorship, the negotiation of the political transition included the establishment of a set of "authoritarian enclaves" that extended military control, under the form of a "protected democracy". One of the most enduring consequences of this was the adoption of a unique electoral system – called "sistema binominal" – that assured an overrepresentation of conservative right-wing forces in Congress and introduced the need to form coalitions in order to even have the possibility to have a place in the legislative power. This system regulated the existence of a less-fragmented and less-polarised political environment that forced parties to focus on "common" goals. As a result, two big coalitions were established: 1) the Alianza (Alliance), formed by the right, free-market oriented Renovación Nacional (National Renovation) and the hard-line, supportive of Pinochet Unión Demócrata Independiente (Independent Democratic Union); and 2) the Concertación (Coalition), formed by the Socialist Party, the Radical Party, and the Christian Democrats, among other groups. While the firsts were strong opponents of civil rights for gays and lesbians, the second held among them a few supporters, although not among the Christian Democrats, who were fierce adversaries of any "moral" change in the country. President Aylwin was, in fact, a member of this party and, consequently, his

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[16] Most Latin American countries decriminalised homosexuality during the nineteenth century or the first decades of the twentieth century. This was a consequence of the fact that the Napoleonic Civil Code of 1804, which did not criminalised homosexuality, was used as inspiration for the construction of penal and civil codes after each country's independence from Spain. Chile, on the other hand, continued using the Spanish model, which was highly punitive (Díez, 2015; Encarnación, 2016).

government did not do anything to advance the debate about the decriminalisation of same-sex relations[17].

While Aylwin's project did not include a reform to article 365, the socialist Deputy Armando Arancibia put forward a proposal to derogate it while the reforms were being discussed. Arancibia's proposal was, of course, fiercely opposed by the conservative parties, arguing that homosexuality was immoral and unnatural and that, therefore, it should be punished. Others feared that this change could be understood as only the beginning of a rapid set of reforms that would eventually lead to gay marriage and that, in order to prevent that, it should be stopped (Díez, 2015). The result of this debate was a compromise: the final proposal stated that same-sex consensual sexual activities would only be decriminalised for individuals who were 18 years old or older – opposed-sex sexual activities, on the other hand, could be legally consented at 16. After months of discussion, this proposal was voted favourably in November 1998, keeping the difference in the age of consent[18]. The project was finally promulgated in July 1999 by President Eduardo Frei (1994-2000).

Although this was, of course, an historic achievement, it did not necessarily mean an immediate improvement in gays and lesbians' everyday wellbeing (Garrido & Barrientos, 2018). Truth is, not many of them were being jailed because of their sexual intimate activities, so they just continued with their lives. This, furthermore, did not alter greatly the ways in which homosexuality was publicly framed, as it continued to be rejected or avoided by the majority of the population. Homosexual activists, on the other hand, failed to seize this opportunity in order to push for other rights or to force a more permanent and stronger national debate around homosexuality (Díez, 2015). This, in part, is explained by the already mentioned post-dictatorship environment of consensual politics and the government's interest in constraining divisive discussions, which is illustrated by Movilh's failure to build stable coalitions with other groups. Left-wing

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[17] In the Chilean political system, the Executive has the power to advance discussions in Congress, by designating that some projects are more important or urgent than others.

[18] This difference is still in place, even after being criticised by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. In 2010, after being required by Movilh, the Constitutional Tribunal analysed the article and sentenced that 1) it does not contradict the constitutional principle of equality under the law and 2) it is not applicable to lesbians, which has stirred discussions about the concept of "lesbian sex" that sustained this decision. This article, however, still constitutes one of the many examples of homophobic legislation in the national system.

parties, for instance, decided to avoid polarising issues that "only mattered" to a small constituency in order to keep a harmonious relationship with their coalition companions. Feminist organisations, on the other hand, were partly co-opted by the government through the creation of the Servicio Nacional de la Mujer, SERNAM (National Service for Women), a service with ministerial rank that partially diluted "the network formed by feminists in the 1980s" (Núñez, 2010, p. 383).

Beyond this, however, another important reason was Movilh's internal dynamics. In 1995, while the decriminalisation of homosexuality was being discussed in Congress, the group experienced a crisis that ended up with several of its members creating a new organisation. As Aylwin's and Frei's governments did not advance greatly in their policies dealing with HIV/AIDS, several Movilh activists decided to create an internal commission devoted to demand health policies and support those who were more vulnerable to become infected: transvestites, gay men, and sex workers. Other members of the organisation, however, believed that associating these demands with the pursuit of civil rights would give the whole movement a negative public image that equated homosexuality with AIDS. The public presence of transvestites and people living with HIV inside of the organisation was strongly rejected by Movilh's more conservative sector, creating a strong division between those who supported the AIDS commission and those who did not. In the end, the position of the latter was stronger, and the members of the commission ended up expelled from the organisation. Months later, they formed Lambda Chile, a group devoted to demand better public policies dealing with HIV/AIDS (Díez, 2015; Donoso & Robles, 2015; Garrido & Barrientos, 2018; Obando, 2017; Robles, 2008). In 1998, another crisis questioning the organisation's perspective hit Movilh. All these internal conflicts weakened the organisation's lobbying endeavours, explaining in part why the modification of article 365 took so long to pass. As a result of this last crisis, Movilh dissolved. Some of its members merged with other groups, such as Lambda Chile and the Coordinadora Lésbica (Lesbian Coordination), creating the Movimiento Unificado de Minorías Sexuales, MUMS (Unified Movement of Sexual Minorities).

Movilh, on the other hand, emerged again a few months later, being reorganised by one of its former more conservative members, Rolando Jiménez. The group, however, made a slight change in its name, which allowed them to keep the already well-known acronym: from Movement for Homosexual Liberation to Movement for Homosexual

Liberation and Integration. The inclusion of this word says a lot about the organisation's new direction. The "new" Movilh believed that the fight for gay rights was a stand-alone pursuit that did not have to be associated with other social demands. They, furthermore, started concentrating on issues affecting specifically gay men, overlooking other needs, including those of lesbians. This stance has been understood as a strategy to "normalise" homosexuality, seeking integration into the socio-political system and not questioning the public moral values. The idea was to get a bigger and better public visibility and, in order to achieve that, the most abject members of the group – effeminate gays, butch lesbians, transvestites, people living with HIV – had to be excluded. This produced the foregrounding of LGBTQ identities that were considered "acceptable" or "appropriate", as they borrowed the hegemonic social values of the Chilean society. In that way, while they were advocating for the extension of certain rights, they were doing it from a perspective that reinforced hegemonic conservative norms. Movilh activists, therefore, changed their strategies and focused on direct dialogue with political parties, integrating themselves into the power decision-making spheres[19] (Garrido & Barrientos, 2018; Núñez, 2010; Obando, 2017; Sutherland, 2009). Although this change has been criticised, because it implied the acceptance of the system's heterosexist schemes, it has had the advantage of placing "important demands of sexual diversity on legislative and governmental agendas" (Núñez, 2010, p. 386).

Analysing shared domestic factors among Latin American nations, Encarnación (2016) explains that advances in gay rights in the region could be explained as consequences of: 1) modernising processes and their consequent increased fulfilment of basic material needs, which have allowed societies to start worrying about "postmaterialist concerns", such as environmentalism and the civil rights of minorities (Corrales & Pecheny, 2010; Díez, 2015); 2) the decline in religiosity that has been observed along with the advancement of gay rights; 3) the transformation of the constitutional landscape that was brought about by the fall of totalitarian regimes, including now ideas about equality

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[19] The emergence of this type of organisations has been identified in many other parts of the world. In the United States, for instance, most of the organisations that have emerged since the late 1980s have been characterised as guided by the conviction that rights are gained by demonstrating gays and lesbians' similarity with heterosexuals, focusing on all that "unites us", and thus asking – through institutional mechanisms – for integration into already-existent institutions (D'Emilio, 2000; Gamson, 1995; Ghaziani, 2011; Halperin, 2014; Rimmerman, 2000; Seidman, 2004).

under the law; and 4) the ascent to power of left-wing governments that have embraced gay rights, slowly leaving behind the historical homophobia of the Latin American left (Corrales & Pecheny, 2010), such as the Partido dos Trabalhadores (Worker's Party) in Brazil, the Kirchners in Argentina, Frente Amplio (Broad Front) in Uruguay, and Nueva Mayoría (New Majority) in Chile.

Although a compelling explanation, none of these factors alone can fully justify each country's changes in terms of the public treatment of homosexuality and the achievement of civil rights. Therefore, an analysis of each one of them must be intertwined with an assessment of the organisations that have emerged in each nation and an evaluation of other local socio-political variables. In that way, according to Díez (2015), the successful achievement of policy variance should be explained through a combination of three variables: 1) activists' willingness and capacity to form coalitions with state and non-state allies, like political parties (Corrales & Pecheny, 2010) or feminist organisations (Espinosa, 2010; Xie & Corrales, 2010), which can translate into mutual support within a wider agenda of "equal rights for all" (Tatchell, 1992); 2) the country's institutional characteristics, that conditions organisations' capacity to install their claims on governments' agendas and access to policy-making procedures; and 3) activists' ability to frame their demands in ways that make sense within larger social debates, like human rights discourses or broader processes of democratisation.

The analysis of all these factors allows for the identification of certain circumstances that have blocked progress in Chile. While the country's economic figures have placed it as one of the most prosperous nations in Latin America[20], inequality is substantial and violently evident every day[21] (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2017), which makes harder to find space for "postmaterialist concerns". Likewise, the local left was slow in incorporating gay rights into their platforms, which established a predominantly homophobic political class across the whole spectrum[22] (Somma et al., 2020); they are, furthermore, hard to reach, as a consequence of the already mentioned

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[20] Chile has the fifth biggest Gross domestic product and the biggest Gross domestic product per capita of the region, according to the International Monetary Fund (2020). Likewise, it is considered the most competitive country of the region by the World Economic Forum (2019).

[21] Chile is placed 136 (out of 159 countries) in terms of its Gini coefficient, which measures income or wealth equal distribution. Inequality has been singled out as one of the main factors that ignited the massive protests that took place in the country between 2019 and 2020.

[22] As will be explained below, this has changed over the last decade.

institutional tendency towards political consensus. Also, beyond some modifications, the constitution that was enacted by Pinochet in 1980 is still in force[23]. The only factor that is evidently present is the decline in religiosity, which has been steady over the last years[24]. Within this context, the biggest national LGBTQ organisations have failed to establish strong alliances with other groups (Somma et al., 2020). Even alliances with feminist organisations, which have proven to be central in countries such as Ecuador (Xie & Corrales, 2010) or Mexico (Díez, 2015), have not been stable. All this, in part as a consequence of the stubborn position of some of the leaders (Robles, 2008), who have continued framing gay rights in a unidimensional way, disregarding gender, class, or ethnic discussions.

Consequently, assimilative politics, which are directed at gaining state recognition and securing access into heteronormative institutions through the possibility of a "normalised" homosexuality, have been foregrounded by the major LGBTQ organisations, particularly Movilh and others that have appeared later, as will be recounted below. In this sense, these organisations' approach can be read through the concept of *homonormativity* (Duggan, 2002), which, as already explained, refers to "the assimilation of heteronormative values and practices in LGBT culture and identities" (D. Richardson, 2018, p. 87). Within homonormative politics, then, the heteronormative values of dominant groups are reproduced through LGBTQ organisations' and individuals' deployment of concepts such as "equality", "normality", and "freedom" for framing their demand for "formal access to a few conservatizing institutions" (Duggan, 2002, p. 190).

In Chile, the advancements produced as a consequence of these strategies have taken place in a context where homophobic violence is still experienced constantly by gays and lesbians who live in a contradictory environment that combines periodic achievement of rights with the necessity to "tone down" the gay in order to avoid homophobic attacks. Homonormative strategies have contributed to the production of an acceptability that only "tolerates" homosexuality as long as it does not deviate from other

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[23] One of the achievements of the 2019-2020 wave of social unrest was the agreement to hold a national referendum to consult voters if they wanted a new constitution. On October 25, 2020, 78.28% of Chileans voted in favour of a new constitution, which is currently being written by a Constitutional Convention.

[24] For instance, surveys conducted by GfK and the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile show that between 2006 and 2019, the percentage of the population that trusts the Catholic church has fallen from 58 to 26 percent among self-identified Catholics and from 11 to 2 percent among non-Catholics.

social norms. These political strategies have then deepened the incoherence between the achievement of policy variance and the production of deep social changes as to the ways in which homosexuality is treated in the country.

According to Encarnación (2011), the fact that legislative progresses have not always been accompanied by social changes is also the case in other Latin American nations. The many achievements that have characterised the LGBTQ movement in the region, therefore, should be understood as political victories rather than as consequences of a deep social transformation. Although law reform is a central precondition for gays and lesbians' wellbeing and proper exercise of citizenship, it does not necessarily mean social respect, as *political* change does not produce immediate *cultural* change (Rimmerman, 2000; Tatchell, 1992). This has made some critics question whether instead of lobbying for changing laws, would it not be "far better to change people's opinions so that the law must follow suit?" (Carter, 1992, p. 225). As a consequence of policy changes being attained without the establishment of deep social transformations, gay rights remain in a vulnerable status that places them as continually open to reversal or backlash. In many countries, this backlash has taken the most brutal form: "rising anti-gay violence in the midst of a gay-rights boom" (Encarnación, 2011, p. 106). Because of this context of stagnant stigmatisation of homosexuality, gays and lesbians still need to monitor the limits of their public visibility, being regularly forced to live reserved or discrete lives, notwithstanding the legal progresses achieved.

The same has happened in Chile, where advances have been accompanied by a permanent environment of possible violence. The reasons for this incoherence can be found, among other institutional factors – such as the inflexibility of the national political system – in the ways in which gay rights have been negotiated by LGBTQ organisations. As has been already explained, the attainment of a "positive" public status has implied the sanitisation of homosexual identities, interests, and demands. As a consequence, only certain identities have been deemed "worthy" of rights. In other words: the "inclusion" has not worked for all, making homosexuality "acceptable" only in certain circumstances and therefore hardly achieving a strong social change that would imply the inclusion of *all* homosexuali*ties* into *all* social spheres.

Negotiating Homophobia: the Construction of "the Victim"

After two Christian Democrat presidents, the election of the Socialist Ricardo Lagos (2000-2006) provided a new context in which the achievement of "morally liberal" legislation was a more plausible possibility. In this context, in 2005, after numerous meetings with representatives of several organisations – among them Movilh and MUMS – his government decided to introduce to Congress an antidiscrimination law, which produced a passionate debate that focused especially on the protection of individuals discriminated because of their gender identity or sexual orientation. During the years of discussion, these articles were repeatedly removed and reintroduced to the project, as a consequence of the opposition led by conservative parties and religious groups and the support provided by several Deputies and Senators and the National Service for Women.

The discussion, however, went beyond Congress' walls, as it placed the issue of homosexual rights solidly on the media and public agenda. The debate even took a central role during the 2005 presidential elections, when Michelle Bachelet "became the first presidential candidate in Chile to commit herself to fighting discrimination against sexual minorities" (Díez, 2015, p. 216). This support forced members of her coalition to weaken their opposition to the law. Truth is, despite her apparent commitment to the protection of discriminated groups, the project did not advance greatly during Bachelet's first presidency (2006-2010), due to the fierce opposition from conservative members of Congress, the internal hostility articulated from certain Ministries, and the emergence of several social mobilisations that put her government and Chile's consensual politics in crisis.

Notwithstanding legislative inertia, during these years homosexual rights were placed on the public agenda as a result of the unveiling of several cases of discrimination that revealed what it was like to be gay or lesbian in Chile. Despite efforts to socialise homosexuality through identities and expressions that could be accepted by mainstream society, gays and lesbians – particularly, although not exclusively, those who would not fit into those acceptable identities – were subjected to homophobic violence on an everyday basis. Those who got more public attention, however, were the cases starred by individuals who would get closer to the "normal" narrative; they would have the prime "capacity" of

inhabiting the role of victim, overlooking the continuous acts of violence lived by transvestites and poor or gender nonconforming gays and lesbians.

In 2003, for instance, a case that moved public opinion was unveiled, producing debates about gays and lesbians' experiences of discrimination and right to form a family. This was the case of the Judge Karen Atala, who was fighting for her daughters' tuition after being sued by her husband under the argument that her lesbianism made her unfit to be a mother. In what was considered a tremendous win for gays and lesbians, the Villarrica[25] Court gave her the tuition of her daughters, arguing that a mother's sexual orientation was not an impediment for the development of a responsible maternity. This sentence was backed by the Temuco[26] Court of Appeal but finally overruled by the Supreme Court in a homophobic ruling that stated that Atala's lesbianism and the fact that she was living with her partner meant that she was putting her daughters' wellbeing aside. Likewise, the Court argued that, for the girls, living with her lesbian mother and her partner would cause pernicious effects that would produce a confusion in terms of sexual roles. This constituted a risky situation that had to be avoided in order to secure the girls' proper development. As a consequence of this prejudiced decision, which denied rights for gay and lesbian parents, Atala sued the Chilean state before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), arguing that the state had violated Article 24 of the American Convention on Human Rights, concerning equal protection. The Commission ruled that the case was admissible, becoming the first time that the IACHR had taken an LGBTQ rights case. After that, in 2009, the Commission produced a series of recommendations that the Chilean state had to follow in order to repair the damage caused to Atala and avoid similar cases in the future; among this, the enactment of antidiscrimination legislation. The Chilean state, however, was incapable of following IACHR's observations. As a consequence of this, the Commission sued the Chilean state before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. In February 2012, the Court found the Chilean state guilty of discrimination, in a decision that exposed the country's institutional homophobia internationally. As Diez (2015) explains:

> A country often used by many as the socioeconomic model of development that Latin Americans should emulate found itself exposed internationally for its failure, twenty

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[25] A city in Southern Chile, where Atala lived.
[26] Another city in Southern Chile. It is the capital of the region where Villarrica is.

years after the end of a brutal dictatorship that had committed gross human rights atrocities, to extend basic rights protections to one of the most vulnerable sectors of its society (pp. 1-2).

After this result, Atala's case became a milestone in the fight for LGBTQ rights in Chile, revealing how ingrained discrimination was in different areas of the national system; but also showing how the constant and stubborn pushing could produce changes.

Although Atala's case was undeniably important for the positioning of LGBTQ rights on the public agenda and consequently opening up the possibility for policy change, it is clear that this type of long processes can only be carried out by people who hold certain privileges; class privileges, for instance. Their involvement, however, has been necessary for a political environment that tends to move faster when the affected holds a position of respectability, particularly because of their class belonging, but also as a consequence of any other feature that puts them in the position of a "good" citizen. The effect is exacerbated when these problems resonate within broad "positive" values, such as maternity. When these conditions are met, a shaking of the public opinion is produced, forcing decision making instances to work. In other words, laws and Executive orders, for instance, move faster when they are boosted by a case that, because of its characteristics, breaks the private frontier and becomes a matter of public discussion. This has had, however, the capacity to destabilise the positions against LGBTQ rights achieved as a result of the consensual style of the Chilean democratic system.

It is, therefore, not surprising that the approval of the antidiscrimination law was the result of a scandalous case of violence that disturbed the public opinion. This case, however, happened in a new context for the Chilean society. In 2009, Sebastián Piñera was elected president (2010-2014), becoming the first right-wing president since the end of Pinochet's dictatorship. His election, and the campaign that preceded it, shook the political establishment, as it altered parties' interests and took Concertación away from a position that, until that point, was taken for granted. In terms of gay rights, it was the first time that the two candidates supported by the biggest coalitions – Piñera and the former president Eduardo Frei – explicitly supported an antidiscrimination law and the regulation of civil partnerships. Piñera's support was the most surprising, as his candidacy was backed by two parties that had historically shown explicit homophobic stances. Gay

rights were, at this point, solidly placed on the public agenda; the "progressive" votes, therefore, were actively sought after, despite personal or parties' positions.

Once in power, Piñera and his government did give some signals of openness; however, material support remained hard to achieve. His election, nonetheless, had a big impact over Concertación, forcing them to move into more progressive ideas. As a consequence, gay and lesbian organisations found new ways to communicate directly with the power spheres, particularly in Congress. During 2011, therefore, the legislative debate about the antidiscrimination law started moving faster, thanks to the support given by specific members of the government and several Deputies and Senators. Homophobic representatives, the majority of them members of Piñera's coalition, kept trying to remove "sexual orientation" as one of the protected categories; their attempts, however, were defeated time after time.

These debates were taking place when, in March 2012, it was informed that Daniel Zamudio, a young gay man, had been violently beaten by a group of men in a park in the centre of Santiago. He was then taken to a hospital where he was diagnosed with multiple fractures and a traumatic brain injury; his body had been burnt with cigarettes and marked with swastika-like signs. His torturers were detained a few days later: four men that identified themselves as neo-Nazis. Daniel died on March 27, after agonising for 24 days. During this whole time, media followed the case thoroughly, framing Daniel as a victim of the homophobic society that Chile was. The same narrative was used by LGBTQ organisations. After announcing Daniel's death, Jaime Parada, a Movilh's spokesperson stated: "[Daniel] is a victim of intolerance, homophobia, and hate. He is our martyr; a martyr of the sexual minorities"[27] (Agüero et al., 2012). President Piñera used Twitter to state his position and expressed: "the brutal and cowardly aggression of Daniel Zamudio has hurt not only his family but also all the people of good will [...] His death will not go unpunished" (Álvarez, 2012). No mention to the homophobia that caused the aggression was made. Despite the President's omission, Daniel's death mobilised Chilean society more broadly in support of protection for the LGBTQ communities and accelerated political endorsement (Cabello, 2017). As a consequence of the increasing public support to the law that was produced by Daniel's death, Piñera met with Movilh activists and

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[27] This and all translations from Spanish were made by the author.

Daniel's family and mandated Congress to discuss it immediately. The law, popularly called "Zamudio Law", was then swiftly debated and approved, with opponents silenced by the understanding that their position was absolutely unpopular. Its enactment provided judicial tools to better face abuse caused by discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, among several other protected categories. The law was celebrated by society at large; according to a survey conducted by Radio Cooperativa/Imaginacción in 2012, 40.1% of the population expressed that the approval of the law was the best news of the year.

Daniel was, of course, not the first fatal victim as a result of homophobia in the country. Before him, several transvestites, sexual workers, and other "abject subjects" had been killed. Daniel, however, and the photos of him that the media insistently used for illustrating his case – that showed him as a sweet and happy young man – made society realised that fatal homophobia was not something suffered only by those undesirable "others", but also by young men and women that could be our sons, daughters, friends; those close to our lives. He became, therefore, a "grievable" victim (Butler, 2018); a "good" person whose future had been unjustly taken away from him. Politicians of the whole spectrum, LGBTQ organisations, and the news media constructed him as someone who "deserved" to be mourned: a diligent happy young man, member of a united and hard-working family, a worthy member of society, a person of "good will" as Piñera stated on Twitter.

That position is understandable: as soon as it was known that he was passed out drunk in the park the night of the attack and that his family was less "united" and "loving" than depicted, some voices were raised arguing that he had a share of responsibility in what happened, for not taking good care of himself. The "sanitised" version of him that was insistently portrayed should then be understood as a strategy for protecting his story from these unfair critics. It also, however, had the consequence of reproducing the idea of an "ideal victim", making homophobia despicable only in those cases where the victim represents values that are regarded positively by mainstream society. Both his and Atala's case reveal the ways in which homophobia has been negotiated in the country: only as a problem in the specific cases where the victim is/was or can be portrayed as a fairly "good member" of our society and not as a structural condition that affects all gays and lesbians – although in different ways depending on our social belongings – and that, therefore,

should be loathed notwithstanding the characteristics of the affected individual. Homophobia, in sum, is treated as a "case by case" problem and not as a broad social condition that permeates all our institutions – including the school and the family – and that, consequently, has constant and multiple effects on our daily lives.

The State's New Ways of Handling Gay/Lesbian Rights

No other topic has agitated the discussion about gay/lesbian rights like the debates about the state's recognition of same-gender partnerships. In Chile, this debate started formally around the same time that the discussion about antidiscrimination legislation. In fact, the first project for the regulation of same-gender unions was called "Project for the Promotion of Non-Discrimination and Civil Union Contract between Persons of the Same Sex"[28]. Inspired by the adoption of same-gender legal unions in Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina, in 2002[29], the project was unveiled in June 2003 by Movilh and the Socialist Deputy María Antonieta Saa. It was then introduced to Congress with the backing of 18 Deputies and Senators. Beyond this, however, the project did not get a lot of support or promotion. In March 2004, in a television interview, President Lagos stated that Chile was "not ready" to allow legal same-gender unions; that discussion had to be had in the future. Homosexuality still was one of these polemic – and also "unimportant" – topics that had to be avoided in order to maintain the consensus and the apparently harmonious political environment. His government, therefore, did not do anything for the project to advance in Congress.

The reality, however, changed rather quickly; in the 2005 presidential elections, all candidates revealed that they were open to discuss some sort of legal unions for same-gender couples, as long as marriage remained a purely heterosexual institution. The majority of them, however, did not reveal precise strategies for achieving this, nor they explicitly included it in their platforms, maybe afraid of the electoral repercussions. Their support can be understood as a strategy aimed at getting progressive votes, within the context of a country – and a continent – that was steadily moving towards a political left

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[28] In Spanish, "Proyecto de Ley de Fomento de la no Discriminación y Contrato de Unión Civil Entre Personas del Mismo Sexo".

[29] Argentina is a federal republic, where civil unions could be discussed separately in each state. Chile, on the other hand, is a unitary republic, where civil unions have to be discussed at the national level.

open to support progressive ideas[30]. This support, likewise, was a way of defining a limit: civil partnerships could be discussed and eventually approved, but not marriage equality. World trends may also have had a role in this: the approval of same-gender marriage in Spain in 2005 may have shaped the understanding of civil partnerships as a "less-evil" alternative.

Bachelet's platform did explicitly state that her government would legislate in order to provide legal stability to unmarried couples, regardless of their gender composition. As a response to this, in 2006, Movilh in collaboration with legal scholars, proposed a bill called Pacto de Unión Civil, PUC (Civil Union Pact). The presentation of this project illustrated Movilh's change of strategy: as the 2003 project was intended to regulate only same-gender partnerships, it was publicly misunderstood as gay marriage. This was perceived by Movilh as a complicated situation, given the strong social and political positions against marriage equality. The presentation of a gender-neutral civil union, therefore, was understood as a more achievable goal for which a social consensus was starting to arise. It could also be framed as an opening of rights for everyone, instead of a small minority's demand.

The project needed to have the Executive's support before being introduced to Congress, as many of its articles implied changes that could only be made if the Executive consented. Notwithstanding Bachelet's alleged support for legal partnerships, the consensual style of politics was still very much alive in the Chilean democracy. As a consequence, once the project was presented to the government, the Minister of the General Presidency stated that in order for the Executive to back it, written formal support from members of Congress had to be achieved. After that, PUC received support from many leaders of Concertación – the alliance in power – and also some members of one of the right-wing parties. However, in 2007 and 2008 a series of strong crises hit the government. All their efforts were directed at solving these problems, leaving "peripheral" issues aside. Likewise, the project was strongly opposed by conservative members of Concertación. This made Executive backing even more difficult to achieve, as a united alliance was necessary in order to successfully face the agitated environment. Once the

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[30] In 2003, for instance, Néstor Kirchner was elected in Argentina and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in Brazil.

crises were solved, Bachelet's public support rocketed, and several "polemic" discussions were avoided.

The topic, however, never faded publicly and the introduction to Congress of a new project regulating civil partnerships penned by the Deputy and presidential candidate Marco Enríquez-Ominami propelled it directly into the 2009 campaign. Unlike Bachelet's, former president Eduardo Frei's electoral platform did not mention gay rights at all. Surprisingly, however, "gay rights were brought onto the electoral scene by Chile's Right" (Díez, 2015, p. 227): Sebastián Piñera – who had already been a candidate in the 2005 election – supported civil unions again, this time with wider support from his coalition. As a consequence, Frei had to be clearer: he publicly backed the legalisation of civil partnerships and met with Movilh representatives. So did Piñera, while two Senators that backed his campaign were presenting a new project for legalising civil partnerships: the Acuerdo de Vida en Común, AVC (Life in Common Agreement). In general, according to Díez (2015), right parties' support for same-gender civil unions was framed on technocratic reasons: the solving of problems that already existed; not as a way of recognising human rights or broadening the terms of citizenship. Likewise, this support was strategically useful in portraying Piñera as the representative of a renewed and socially liberal right.

After Piñera's election, Senator Andrés Allamand introduced to Congress a newer but weaker version of the AVC. Despite all the public debate produced by this and other projects, it stalled in Congress in 2011. Truth is, after being helpful for winning votes, gay rights remained a centre of intense dispute inside of both coalitions. As a consequence, Piñera did not refer to gay rights in his 2011 May speech[31]. This eschewing produced the emergence of a new LGBTQ organisation: Fundación Iguales (Equals Foundation), which "was founded under the auspices of a group of homosexual men from the Chilean elite" (Astudillo, 2015, p. 1448). One of them was Luis Larraín, member of a family that has been historically identified with Chile's Right. This new organisation and its leaders altered dramatically the face of the LGBTQ movement in the country, associating gay demands with other sector of the population; one that, for instance, is wealthier, whiter, and

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[31] Chilean presidents present a "state of the country" address once a year. Until 2016, it was always delivered on May 21st. Since 2017, it is delivered on June 1st.

"professional". The co-optation of gay rights by members of the Chilean elite that was produced as a consequence of Fundación Iguales's emergence has been useful for its placing in decision-making environments. In only a few months, the new organisation achieved immense public recognition, built a strong network of state and nonstate allies, and won a seat at the table at the presidential palace La Moneda.

A few months after Fundación Iguales's creation, in August 2011, Piñera unveiled his government's version of a civil partnership legislation. This one was called Acuerdo de Vida en Pareja, AVP (Life in Couple Agreement) and was introduced to Congress shortly after its ceremonial presentation at La Moneda, which included for the first time an official meeting between a Chilean President and LGBTQ organisations. In that opportunity, Piñera said: "we have to understand that there is not only one type of family [...] there are same-sex and opposite-sex couples [...] each one of them deserves respect and dignity and will have the state's support" (UPI, 2011). He also stated: "this project does not alter the legal definition of marriage [...] marriage, by its nature, is between a man and a woman" (UPI, 2011). With this, Piñera was fulfilling his campaign promises, while trying to control the strong opposition that gay rights produced inside of the majority of his alliance and even his own government. On the other hand, all parties that were part of Concertación, maybe traumatised by their still recent loss, showed their complete support to the project and even their interest in making it better.

The placement of gay rights on political arenas connected to Chile's elite was not the only factor that propelled Piñera's announcement. One of his election's effects was the reinvigoration of social mobilisation in the country: in 2011, university students started a series of mobilisations demanding a new general framework for the educational system that would include more direct state participation and an end to profit in secondary and higher education. Beyond these demands, the protesters were showing a dissatisfaction with the country's high levels of inequality within a socioeconomic model that had been imposed by Pinochet and deepened by the democratic governments. The student protests propelled a general environment of discontent that included several other organisations and non-organised citizens. Massive marches and other demonstrations were held during the whole year, destabilising the government and Chile's consensual style of politics. During this period, Piñera's support decreased dramatically. Gay rights – particularly the two legislations that were being discussed at that moment:

the antidiscrimination law and civil partnerships – were framed as another strategy for broadening the terms of democracy and citizenship and reducing inequality in the country. Marches demanding for the approval of these laws rocketed to around 80,000 participants. The momentum for gay rights was clearly increasing and also its public support: a survey conducted in 2011 by the conservative newspaper La Tercera stated that 65% of the population supported civil partnerships.

The government's presentation of their own project for legalising civil partnerships, therefore, seems like a good strategy for boosting their public support. Also, it was a way of consenting to a demand that, since Fundación Iguales's emergence, was framed differently: now more respectably. All this, in a context where the Chilean society was demanding more profound changes that compromised the neoliberal development of the country. Piñera, a president that is also a billionaire, was not going to consent to these transformations. Gay rights, therefore, seemed like an appropriate way to look like a leader that listens to his constituents without compromising revolutionary changes that would endanger Chile's capitalist system. Media reproduced this narrative, framing the Civil Union Law as a consensus within Chilean society, which obscured the still highly homophobic environment of the country (Ramírez, 2016).

All this marks a change in the ways in which the Chilean state has handled gay/lesbian rights. Historically, according to Puar (2006), liberal states have been conceived as sites of institutional reproduction of heteronormativity, repressing and disallowing homosexuality, and thus consequently legitimising "the marginalization of and violence towards sexual minorities" (Mole, 2017, p. 660), as they are perceived as a threat to the nation that undermines the traditional concept of family, destabilises the "accepted" gender system, and, in general, deviates from various types of national norms. Within this context, gay rights are disregarded and singled out as policies of marginal importance that should better be avoided since, for the sake of the broader population's approval, they do more harm than good.

According to Puar (2006, 2013), however, we are now in a context in which this relationship has been altered. An historical shift has allowed the framing of *some* homosexual bodies as worthy of protection by nation-states, thus including them into nationalist projects. This move is a "constitutive and fundamental reorientation of the relationship between the state, capitalism, and sexuality" (Puar, 2013, p. 337) that has been

called *homonationalism*. According to this theorist, this concept should not be understood as a position, an accusation, a bad way of doing politics, a separation between good queers and bad queers, or a co-optation of gay and lesbian identities by conservative political imaginaries. Instead, it should be understood as:

> An analytic to apprehend state formation and a structure of modernity: as an assemblage of geopolitical and historical forces, neoliberal interests in capitalist accumulation both cultural and material, biopolitical state practices of population control, and affective investments in discourses of freedom, liberation, and rights (Puar, 2013, p. 337).

It is, therefore, a result of an assemblage of historical positions in which gay and lesbian demands have stabilised through the desire to become "legible and recognized within [...] the institutions of the nation-state" (Luibhéid, 2018, p. 408); furthermore, in ways that do not critique but support economic and political state logics. In this manner, the use of homonationalism as an organising principle facilitates the understanding of how the state's mission to include marginalised communities implies a movement in which the affordance of full legal citizenship to some individuals is achieved at the expense of others, particularly racialised and religious others, as analysed by Puar (2006, 2013), but also those whose marginalisation is marked by others factors, such as class.

While this frame has mostly been used for analysing international relations and the ways in which "contemporary uses of gay rights [...] rely on and reproduce imperialistic practices" (D. Meyer, 2020, p. 250), it is also useful for understanding how the state's support for certain rights *within* its national borders is contingent on a situation in which "only certain kinds of LGBTQ people are considered to be acceptable members of the nation" (Mole, 2017, p. 661) – these are, in general, those who fit the homonormative definition of "good citizen" as analysed by Duggan (2002).

Rao (2015, 2020) has proposed a particular reading of this situation, highlighting economic factors as central elements. Building on homonormativity and homonationalism, he then proposes *homocapitalism* to signify "the folding into capitalism of some queers and the disavowal of others", in a process in which "productivity, measured in terms of potential or actual contribution to economic growth, becomes the marker on the basis of which queer inclusion is premised" (Rao, 2020, p. 164). Through homocapitalism, therefore, the relation between queerness and capitalism gets drawn as a one of comfortable compatibility and mutual benefit, thus obscuring the ways in which

this economic model further affects the lives of LGBTQ individuals who are marginalised as a consequence of their socioeconomic positioning.

The Chilean government's support of gay rights, materialised in the presentation of their own project for legalising civil partnerships, can therefore be understood applying the analytical lens of homonationalism and, particularly, homocapitalism, in a movement that has been read as a local adoption of international strategies of pinkwashing [32]. This shift has enabled the government to present itself as the proponent of (some) gay rights – thus being "democratic" and "modern"[33] – while maintaining restrictive economic policies that affect broad segments of the population, including unprivileged gays and lesbians. Undoubtedly, a central part of this is the fact that the biggest LGBTQ organisations of the country (Movilh and Fundación Iguales) follow a strategy that calls for the broadening of rights while maintaining the basic structures of the national system, particularly the economic ones – in other words, they follow an agenda that recognises "claims to equality while downplaying demands for redistribution: in essence, […] a non-redistributive recognition politics" (Rao, 2020, p. 153). This type of activism has thus not highlighted the ways in which the everyday experience of homosexuality intersects with unprivileged class positions or other precarious belongings. Highly remembered, for instance, is the image of three Movilh activists giving a standing ovation to President Piñera during his 2012 May speech while he was talking about the Antidiscrimination Law – consequently contributing to his legitimisation as a "gay-friendly", "modern", and "democratic" president, notwithstanding the fact that during the two-hour speech he was announcing many neoliberal economic policies that were incompatible with the demands that broad sectors of the population were putting forward. Homonationalism in the country, therefore, has to be understood particularly in relation to the maintenance of the

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[32] According to Ritchie's (2015) account, "pinkwashing" was coined by Sarah Schulman in an editorial piece for *The New York Times*, where she defined it as "a deliberate strategy [on the part of the Israeli state and its supporters] to conceal the continuing violations of Palestinians' human rights behind an image of modernity signified by Israeli gay life'" (p. 618). From there, the concept has been widely used for understanding governments' strategic "deployment" of LGBTQ rights as a way of concealing other social issues. About this, Puar (2012, 2013) has explained that "pinkwashing" is an strategy made possible because of homonationalism. Unlike homonationalism, then, "pinkwashing" has to be understood as a state practice *per se*.
[33] Dhoest (2020), Dreher (2017), and Tsfati & Ben-Ari (2019), among others, explain that "the gay question" (how do they treat their gays?) has become the way in which the "development" and "civilisation" of a country is tested.

capitalist *status quo*, conceiving only some homosexual bodies as worthy of protection, while further marginalising others.

Anyhow, during 2012, AVP did not advance in Congress. Mainly because all legislative, governmental, and lobbying efforts were directed at approving the Antidiscrimination Law. After this law's enactment, the debate reinvigorated again. By the end of his government, in 2014, Piñera mandated Congress to discuss the law immediately. This order came into effect during Bachelet's second government (2014-2018), who had won the presidency with a platform centred on some of the reforms that the Chilean society had been demanding over the last few years – including legalising civil unions and marriage equality. This gave her an immense social support[34]. As a consequence, the law was rapidly approved and enacted in 2015, under the name Acuerdo de Unión Civil, AUC (Civil Union Agreement). During the enactment ceremony, President Bachelet said: "we are taking a fundamental step in this path of rights, justice and respect for individual freedom" (Cisneros, 2015).

Marriage Equality's Beneficiaries: Intersections of Sexuality, Gender and Class

The Acuerdo de Unión Civil undoubtedly represents a much-needed broadening of the terms of citizenship, the state's recognition of gays and lesbians' right to form a family, and a quick solution to innumerable practical issues. Its placement on the public agenda, however, has been achieved along Movilh's and Fundación Iguales's foregrounding of assimilative strategies. This environment has seen the emergence and reinvigoration of more radical points of view that have questioned the main LGBTQ organisations' insistent interest in being recognised and legitimised by the state through sexual diversity's incorporation into traditional family forms that reproduce heteronormative values. This type of organisations has also arisen in other countries (S. Brown, 1999; Duggan, 2006a; Hunter, 2006), showing that "the gay and lesbian movement is no unitary phenomenon but rather a collection of diverse social groups, competing schools of thought, and evolving debates over fundamental questions" (Adam, 1994, p. 145). In different levels,

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[34] Bachelet won, on the second round, with 62.16% of the votes.

organisations such as Agrupación Lésbica Rompiendo el Silencio (Lesbian Group "Breaking the Silence"), MUMS, and ACCIONGAY (formerly known as Corporación Chilena de Prevención del SIDA), among others, have questioned whether state recognition of couples should be a priority in a country where homophobic violence and other forms of precariousness are still an everyday problem that urgently needs solutions[35]. In general, these activists have stressed the need to validate difference and resist assimilation in order to achieve the necessary wellbeing of *all* LGBTQ individuals, regardless of their identities and expressions. This discussion has grown and become even more present over the last few years, when marriage equality has consolidated as one of Movilh's and Fundación Iguales's main priorities.

In Chile, the legal discussion about marriage equality started formally in 2008, when the Deputy and presidential candidate Marco Enríquez-Ominami introduced to Congress a project that was aimed at modifying the Civil Code's concept of marriage, replacing the words "a man and a woman" for "two people". The project did not gather a lot of support; its main consequence, however, was placing gay rights in the electoral agenda, which forced candidates to clarify their positions. In 2010, after Piñera's election and the subsequent reordering of Chilean politics, another project was introduced, now penned by the Socialist Senator Fulvio Rossi. The momentum of this project was different: after a long judiciary and legislative process, in 2010 Argentina had become the first country in Latin America and 10th in the world to legalise same-gender marriage, which convinced Chilean legislators and activists that this could also be achieved in the country. Likewise, in 2010, three couples decided to sue the Chilean state in order to be able to get married. They argued that Chilean legislation's definition of marriage is unconstitutional, as it violates the principle of equality under the law. In an unprecedented decision, the Santiago Court of Appeal asked the Constitutional Tribunal to analyse the case and state its position. In 2011, the Tribunal analysed, for the first time in its history, the national legislation's definition of marriage. Although they decided that it was not

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[35] This position seems to be also resonating within sectors of the LGBTQ communities. A survey conducted by ACCIONGAY (2020), for instance, asked LGBTQ individuals which social demands affecting the LGBTQ communities should be prioritised. 52.8% said that the most important issues are those concerning "adoption and filiation rights"; 49.6% highlighted the need to have a non-sexist educational system; and 36.3% marked as important to achieve a change in the legal system, establishing LGBTQphobia as an aggravating factor. Marriage equality came in sixth place, with 24.2% of the surveyed population marking it as an issue that should be prioritised.

unconstitutional, the sentence expressed that it was Congress' responsibility to discuss and eventually approve a law of this type; likewise, 8 of its 10 members urged Congress to regulate same-gender partnerships. After this result – that was considered more positive than negative by activists – in 2012 Movilh sued the Chilean state before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), arguing that the state was violating Article 1 of the American Convention on Human Rights, which forces the States Parties "to respect the rights and freedoms recognized herein and to ensure to all persons subject to their jurisdiction the free and full exercise of those rights and freedoms, without any discrimination" (*American Convention on Human Rights*, 1969).

By the end of 2013, Piñera's government formally rejected Movilh's suit, arguing that not all the national formalities had been met and that, therefore, appealing to an international court was not appropriate. This administration, however, was on its way out: Bachelet had won the presidency for a second time (2014-2018) with a platform that included marriage equality. It was the first time in Latin America "that a major contending presidential candidate adopted gay marriage as an electoral promise" (Díez, 2015, p. 236) and she initially delivered: a few months after her government's inauguration, the Minister of the General Presidency assured that Bachelet was going to express her public support for marriage equality. In the meantime, the government and Movilh started working on a friendly resolution to the suit. In 2016, the agreement was signed: Movilh withdrew the case before the IACHR and the government defined marriage equality as a state commitment. The most important agreement was the introduction to Congress of a marriage equality bill. Bachelet confirmed her compromise in October 2016, while giving a speech before the United Nations General Assembly. The project was finally unveiled in August 2017, when President Bachelet tweeted "there are no conditions for loving. In order to continue advancing towards an inclusive Chile, today I signed the Marriage Equality Law" (García, 2017). During all her second government, Bachelet continuously showed her support for gay rights in national and international arenas, leaving behind the ambiguous – or plainly negative – record of her past administration. Her coalition had also changed: the majority of the parties that formed it are in favour of marriage equality. Different is the case of the right-wing parties – who are in government again, since Piñera became president for a second period (2018-2022) – that predominantly oppose this type of

legislation. Likewise, during the elections that led to his victory, Piñera himself showed repeatedly his opposition to marriage equality [36].

Socially, on the other hand, same-gender marriage has now a majoritarian public support. According to surveys conducted by CADEM-Plaza Pública, the percentage of people who say that they are in favour or strongly in favour of marriage equality has risen from 50 to 74 percent between 2014 and 2021; likewise, the percentage of people who say that same-gender marriage should include the possibility of couples adopting children has risen from 37 to 65 percent. This support, however, has been achieved alongside the consolidation of "acceptable" identities for gays and lesbians, which further stigmatises those who do not fulfil this ideal.

Consequently, as in other countries, within the Chilean lesbian and gay communities, there are arguments in favour and against marriage equality. Proponents have generally framed their position in terms of equality – homosexuals and heterosexuals have the same social duties, so we all should have the same rights – and/or love – all love is the same, so it should be celebrated accordingly. Opponents, on the other hand, while not necessarily rejecting the equality/love narratives, have based their position upon three main arguments: 1) there are many other issues that should be prioritised, as they are impeding the possibility of gays and lesbians – particularly economically unprivileged ones – leading a "liveable life"; 2) marriage equality implies the incorporation of gays and lesbians into a paradigmatically heterosexist institution, which would further legitimise its oppressive gender relations; and 3) through marriage, homosexuality is normalised, hindering its capacity for destabilising sexual norms, as a particular type of relation – monogamous, "serious", stable, etc. – gets consolidated as the ideal, thus failing to recognise the many kinship and family arrangements that gays and

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[36] In a recent development, which will not be thoroughly analysed here as it took place long after this study's interviews were conducted – thus not being part of the context participants and I shared at the time of our encounters – Piñera announced in June 2021 that his government will ask Congress to discuss Bachelet's marriage equality project as a matter of urgency. This U-turn has been celebrated by some activists, political parties, and members of the LGBTQ communities, but has also been seen with suspicion by many others, as it arrives in the middle of the Covid-19 global pandemic, which has left devastating consequences in the country. Chile, furthermore, is still shaken by the effects of the 2019-2020 wave of social unrest, including national and international accusations against Piñera's government for violating protesters' human rights. This, therefore, has been interpreted as a new example of pinkwashing and the strategic use of LGBTQ rights by Piñera and his government.

lesbians have explored as alternatives to conventional marriage (Adam, 1994; Bell & Binnie, 2002; Cover, 2010; Dreher, 2017).

Notwithstanding these critiques, and recognising that rights – including the right to marry – may leave "underlying social inequalities intact" (Kiss, 1997, p. 14), proponents of marriage equality have defended its capacity to solve important practical issues – taxation, immigration, housing, etc. – and, principally, its ability to alter the heterosexist social order as it encompasses a modification of the basic unit of social organisation: the family (Hunter, 2006). For them, the fact that same-gender marriage is so fiercely resisted by homophobic organisations, politicians, and citizens is an evident sign of its capacity for altering social norms: "if gay marriage did not change much: Why the unyielding opposition to its recognition by some sectors of society?" (Díez, 2015, p. 46).

As a way of establishing a bridge between these positions, Seidman (2004) proposes that same-gender marriage should be foregrounded within a narrative that approaches marriage "as an institution worth defending but in need of reform" (p. 192). This means constructing a type of activism that 1) argues in favour of same-gender marriage as a union of *equals*, which implies highlighting a criticism of and the intention to overcome the sexist organisation of the institution; and 2) defends marriage as an option that should be open for everyone, while arguing for "enhanced state recognition and support of nonmarital arrangements (in the short term) and to make the case for uncoupling basic health-care and social security benefits from marriage (in the long-term)" (Seidman, 2004, p. 193). Arguments of this type have not taken centre stage in Chile, where the biggest LGBTQ organisations have mostly defended the right to marry using the aforementioned equality/love narratives.

However the case, it is undeniable that the debate around marriage equality has taken over the public discussion about gay/lesbian rights, rendering invisible the many differences and demands that exist within the LGBTQ communities in the country. According to Brown (2000), rights "differentially empower different social groups, depending upon their ability to enact the power that a right potentially entails" (p. 232). In that sense, critics have conceptualised marriage as a right that further empowers the more privileged members of the LGBTQ communities: those whose basic needs have been more satisfactorily met. Being able to get married, then, would be *mostly* – although, of course, not *only* – a priority for middle- and upper-class individuals, who have goods to

inherit, health and pension insurances to regulate within the almost absolutely privatised Chilean system, and who live in areas where violence is not-so-much an everyday problem, but maybe it is not a priority for those who are burdened by other "pressing needs", such as the high rates of suicide, homelessness, and mental illness among LGBTQ individuals; HIV and health care; or antigay violence (Dreher, 2017; Plummer, 2001; Pollitt et al., 2021; Y. Taylor, 2011; Warner, 1999). None of this is to negate how important it is that marriage is available to those who wish to frame their relationship within this institution. It is a right that has being won with great difficulty in all countries where it is available and should therefore be protected. That, however, does not preclude contesting its characteristics and questioning who are its "primary" or "immediate" beneficiaries: arguably, those who embody the "acceptable" homosexuality that has been produced as a consequence of assimilative strategies. In Chile, therefore, the placing of marriage equality as the most important priority for the biggest LGBTQ organisations has concealed other needs and demands; particularly those that are associated with less economically privileged gays and lesbians.

The intersection between class and sexuality in the country – which is a central element of the activism proposed by organisations such as the aforementioned MUMS and ACCIONGAY – has started to also become an issue of academic enquiry. Astudillo (2015), for instance, explains that Chilean gays and lesbians tend to monitor their own sexual identity and expressions by complying with two rules: "the rule of discretion" and "the rule of good taste". The first one forces gays and lesbians to hold back any visible manifestation of homosexuality in order to be "tolerated" in public. This includes two central values: "respect toward dominant rules regarding gender identity and the management of subtle codes of homosexuality expression within this framework" (Astudillo, 2015, p. 1438). The rule of discretion, however, does not only regulate individuals' daily lives, but also the invisibility of spaces of socialisation: bars or shops directed at a homosexual clientele do not, for instance, display any signs of queerness, as the rainbow flag. Although there is an area of Santiago in which many of these establishments are located, it is "shared" with many other spaces; its borders, furthermore, are not clear, which makes the distinction between safe and non-safe an imprecise and potentially dangerous one (Sutherland, 2009). Associated with this, "the rule of good taste" is based upon classist conceptualisations that see hypervisible gay/lesbian identity as

vulgar and unnecessary. In the country, therefore, the construction of the "good" homosexuality has amalgamated a privileged class position with gender conforming expressions. In general, those are the values to aspire to. Effeminate gays and butch lesbians are then associated with a working-class homosexuality that is tasteless and must be avoided. As a consequence, spaces of socialisation, activities, tastes, and even desire and love get differentiated alongside class positions.

Over the last few years, a social resistance led by feminist and class-conscious LGBTQ individuals is being reinvigorated as a way to contest the foregrounding of this "acceptable" homosexuality, whose deployment as a discursive construction has undeniably been beneficial in achieving important rights but has not been equally useful for thoroughly assessing the intersectional problems lived by gays and lesbians nor the everyday threat of violence. This resistance also contests Movilh's and Fundación Iguales's co-optation of the whole "gay movement", as it has become more and more clear that they do not represent all LGBTQ identities and expressions. This new feminist and intersectional movement, however, is just getting stronger; its cultural consequences, therefore, are to be seen in the future.

Beyond all the differences that exist among Chilean gays and lesbians in how we experience our sexual identity depending on our multiple identifications and social belongings, we are *all* affected – although in different ways – by being from a country where our life possibilities are curtailed because of our sexual identification. This restriction has usually been analysed through the concept of "sexual citizenship", which highlights the ways in which "a person's sexual status restrict access to citizenship in terms of social, civil, political and other rights" (D. Richardson, 1998, p. 84). Using this frame, it becomes clear that Chilean gays and lesbians are only partial citizens, as there are innumerable rights which we are denied of as a consequence of our sexual identification: we cannot get married, the discrimination that is directed against us is not prevented but only dealt with *post facto*, the primary and secondary educational system rarely highlights gay/lesbian experiences, and we cannot adopt children as couples, among many other examples. An extension of the concept of citizenship, made in order to include *cultural* elements, allows Richardson (1998) to "raise questions about the sexualised [...] nature of social inclusion and exclusion" (p. 94), highlighting issues such as the ways in which popular culture has either ignored or misrepresented gays and

lesbians and how this is connected with our position as members of our societies. This also makes possible the extension of the discussion beyond debates about legal rights, thinking about the achievement of social justice as an endeavour that cannot be done "without challenging a culture of advertising, television, film, music, literature, and news that make heterosexuality the norm and the ideal" (Seidman, 2004, p. 16), as equality is intimately intertwined with issues of representation. These topics will be covered in the next chapter, where I propose an interpretation of the ways in which Chilean television has depicted gay and lesbian lives since 1990.

Chapter 2   *Watchable* Images: Five "Types" of Gays and Lesbians on Chilean Television[37]

Introduction

The visibility of gays and lesbians on Chilean television has increased steadily since 1990, when Pinochet's dictatorship ended, producing a tepid loosening of moral barriers that entailed the incorporation of new topics in a now not directly censored television. This growing presence has been particularly noteworthy in the last 20 years, when gays and lesbians have appeared in different types of programmes produced in the country: there have been several gay and lesbian characters in series and *telenovelas* and contestants of reality shows, presenters of talk shows, and news anchors have publicly come out. The news and political programmes have also been places for visibility, where gays and lesbians have appeared as sources of information, particularly in stories and debates regarding the LGBTQ communities. This presence, however, remains weak or scarce: even though the televisual visibility has increased continuously, gays and lesbians continue to be "absolutely outnumbered by heterosexual roles" (N. Richardson et al., 2012, p. 8). Similar patterns of scarcity have been described in other Latin American countries, such as Peru (Dettleff et al., 2015) or Brazil (Rodrigues Lima & Cavalcanti, 2020).

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[37] A reduced version of this chapter has been published in *Sexualities*, 23(8), March/2020 by SAGE Publications Ltd, All rights reserved. © Ricardo Ramírez, 2020. It is available at: https://journals.sagepub.com/home/sex.

Invisibility[38] is a central part of any marginalised group's oppression, since it contributes to their maintenance at the bottom of the social scale (Gross, 2001; Porfido, 2009). The problem, however, is not only a quantifiable one of visibility versus invisibility. Activists' aim has never been solely the existence of more images, but the presence of particular types of representations, as it has become clear that the pure increasing of visibility does not necessarily imply the overcoming of the social conditions of discrimination and that the images that do appear can indeed reify dominant discourses and not subvert them (Bateman, 2006; Battles & Hilton-Morrow, 2002; Becker, 2006; Burgess, 2012; Chambers, 2009; Clarkson, 2008; D'Emilio, 2007; Shugart, 2003).

Analysing gay/lesbian representations, then, implies not only focusing on the quantifiable presences or repressions but aiming attention at the ways in which this visibility has been achieved, questioning the mechanisms through which homosexuality has been televised. According to Dow (2001), the presence of gays and lesbians on television has "followed clear norms for different kinds of silence and speech" (p. 129), thus not necessarily repressing their existence altogether, but granting visibility through the design of images that "can be watched". That is, as Ciasullo (2001) explains, *watchable* images that are expected to be "accepted" by audiences, as they cohere with what has become stabilised as common sense at the time of their production/reception. This is particularly important in a ratings-driven television system like the Chilean one, which is constantly searching for those images that can be considered "acceptable" and thus watched regularly by as many viewers as possible. As several authors have stated (e.g., Bourdieu, 2012; Buonanno, 2008; Gross, 2001; Hagen, 1999; Kunze, 2013; Lopez, 1995; Pearson, 2005), commercial television's aim to reach large audiences implies that its images are not designed to disturb and are therefore highlighting worldviews that are expected to make sense to the majority. What is singled out as *watchable*, then, is the result of an *interpretation* of society's expectations and dominant values that is made by those who are in charge of designing TV images.

Any representation, however, holds the possibility of multiple uses and interpretations. Fiske (1987) points out that any televisual image, in order to be popular,

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[38] By invisibility, I refer to the media practice of gay/lesbian stories and lives being ignored: not included in the televisual narratives.

does not only have to appeal to the social values that are expectedly common, but also has to offer the possibility to be read and enjoyed by heterogenous audiences that bring a variety of points of view to the reading encounter. Viewers can thus potentially deconstruct what television is showing and produce meanings that destabilise the dominant codes through which these images have been assembled. The televisual text is then characterised as a "site of struggle" (Fiske, 1987, p. 94) where an object of cultural production can be decoded "from the perspective of a minority subject who is disempowered in such a representational hierarchy" (Muñoz, 1999, p. 25). This, nevertheless, does not erase the marks that the dominant culture's discourse leaves or the ways in which these images relate to a certain context and the place that homosexuality holds within these social conditions. Because of this inherent complexity, any image's assessment has to be carried out paying attention to its multiple qualities and features, not losing sight of its location within the media landscape and the social context that engendered it.

As was explained in the Introduction, this is a highly under-researched area of study in Chile. Nonetheless, reviews conducted in other national contexts have regularly reached a set of conclusions that can help understand the Chilean reality. In general, the coexistence of an increased cultural visibility and a limited representational range that is formed by "old" and "new" stereotypes has been reported (Becker, 2006). Within this context, several studies (e.g., Alwood, 1996; Doty & Gove, 1997; Gross, 1991, 1994; Raley & Lucas, 2006) have described the persistence of images that, from the 1960s, have depicted gays and lesbians as victims, villains, and/or objects of laughter, reinforcing demeaning stereotypes that represent "gay men as hysterical prissy queens, and lesbians as violent predatory butches" (Doty & Gove, 1997, p. 86). According to Alderson (2014), the political agenda that emerged out of gay liberation identified these cross-gender stereotypes as *the* negative image that had to be rejected and removed from cultural representation, while advocating for the presence of "positive" images that would present gays and lesbians in other roles while destabilising the association between homosexuality and gender nonconformity. The basic problem with these propositions, however, is that what is "negative" or "positive" is debated (Gill, 2007) and that both "types" of depictions can restrict the range of representations available for any social group. The same principle holds for demands for "more realistic" images, which are usually not more than calls for one's own particular version of reality to be represented (Gill, 2007). Placing the demands

in these terms ignores reality's intersecting complexity, which could never be unravelled by any "corrective" image (N. Richardson & Wearing, 2014). In this sense, moving beyond the binary visibility/invisibility and the consequent more stable agreement around the need for a greater number of images, "a consensus regarding who is to be made visible, to represent us, is much more difficult to achieve" (Beirne, 2006, p. 43).

In this way, while the so-called "negative" images have been singled out as stereotyped, derogatory, and plainly harmful, several authors (e.g., Avila-Saavedra, 2009; Becker, 2006; Cochran, 2012; Dhaenens, 2012b; Gorman-Murray, 2009; Hantzis & Lehr, 1994; Harris, 2006; Kessler, 2012; McNicholas, 2020; McNicholas & Tyler, 2017; Medhurst, 2009) have also questioned the "positive" portrayals that have pullulated the Western televisual environment since the early 1990s, as many of them serve as homonormative devices that do not contest heterosexism, but perpetuate it by encouraging "only bland, saintly, desexualized mainstream figures who might as well be heterosexual" (Doty & Gove, 1997, p. 87). That is, pleasant characters who are shown to be aspiring to the heterosexual ideal, while reproducing the norms that constitute the heterosexist society: family values – e.g., monogamy, longevity – anchored in domesticity and sanctioned by both trivial and crucial rituals – e.g., moving-in together, getting married, having children. According to Gorman-Murray (2009) and Harris (2006), becoming acceptable through these depictions is a rather costly business that is incompatible with the full embracing of sexual difference and works against gay and lesbian communities' commitment to diversity and openness.

Finally, a third stream of studies (e.g., Chambers, 2009; Dhaenens, 2014; Murrell & Stark, 2013) has described the more recent emergence of representations that can be read as devices that disrupt heteronormativity through the deconstruction of its strategies and the imagination of queer alternatives to the heteronormal. Some of these studies, however, do not focus on the representation of gays and lesbians, understanding that queer potential lies in any character that offers a disruption to heteronormative values and expectations.

In general, then, these studies suggest that the boosted visibility of gays and lesbians has been mostly attained through the mainstreaming of gay/lesbian identities via *watchable* images that do not challenge the *status quo* nor threaten the heteronormative societies in which they are placed, as they occupy the social space that has been granted for them. All this reveals that the debate around gay and lesbian representation is a far

more complicated issue than the binaries visibility/invisibility and positive/negative images can account for, as 1) the equation "invisibility equals powerlessness and visibility equals empowerment" (Clarkson, 2008, p. 370) is a far too simplistic account that does not consider the qualities or characteristics of the images, ignoring the fact that there is nothing necessarily subversive about the sole presence of representations of gays and lesbians (Battles & Hilton-Morrow, 2002; Chambers, 2009; Shugart, 2003); and 2) the "evaluative paradigm" (Davis & Needham, 2009) that focuses on the poles negative/positive ignores the changing conditions of these categories – both in term of time and from one person to another – and the importance of paying attention to other elements, such as the figures' intersectional identities and narrative positions (D'Emilio, 2007; Doty & Gove, 1997; Gill, 2007; Joyrich, 2009).

Consequently, the analysis that will be presented in this chapter goes beyond these binaries and pays attention to the intersectional identifications and narrative positions of the gay/lesbian figures that have appeared on Chilean TV between 1990 and 2019. I will be focusing on questions such as: how has homosexuality *been represented* on Chilean television? Through which characteristics have gays and lesbians *been allowed* to appear? And which dramatic arcs have been *made possible* for these characters? Through the answers to these questions, it will be explained how television in Chile has framed homosexuality over the last decades. This analysis has to be understood in parallel with the previous chapter, as I have read these images keeping in mind the cultural context in which they were produced and received.

In order to carry out this analysis, firstly I put together a list of gay/lesbian characters/people that have appeared on programmes produced in the country since 1990. I wanted this list to be as extensive as possible, so different sources of information were used – among these, my own memories of past characters, online forums and pages, and conversations with friends. The result was 66 characters of series and *telenovelas*[39]; six

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[39] *Telenovelas*, one of Latin America's particular forms of cultural production, have been central for the increased visibility of a number of "new" social topics, including gay/lesbian stories. In that sense, these programmes have been considered not just a successful form of entertainment that attracts diverse audiences (Fuenzalida, 2007; Lull, 1998), but also a space for education and information: studies have concluded that *telenovelas* contribute to the construction of each country's cultural identity (Casas Pérez, 2005; Fuenzalida, 2001; Sifuentes, 2014), offer points of reference that have an impact on viewers' identities (Sifuentes, 2014; Slade, 2010; Tate, 2013), and motivate public discussion about contemporary social situations (Casas Pérez, 2005; Garcia et al., 2018; La Pastina, 2002; Pearson, 2005;

fictional characters that have appeared in non-fictional programmes, such as talk shows or comedy shows; and 31 individuals that have appeared regularly in non-fictional programmes, as presenters of talk shows, participants of reality shows, sources of information on news stories, etc. Then, episodes or extracts from all the programmes in which these characters/people have appeared were watched. Not all the programmes were entirely available online, therefore a different number of episodes of each was included.

Taking each figure as a separate case, a qualitative content analysis was conducted. This is a method "for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative data" (Schreier, 2014, p. 170). It comprises descriptions of the manifest content as well as interpretations of the latent content, which is understood as context dependent (Graneheim et al., 2017; Schreier, 2014). Through this type of analysis, it is possible "to analyse data qualitatively and at the same time quantify the data" (Vaismoradi et al., 2013, p. 400), allowing for the presentation of findings via frequency counts.

For conducting this analysis, I developed a coding frame following a deductive or concept-driven approach. This frame is formed of theoretically defined categories that were designed to capture the "what?" of the data at the manifest level. In the case of fictional programmes, the utilised categories were designed to record the characters' features, narrative positions, diegetic arcs, and relations with others; and, in the case of non-fictional programmes (both for fictional and non-fictional figures), the utilised categories were designed to record the individual's characteristics, the types of programmes in which they regularly appear, and the issues about which they talk[40].

Initially, the manifest/descriptive features of each unit of analysis were recorded on a coding sheet. After this descriptive phase was carried out, interpretations regarding patterns of meaning were made. I made these interpretations through an intertwined comprehension of the recorded manifest content and the context in which these images

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Rodrigues Lima & Cavalcanti, 2020; Sifuentes, 2014; Tate, 2014). In terms of their structure, *telenovelas* have been compared to Anglo-Saxon soap operas, as they are broadcast daily or at least several times a week and narrate stories that are mainly about families' and friends' everyday dramas and conflicts, focusing on interpersonal relationships (Graf, 2015; Santa Cruz, 2003). Unlike soap operas, however, *telenovelas* have definitive endings after around 120 episodes for the Chilean case. These endings constitute an ideologically important part of the characters' narrative, as this is the moment where their whole journey gets a final sense and where their "future lives" – all that we will not be able to watch – are defined (R. C. Allen, 2004; Nogueira Joyce, 2013).

[40] The list of the codes that were used can be found in Appendix 1.

were produced/received. Consequently, the findings that are presented below should be understood as intrinsically situated and are not generalisable to other TV formats, national contexts, or historical periods.

General Findings: Normative Images

When reviewing or critiquing representations of homosexuality, they are usually placed somewhere in a line whose extremes are, on one side, images that reproduce the norms of heterosexuality through assimilation, stereotyping, simplification, humiliation, or a combination of all this and, on the other, images that critique or subvert the heterosexual ideal with at least potential to deconstruct norms of gender and sexuality. Although this can be a reductive mapping, since representations can combine elements associated with both "extremes" and, furthermore, their assessment may change over time or from one person to another, it is nonetheless initially useful for stating that Chilean TV representations of gays and lesbians are generally closer to the assimilative "extreme", as they do not contest heteronormativity but reproduce it through the mainstreaming of "acceptable" non-heterosexual identifications.

This is consistent with reviews conducted in other national contexts. As was already explained, several studies (e.g., Avila-Saavedra, 2009; Branfman, 2019; Dhaenens, 2012a; Doran, 2013; Escudero-Alías & Calvo-Pascual, 2012; Gorman-Murray, 2009; Harris, 2006; Hubert, 2003; Kerrigan, 2021; Vanlee, 2019) have shown that the visibility of gays and lesbians, although embodied by diverse types of images, has more recently increased through an homonormative paradigm that renders non-heterosexual sexualities safe, tolerable, sanitised, domesticated, and/or undifferentiated. Within these representational patterns, a figure that has emerged and stabilised as *the* preferred way of depicting homosexuality is the respectable gay or lesbian who holds traditional values like family and monogamy and whose aims are to be "accepted" by their family and to form one of their own through a stable relationship. Similar to what has been described in other countries (e.g., Avila-Saavedra, 2009; Escudero-Alías & Calvo-Pascual, 2012; Kessler, 2012; Moritz, 1994; N. Richardson, 2009), in Chile, this "desirable" homosexuality has been embodied by subjects who act in a gender conforming manner. Effeminate gays and butch lesbians are still present, but the "good" homosexuality is the one that adjusts to gender

norms. That does not mean that gender nonconforming individuals are fully rejected, as they have continued to appear, arguably because they are expected and enjoyed by national audiences. As will be explained in detail below, however, gender expression does serve as a highly differentiating mechanism with which other characteristics and possible roles and storylines are usually associated. Either one way or another, nevertheless, these representations echo the same principle: all of them are *watchable* images, as they materialise values and expectations that are assumed to be shared by broad sectors of the audience.

According to Dyer (2002b), a major fact about gayness is that it does not show: there is nothing about gays' and lesbians' physicality that declares our sexual orientation. What is available, however, is a set of culturally defined repertoires of gestures, signs, and expressions that convey homosexuality, "making visible the invisible" (Dyer, 2002b, p. 19). In Chile – as well as generally in Latin America – this repertoire is mainly based on the association between homosexuality and gender nonconformity (Asencio, 2011; Cantú, 2000; Jeffries, 2009; Mutchler, 2000; Tate, 2011), being crystallised in stereotypes that conceive gay men as effeminate *locas* and lesbians as masculine *camionas*[41]. These cultural formations, although not always necessary, are the basis for the representation of homosexuality, particularly in those cases where a character/person's sexual identity might be conveyed, but not directly named. This is what generally took place until the beginning of the 2000s on Chilean television. In fictional programmes, the sexual orientation of the six characters – all men – that appeared until 2001 was only suggested through their effeminate behaviour but never named nor addressed as part of their narrative development. Similarly, the few recognisable gay figures that appeared regularly on non-fictional programmes during the 1990s usually acted in gender nonconforming ways, without ever discussing their sexual identification. Nevertheless, as all these characters were represented through the repertoires that articulate how homosexuality had been conceived/visualised in Chile, it is possible to read them as gays and are thus included in this analysis. After that, from the beginning of the 2000s, all characters/people

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[41] *Loca* and *camiona*, which could be translated as queen and dyke, have usually been used as insults in Chile. These concepts, however, have also been re-appropriated by gays and lesbians and used as a way to call ourselves.

have verbally identified themselves as gay/lesbian and have reflected on their sexual identifications.

In general, all the characters/people are presented or (self)identified as cisgender at the time of the analysed broadcasts, with men being more present than women (72 and 31, respectively). Out of all of them, 38 (37%) act in gender nonconforming ways (four lesbians and 34 gay men), while 65 (63%) act in gender conforming ways (27 lesbians and 38 gay men). It is worth reiterating, however, that the emergence of the masculine gay man and the feminine lesbian is a more recent phenomenon that has been developed in the context of strengthening assimilative gay/lesbian politics. Until 2003, the fictional narratives did not admit the existence of gender conforming gays and lesbians; likewise, it was only 2001 when an already famous TV journalist – Ítalo Passalacqua – came out of the closet, surprising audiences. The emergence of these figures should be understood as a consequence of the assimilate processes but also as one of the favoured sites where these "appropriate" gay/lesbian identifications have been articulated. This has, however, only partially dismantled the association between homosexuality and gender nonconformity, consolidating coexisting gay/lesbian repertoires. This has been done through ways that have further marginalised the figures of the *loca* and the *camiona*. Unlike what has happened in other countries, on Chilean television these images have generally not been reclaimed or celebrated, but only placed in the specific situations where they can reproduce the ideologies of heteronormativity. They have neither been reclaimed by the major LGBTQ organisations, who have generally framed gender nonconformity as one of the derogatory stereotypes that need to be disregarded from cultural representation. That position, however, is understandable in the light of the fact that the ways in which TV has framed *locas* and *camionas* is a simplified and degrading one, as will be explained in detail below.

Although some scholars have stated that gender conforming gays and lesbians may be read as figures that challenge the social order through the destabilisation of a supposed monolithic gay identity (Clarkson, 2008) and that gender nonconformity is a way of differentiating oneself from straight people in order to prove one's own harmlessness to traditional gender values (Bateman, 2006), gender nonconformity has been more usually singled out as a way of refusing homosexuality's silencing or effacement through the assertion of a way of being, behaving, and feeling that is anti-social, as it rejects the

standard forms of gender expression (Halperin, 2014; McNicholas & Tyler, 2017; N. Richardson, 2018; N. Richardson et al., 2012). It is important, however, to highlight that these images have the *potential* to be disrupting; there is nothing *naturally* radical about them. They can – and continually have, in the Chilean case – be used as one-dimensional caricatures complicit with the gender/sexuality system.

About this, a striking difference between the frequency of representation of gender nonconforming gays and lesbians was identified, with the former being more regularly present. This could be explained as a consequence of the fact that the figure of the *loca* is one that has a long history in different forms of cultural expression in Chile: it has become a fairly common trope in cinema, literature, and other cultural productions (Fischer, 2016; López, 2011), which has therefore become familiar for producers and audiences. *Camionas*, on the other hand, have not been presented in different forms of cultural expression as frequently as *locas* have. TV producers know "what to do" with *locas*, as they are figures that have "been around" for decades; they have learned how to incorporate them into the heterosexist narratives. On the contrary, they do not have a solid cultural base on which to support gender nonconforming lesbians. Consequently, as producers do not know "how to deal" with them, their presence is avoided. All this, however, aligns more directly with the production of fictional programmes and does not explain why butch lesbianism is so rarely depicted in the first place, both on TV and other forms of cultural expression. About this, it can be argued that in a *machista* society such as Chile, which places high value on a femininity that is associated with dependency, vulnerability, hegemonically defined beauty, motherhood, and men-directed sexuality (Antezana, 2011; Asencio, 2011; Bucciferro, 2011; Melhuss & Stølen, 1996; Saavedra & Toro, 2018; Valdés, 2018), the depiction of an "unattractive" woman who does not hold many of these features would be highly resisted or plainly rejected. Masculinity is a serious matter, a privilege that must only reside in the *macho*, avoiding its presence in any other body. Femininity, on the other hand, does not hold this privileged position; it is an unserious matter that can be ridiculed notwithstanding the body on which it is placed. In fact, the "type" of femininity that is embodied by effeminate gay men on TV – which, as will be explained below, is flamboyant, (melo)dramatic, excessive, and superficial – is one that is also ridiculed when it is embodied by characters who are women. In that sense, while masculinity is encouraged for gay characters, gay femininity has become acceptable through its laughable

sanitisation; for lesbians, on the other hand, hegemonic femininity is almost always the only option.

In terms of other identifications, Chilean TV has usually depicted homosexuality through a set of specific attributes. Racially, almost all of the gay/lesbian characters and people that appear on TV could be considered white within the Chilean context (87 or 85%). There is only very limited space for mix-raced subjects or indigenous population. This is associated with the preferred class positions depicted, as in Chile race and class are two tightly intertwined categories: whiteness is normally associated with upper classes, while darker skins are associated with lower classes. Gay and lesbians on TV, therefore, not only tend to be white but also affluent, professional, and/or sophisticated. Chilean TV's presentation of a class and race-skewed society, however, is not limited to the representation of gays and lesbians; these are the identity positions that are generally highlighted through all types of characters and people (Bravo et al., 2018). Of these two axes, the one that is stronger is race: even though the connection between race and class is socially salient in the country, when working-class gays and lesbian appear on TV, they are generally white. Upper-class figures, on the other hand, are always white. There are, however, also gays and lesbians on Chilean TV who, although white, are not affluent. Lower-class gays and lesbians appear regularly. They, however, are also marked by other specific characteristic: they commonly act in a gender nonconforming manner. On Chilean TV, therefore, gender expression is tightly connected to class: unprivileged gays and lesbians occupy the role of the effeminate gay men and the masculine lesbian more commonly than wealthy non-heterosexuals.

Within this general set of features, Chilean TV has constructed *watchable* images of homosexuality. The representation of gays and lesbians, however, goes beyond their pure characterisation in terms of identity markers. Consequently, for the analysis of these figures' roles and/or plot positions, it is necessary to make a differentiation between fictional and non-fictional programmes, as these two macro forms of representation make different options available in terms of narrative development (Gordillo, 2009; Jost, 2012).

Gay and Lesbian Characters on Fictional Programmes

According to Amigo et al. (2014), the first gay character of a Chilean fictional TV programme appeared on the *telenovela La Madrastra* (Miranda, 1981). It was a diegetically peripheral character: an un-named waiter that would appear for a few minutes, two or three times a week, and whose only role was to be an object of laughter as a consequence of his effeminate behaviour. His presence, however, was no more than a rare sighting in a heavily censored dictatorial television. In 1990, when democracy was "recovered", things started changing slightly: from that year until 2019, there was at least 66 gay or lesbian characters on fictional programmes produced in the country (61 in *telenovelas* and five in series). As shown in Figure 1, during the 1990s this visibility was scarce. Later, with the change of century, gay/lesbian characters started being more common, with a peak of seven new ones in 2009 and 2018[42].

As Figure 1 also shows, the majority of these characters are men (42 or 64%, versus 24 or 36% women). Arguably, lesbian representation has been curtailed by the fact that in a *machista* society, femininity is shaped by its dependency on a man, element that could be challenged by images of lesbians. Lesbian representation, in this sense, does not only have the potential to threaten heterosexuality but also men's dominance – consequently, it was strongly resisted. This situation, however, has changed over the last years: between 2013 and 2018, there were more lesbian than gay new characters on *telenovelas* and series. This increase can be explained by TV's assessment and, in turn, appropriation of a social environment where feminist discourses and aims have become more socially present, which has happened in Chile over the last few years (Follegati, 2018; Saavedra & Toro, 2018). Lesbian characters, in that context, can be seen as strategies for broadening the representational field of women; furthermore, in ways than can introduce topics associated with the "women empowerment" narrative.

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[42] For the analysis presented in this chapter, the year each character is associated with is the year in which the programme they appeared in was first broadcast. The analysis then covers also 2019 (specifically until May, when the interviews were conducted), even though no *new* characters had appeared until that point. Some of the ones that first appeared during past years, however, were at that point still part of the televisual environment.
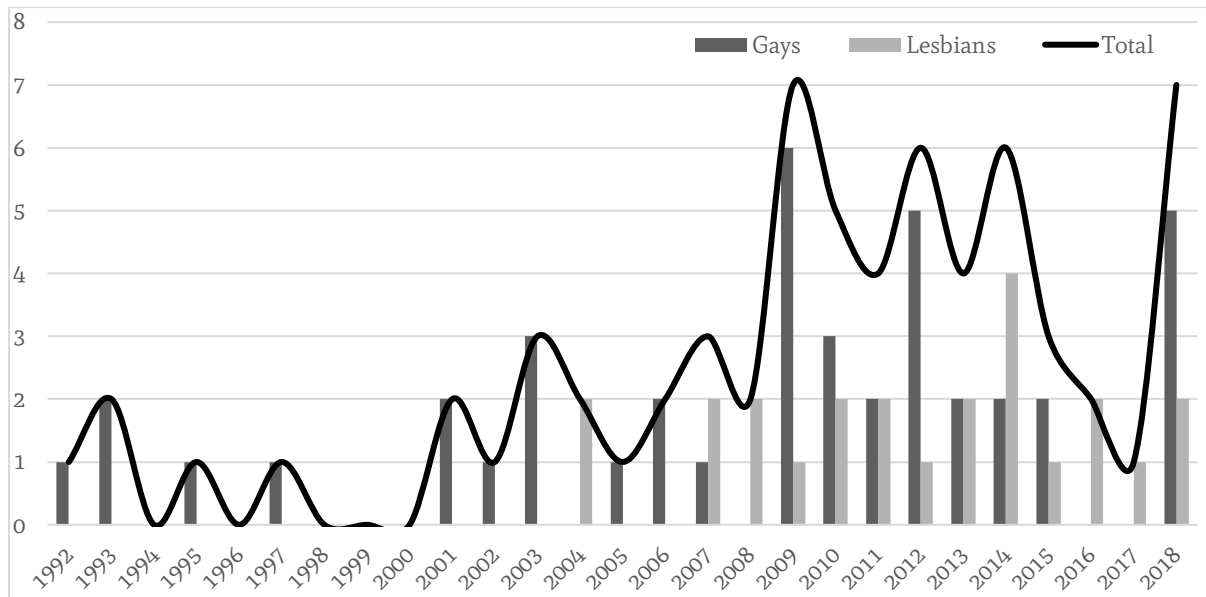
Figure 1 Gay and Lesbian Characters on Fictional Programmes per Year

Another trend that can be traced through time is the change in characters' level of diegetic importance: as can be seen in Figure 2, until 2002 there were no main gay or lesbian characters. This has changed since then, with several series and *telenovelas* presenting non-heterosexual characters in a main plot position. In total, there have been at least 26 main characters (12 gay men and 14 lesbians) and 40 supporting ones (30 gay men and 10 lesbians). As will be explained below, however, this differentiation is marked by the characters' specific features and ways of behaving: only certain "types" of gays and lesbians are allowed to occupy a main diegetic role.
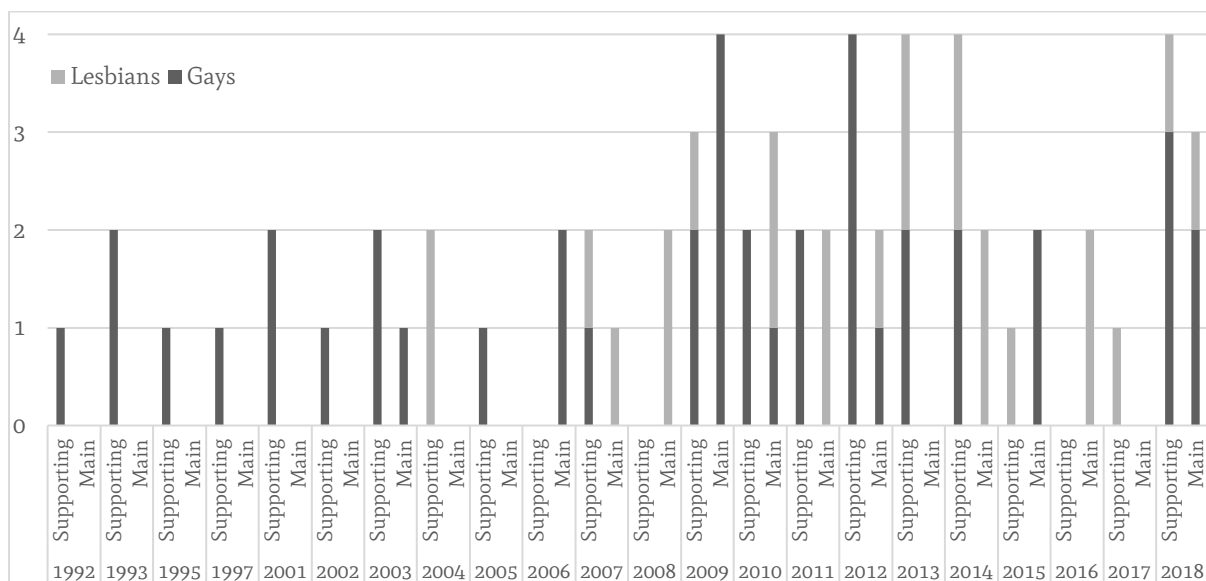
Figure 2 Gay and Lesbian Characters' Diegetic Importance in Fictional Programmes per Year

Regarding their social identifications and features, fictional characters generally follow the same patterns that were already explained for the complete sample. In that sense, 47 of the 66 characters (71%) act in gender conforming ways (22 lesbians and 25 gay men), while 19 (29%) do it in gender nonconforming ways (2 lesbians and 17 gay men). Likewise, the majority could be characterised as upper-class (43 or 65%), while 17 (26%) could be characterised as working-class, and 6 (9%) could be placed somewhere in the middle. An upper-class belonging, although the more common position for both groups, is much more common among gender conforming characters (72%) than among gender nonconforming ones (47%), consolidating that idea that, on Chilean TV, gender expression is tightly connected with class: working-class gays and lesbians behave in gender nonconforming ways more usually than upper-class ones. In terms of race, almost all of the characters (94%) could be considered white within the Chilean context. This phenomenon, however, not only characterises the representation of gays and lesbians but the production of fictional local TV in general, where darker-skinned figures are regularly ignored or relegated to very small roles (Bravo et al., 2018). This is something that has also been identified in the fictional televisual production of other Latin American countries (Tierney, 2013). About their ages, they are frequently young to middle-aged. The few older characters – which are all men – receive extremely reduced diegetic attention.

According to Allen (2004) – who is writing about US soap operas, but whose theorisations can also be applied to *telenovelas* – there are three basic types of relationships for characters to occupy in these productions: relations of kinship (as a parent, sibling, son, daughter, etc.), relations of romance (spouse, lover, ex-partner, secret admirer, etc.), and relations marked by a social bond (co-worker, neighbour, friend, etc.). While heterosexual characters "move easily among these three categories" (R. C. Allen, 2004, p. 254), gays and lesbians usually occupy a more reduced number of roles. Out of these possibilities, the type of relationship that is more regularly inhabited by gays and lesbians on Chilean fictional TV is the one marked by a social bond: they are usually depicted as friends or co-workers. Relations of kinship are also regular, with gays and lesbians occupying the role of son, daughter, or mother (and mother-to-be). Relations of romance, on the other hand, are the most avoided ones: 71% of the characters have a partner or love interest, 50% kiss, and only 13% are shown as sexually active. All these percentages are expectedly higher for heterosexual characters, as fictional productions –

particularly *telenovelas*, but also series – usually take this kind of relations and activities as one of their main elements (Pearson, 2005). Similar to what has been profusely described in other national contexts, including some Latin American countries (Aprea & Kirchheimer, 2015; Avila-Saavedra, 2009; Bateman, 2006; Battles & Hilton-Morrow, 2002; Becker, 2006, 2009; P. Bradley, 2013; Clarkson, 2008; Cochran, 2012; Doran, 2013; Dow, 2001; Fejes, 2000; Gross, 2001; Hantzis & Lehr, 1994; Hubert, 2003; Jackson, 2012; La Pastina, 2002; Marentes, 2017; Moritz, 1994; Nogueira Joyce, 2013; Porfido, 2009; N. Richardson, 2009; Rodrigues Lima & Cavalcanti, 2020; Shugart, 2003; Tate, 2013), gays and lesbians on Chilean television are mostly desexualised. As will be explained below, however, the type of relations that gay/lesbian characters are allowed to have is also associated directly with their features and ways of behaving: some gays and lesbians are more likely to be allowed to fall in love and be romantic and/or sexual.

Sexuality, nevertheless, is not the only aspect of queer existence that gets elided from televisual visibility: gay and lesbian characters are usually isolated from the LGBTQ communities. As has also been identified in other countries (Arthurs, 2004; Becker, 2006, 2009; Davis & Needham, 2009; Dow, 2001; N. Richardson et al., 2012), gays and lesbians on Chilean fictional TV live in an almost exclusively heterosexual world. In general, they do not have gay/lesbian friends, do not visit places directed at a non-heterosexual clientele, do not have political participation facing issues that affect the communities, and do not enjoy products of queer cultural production. The only non-heterosexual company some of them have is their partner or love interest. Either alone or with a partner, however, their stories are generally marked by the heterosexual people in their lives and what is most important are the consequences that their decisions have upon the lives of these other characters (D. Allen, 1995).

The avoidance of cultural aspects of gay/lesbian existence correlates with the fact that, in general, when these characters face an issue with socio-political connotations – e.g., wanting to get married, to adopt a child, or facing discrimination – these problems are depicted as a purely personal/psychological matter, avoiding broad political references. In the face of social problems, the personal experience is prioritised, ignoring the context in which these issues are placed. When these problems are the ones associated with the different treatment received by gays and lesbians because of their sexual identification, the context that is omitted is homophobia. In that sense, the consequences

of living in a homophobic society are ignored or just slightly addressed. This does not mean that every "gay/lesbian story" should revolve around homophobia or the consequences of social discrimination, as this would also be a simplification of queer lives that frames gays and lesbians only as victims; however, making these issues invisible can give the impression that homophobia "is over". And it is not, particularly in the Chilean context, as was explained in Chapter 1. Following Dow (2001), therefore, it is worth highlighting that "it is not sexuality that has been repressed in television, but, rather, the politics of sexuality. Or, to put it another way, the secret being kept isn't homosexuality; it's homophobia and heterosexism" (p. 135).

Gay and Lesbian People on Non-Fictional Programmes

Chilean television has not only addressed homosexuality in fictional programmes: several news anchors, participants of reality shows, and presenters of different types of programmes have publicly come out; gays and lesbians have become common sources of information, particularly on news stories about the LGBTQ communities; and documentaries have shown several aspects of gay/lesbian lives. National audiences, therefore, have had plenty of opportunities to know, hear, and see "real" gays and lesbians. This is, however, a phenomenon that can only be seen over the last 20 years. As Robles (2008) explains, the 1990s were a decade marked by "journalistic indifference" in which gay/lesbian topics were routinely ignored by news programmes and other non-fictional formats.

From there, there have been at least 24 gay men and seven lesbians that have appeared regularly on non-fictional TV programmes made in Chile. This is a very low number that has also been identified by Bravo et al. (2018), who found that only eight out of 167 people who have appeared on a sample of non-fictional programmes identify themselves as gay or lesbian. The big difference between the number of "visible" gays and lesbians coheres with the ways in which TV functions in a society marked by *machista* values, where women are usually depicted following traditional ideas that associate femininity with hegemonically defined beauty, dependency, and subordination in relation to men (Antezana, 2011; Bucciferro, 2011). In that sense, in light-hearted programmes, such as reality shows or some talk shows, women are expected to dress and

behave in a seductive way that is appealing to the masculine gaze, highlighting features like their beauty and fashionableness, barrier that has not yet been broken by the representation of femme lesbians. On the other hand, in more serious programmes, such as political shows or the news, the representation of women has been historically low[43], as the *machista* ideal femininity is one that is not opinionated or assertive. The role of the "woman expert" has thus been highly neglected, reducing the representation of *all* women on news programmes or political shows.

In general, regarding these individuals' identifications and features, 18 of the total 31 (58%) act in gender conforming ways (five lesbians and 13 gay men), while 13 (42%) do it in gender nonconforming ways (two lesbians and 11 gay men). Likewise, the majority of them could be characterised as upper-class (23 or 74%), while four (13%) could be characterised as working-class, and four (13%) could be placed somewhere in the middle. As was also the case among fictional characters, an upper-class belonging, although the more common position for both groups, is much more common among gender conforming characters (83%) than among gender nonconforming ones (61%). In terms of race, the majority of them (71%) could be considered white within the Chilean context[44]. Furthermore, they are usually young to middle aged. Older gays and lesbians rarely appear; there are only two old gay men who are/were[45] sometimes invited to talk shows. Their images, however, are/were usually constructed paying attention to their solitude, physical sickness, and difficult economic conditions. All the other individuals appear on a wide variety of programmes, where they talk about issues ranging from their personal lives to political analyses regarding LGBTQ lives in the country. As will be explained below, however, here also the topics they discuss and the types of programmes in which they are given a platform are directly associated with the individuals' features and ways of behaving.

Likewise, because of all the social and legal changes that have taken place in the country over the last decades, the news has become a place where homosexuality has been frequently depicted (Levy, 2017). As has also been observed in the case of newspapers

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[43] An organisation called Hay Mujeres (There are Women) was formed in 2015 in order to push for the participation of qualified women in spaces of public debate and decision, such as news media.
[44] A similar figure (66% of their sample as white) was reported by Bravo et al.'s (2018).
[45] One of them passed away in 2018.

(Ramírez, 2017), however, stories about the LGBTQ communities are usually constructed from the perspective of (heterosexual) official sources: the voices that are repeatedly heard are the ones of members of Congress and ministers. This is, according to authors such as Barnhurst (2007), Jacobs and Meeusen (2020), and Moscowitz (2010), a usual combination of visibility and erasure in which homosexuality appears as visible but through the voices and opinions of heterosexual people. Members of LGBTQ organisations do appear, but in a lower proportion. The heterogeneity of the members of these groups that are consulted is also low: they are usually members of Fundación Iguales or Movilh, who embody a homosexuality that is coherent with gender, class, and/or racial hegemonic values. In television news programmes, there is no space for members of radical or queer movements that could offer different points of view or destabilise the attention put into a reduced number of interests or demands. The "sexual diversity movement" is therefore constructed through an apparent unified set of objectives where there are no positions of disagreement. In that sense, the LGBTQ interests are constructed in a univocal way that is coherent with the maintenance of the *status quo*: the strengthening of certain values, like "family" and "organised relationships", as crucial social elements. When "other" homosexualities are shown – for instance, drag queens, people living with HIV, or members of queer organisations – they are depicted as part of the "mass", for instance in gay pride marches, rarely individualised, which nullifies the possibility of presenting their potentially divergent points of view and demands.

Additionally, the gay/lesbian rights that do get news media coverage are usually depicted in pieces that legitimise homophobic points of view: the journalistic value of "balance" or "showing the other side" (Alwood, 1996; Barnhurst, 2007) allows bigots to provide their "perspective" under the disguise of "freedom of speech". In that sense, homophobia – although very rarely mentioned like that – is presented as just another point of view in our democracy, which therefore has to be respected. When homophobic positions are extremely flagrant and cannot be framed as legitimate parts of the national social debate, they are presented as an individual whim, an "atomised" position with no institutional support (Ramírez, 2016). However the case, the result is the same: homophobia gets concealed; the politics of homosexuality, erased.

Gay Characters on Non-Fictional Programmes

Finally, there are six characters that appear on non-fictional programmes, mainly comedy shows. This is not a clear-cut category, as is formed by individuals that are presented in different positions along the fiction/non-fiction spectrum. Three of them are fictional characters that are, nevertheless, placed in non-fictional settings: as characters, they interact with presenters and panellists, discussing "real" issues. The other three are drag queens that generally appear as such; however, a few times they also appear "out of drag", as the real gay men who play these characters. Notwithstanding their differences, I decided to group them into one category because all of them appear either always or mostly *as characters* and in the same type of programmes. These six individuals are men, all of them act in gender nonconforming ways, half of them could be considered white within the Chilean context, and four of them could be characterised as working-class.

As is now clear, there are several similarities between the framing of homosexuality on fictional and non-fictional TV programmes: in general, gay men appear more often that lesbians; it is presented a class and race-skewed version of the Chilean society, with white and affluent gays and lesbians occupying the screen more regularly than unprivileged and darker-skinned subjects; additionally, gender expression is mostly a differentiating value that delineates characters' features and narrative possibilities; all this in a context where homophobia is ignored or just slightly addressed. With these general characteristics, I turn now into the definition of a set of "types" of gay/lesbian figures through which Chilean television has made non-heterosexual lives intelligible.

Chilean Television Gay/Lesbian "Typology"

Stereotypes are a form of ordering the world through the categorisation of people; a process that constitutes an inescapable "part of the way societies make sense of themselves" (Dyer, 2002b, p. 12). They express a general agreement about a social group, becoming one of the principal ways for understanding the individuals who "belong" to that group. Stereotypes, however, are not unique: they can coexist or supersede one another, once they are reproduced enough for their stabilisation. One of the ways in which this is produced is through their media use, as they form the basis for constructing characters and narratives that can be easily recognised by viewers; what Dyer (1984b,

2002b) calls "types". A type will then be understood as a "mode of characterization" (Dyer, 2002b, p. 13) that is constructed through defining traits that point to recurrent features, which can be "conceptualized as universal and eternal, the 'archetype', or historically and culturally specific, 'social types' and 'stereotypes'" (Dyer, 2002b, p. 13). While social types can have a wide range of positions, stereotypes "always carry within their very representation an implicit narrative" (Dyer, 2002b, p. 15)[46]. The latter is what can be viewed on Chilean television, where gay/lesbian figures have generally been represented through sets of features that are routinely paired to narrative possibilities, consolidating a number of "types" via which homosexuality has been televised. These modes of representing gay/lesbian identifications are not only the product of social conventions but are one of the main mechanisms through which these ideas are routinely reproduced, which therefore provide their social significance. The five types that will be explained below have been constructed through the identification of narrative possibilities and sets of more or less stable features. This does not mean that all of them are identical, as variations can be found within each type. However, the repetition of significant patterns that establish particular functions for each type and the ways in which they are connected with broader discussions about homosexuality in the country make possible their identification as differentiated modes of representation.

Funny Locas

These are 35 effeminate gay men that are depicted in humorous ways: an excuse for audiences to laugh about those men who embody a particular type of femininity – flamboyant, excessive, overly dramatic, sometimes even mischievous. Their presence on TV rarely goes beyond their gendered behaviour; they are reduced to it, mostly simplified. Conceptualisations made in other national contexts (e.g., Dyer, 2002b; Gross, 1991; N. Richardson, 2009) have explained that, historically and across audio-visual formats, effeminate gay men have usually occupied either the role of monsters to be feared or figures of fun. In the case of Chilean television, the second option is the one that has been

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[46] Dyer's (1984b, 2002b) theorisations focus on fictional representations. However, I use them for analysing individuals who have appeared in all types of programmes, as studies conducted in Chile (Antezana et al., 2016; Mujica & Bachmann, 2013, 2015) have shown that techniques that are usually associated with fictional texts – in terms of melodramatic character and narrative construction, for instance – are also used in non-fictional ones.

prioritised. There is nothing to be feared about *locas*. Apart from the eventual scheming, deceiving, and gossiping, they are harmless. They are not there to modify the gender system but to reinforce it through the pairing of femininity with a set of demeaning features. It is arguable, therefore, that *locas* have constituted a device through which Chilean TV has further placed femininity – and, through that, the bodies who inhabit it: mostly women – in a secondary social position as a consequence of its apparent incapacity of dealing with "serious" issues, which have been reserved to straight men; masculine gay men; and only those women who have, "with effort", gained this space. These representations could then not only be characterised as *effeminophobic* (Branfman, 2019; N. Richardson, 2009, 2018), since they are pointing directly at effeminacy as the element to be ridiculed, but also as misogynistic, as they are based on ideas that consider femininity as inherently inferior to masculinity. Similar humorous representations of effeminate gay men have been identified in other Latin American countries, such as Argentina (Aprea & Kirchheimer, 2015), Colombia (Bustamante & Aranguren, 2015), and Mexico (Tate, 2013).

The class position of *funny locas* – coded through elements such as their professions and the places in which they live – is fairly divided: 17 (49%) of them could be considered upper-class, 12 (34%) working-class, and six (16%) somewhere in the middle. When they are upper-class, that position is generally the result of moving upward the social ladder via effort and work, not of being a member of a historically well-off family. These upper-class *funny locas* usually show snobby attitudes, rejecting everything that is too common when compared to their refined tastes. On the other hand, when they are working-class, they show aspirational attitudes, wanting to appear wealthier or more sophisticated. They do this via changing their names; having a refined attitude, way of talking, and taste; or using words in French or English, trying to look international. The result is usually the same: a mostly likable but pitiful figure that breaths some air into the serious (heterosexual) problems. *Funny locas* are then not only a testament of how Chilean TV depicts homosexuality but also reveal its classist functioning[47], as they are also a device

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[47] According to a comprehensive study conducted by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (2017), the Chilean society can be characterised as a highly unequal and classist one. Even though the country has experienced a huge economic growth over the last decades, the effects of this growth have not been felt equally by all social classes. According to the UNDP's study, for instance, a vast number of Chilean full-time workers do not even get paid what they need in order to fulfil their

through which working-class positions are ridiculed, singled out as funnily pretentious and thus phony.

When analysing gay representations, authors like Cooper (2003) and Harris (2006) have utilised the term *camp* to describe images that, through humour, hold the possibility of "a pointed social critique" (Muñoz, 1999, p. 133). Camp, according to several classic conceptualisations (e.g., Babuscio, 1984; Dyer, 2002a; Newton, 1972), is a sensibility that employs humour as "a means of dealing with a hostile environment" (Babuscio, 1984, p. 47), while opening up possibilities of positive self-production and identity construction. This is not what takes place with *funny locas*; while their representation does rely on humour, this is not used as a strategy to criticise dominant social discourses. *Funny locas* are not directing at themselves the mockery they "direct [...] at the larger social world" (Halperin, 2014, p. 203). Instead, they are the target of a mockery that is created by others and that, furthermore, sustains their hierarchically inferior position, thus preventing access to "new realities" (Muñoz, 1999).

Regarding fictional programmes, *funny locas* have only appeared on *telenovelas*[48], where they usually occupy a secondary diegetic position in a narrative world that is almost exclusively inhabited by heterosexuals: almost all of them are the only gay characters living in an otherwise completely straight world. As secondary characters, and even though the majority of them appear in almost every episode, they generally do not have narrative arcs of their own. Their role is to support someone else (usually a woman friend), helping them in their decisions, particularly those related to romantic issues, a topic on which they are specialists. They know more about women than heterosexual men do, as they are

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and their families' basic needs; this reality is strongly stratified by social classes. These inequalities are also crystalised in modes of social interaction. A survey conducted by the UNDP in 2016, whose results are included in the 2017 report, shows that 41% of the surveyed population had experienced, during the past year, some form of discrimination. Of them, 43% identified their social class as the reason for that discrimination; likewise, 28% perceived the place in which they live as the reason, 27% the way in which they dress, and 26% their occupation or profession, all elements that are defined as social class markers. Following these figures, the UNDP (2017) states that an acute inequality of social treatment is an evident element of the Chilean society.

[48] Amadeo in *Trampas y Caretas* (Saquel, 1992), Juanito in *Ámame* (Larenas & Saquel, 1993), Pierre in *Marrón Glacé* (Aguirre, 1993), Marco Antonio in *Juegos de Fuego* (Saquel, 1995), Rolo in *Loca Piel* (Saquel, 1997), Orteguita in *Pampa Ilusión* (Ávila, 2001b), Rucio in *Amores de Mercado* (Ávila, 2001a), Recaredo in *Purasangre* (Ávila, 2002), Benito in *Los Treinta* (Demicheli, 2005), Tomás and Charlie in *Los Exitosos Pells* (Sabatini & López, 2009), Samuel in *Los Ángeles de Estela* (Rencoret, 2009-2010), Domingo in *Primera Dama* (Abreu, 2010-2011), Mateo and Andrés in *Separados* (Demicheli, 2012-2013), Enrie-André in *Pituca sin Lucas* (López, 2014-2015), and Rubén in *Si Yo Fuera Rico* (López, 2018).

"different"; they even sometimes know more about women than women do: "if there is someone that knows women well, that's *us* [gay men]. They tell us everything, they trust us", says Rubén in *Si Yo Fuera Rico* (López, 2018). Likewise, Enrie-André's best friend in *Pituca sin Lucas* (López, 2014-2015) (both of them depicted in Figure 3) says to him: "I hate men, they are all the same. That's why I like *you*". As in general their only role is to live for others, audiences do not know much about *funny locas*: not much is said about their personal lives, their problems, or reasons for happiness. They are helpers whose lives are only shaken as a consequence of the events that take place on someone else's life. Even the closet, which is a common narrative device through which homosexuality receives televisual visibility (D. Allen, 1995), is not a problem for them: the way they behave grants them a position outside of it. Therefore, there are no stories about coming out or "hiding" their sexuality. Not all of them, however, have been verbally identified as gay. The first one was Rucio in *Amores de Mercado* (Ávila, 2001a). Before him, as was explained above, homosexuality was not named as such, but only suggested by its classic signifiers: effeminate behaviour, extravagant clothes, and a delicate voice.

Figure 3 Enrie-André and his best friend, Stella, in *Pituca sin Lucas* (López, 2014-2015)

The fact that they do not have narrative arcs of their own implies that they generally do not occupy one of the principal storylines in *telenovelas*: the tribulations of love and passion. In fact, only three of all the *funny locas* have a love interest at some point of the narration. Regardless of this, all of them are desexualised. They never engage in sexual activities, despite their sometimes-lustful behaviour, which is mostly directed at straight men. This desire, nevertheless, is permanently ridiculed; just another reason for

audiences to laugh at them and pity them. Accordingly, only two *funny locas* kiss. These kisses, however, could hardly be considered "real", passionate, or embedded with romantic feelings, as both of them are depicted internally as a misunderstanding and externally as a joke for audiences to laugh at. Benito in *Los Treinta* (Demicheli, 2005), for instance, kisses his straight boss as a way to contest and hopefully put an end to his homophobic attitudes; needless to say, it does not work. Likewise, as shown in Figure 4, Tomás in *Los Exitosos Pells* (Sabatini & López, 2009) kisses someone he thinks is his boyfriend but who, in reality, is his boyfriend's twin. As a result of the misunderstanding, another burst of laughter is suggested – via the utilisation of comic music and a close-up of the confused straight men's face – as a consequence of unrequited gay lust. Something similar happens with fictional *funny locas* that appear on non-fictional programmes[49]: many of the comic appearances of some of them are associated with their intense sexual desires, which are particularly directed at straight men. These feelings, however, are strongly rejected, disgusting the desired men. Effeminate men's sexual desire is continuously rendered pathetic: they intensely want what they cannot have, transforming them in sexually frustrated creatures that only desire without materialising their cravings.

Figure 4 Tomás kisses his boyfriend's twin in *Los Exitosos Pells* (Sabatini & López, 2009)

Funny locas on non-fictional shows[50], on the other hand, usually appear on light-hearted programmes, such as talk shows, morning shows, or reality/talent shows, where they can

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[49] Cochiguaz (1997-2002), Tony Esbelt (2000-2013), Yerko Puchento (2003-2018), Stephanie Fox (2013-2018), Conny Dacardill (2011-2013), and La Pola (2011-2017).

[50] Jordi Castell (photographer, talk show presenter), Gonzalo Cáceres (make-up artist, regular guest in talk shows), Giovanni Falchetti (singer, participant of a reality show), Andrés Caniulef (journalist, talk

talk about the topics they know more about – beauty, showbusiness, fashion – while also sometimes talking about their lives, albeit in a way that mixes seriousness and humour. Whichever the case, all of them try to look and sound sophisticated, while showing aspirational and/or snobby attitudes. Striking is the fact that some of them also show *effeminophobic* attitudes, rejecting a homosexuality that is too feminine, for being "socially inadequate". An interesting example of this is an interview given by Jordi Castell on the talk show *La Noche es Nuestra* (Zamora, 2018-2020), illustrated in Figure 5, where he playfully talks about the "types of gays".

Figure 5 Jordi Castell, on *La Noche es Nuestra (Zamora, 2018-2020),* explaining why he does not like *primas*

In this interview, while talking about "bears", he says: "if I'm single and I'm looking for a man, I like that he smells like a *macho*, of course [...] I don't want a sissy, a *loca*". Likewise, when talking about "*primas*"[51], he says:

> They are the ones that are *mujereando*[52] everything all the time. I don't do it. I don't like when other people do it. That's a type of gays that I don't really like. I'm going to tell you

show presenter), William Geisse (events producer, regular guest in talk shows), Claudio Doenitz (photographer, participant of a reality show), Nelson Pacheco "Nelson Mauri" (dancer, participant of a talent show), Alexander Núñez "Arenito" (dancer, participant of a talent show), Erick Monsalve "Lelo" (dancer, participant of a talent show), Di Mondo (regular guest in talk shows), Nicolás Yunge (participant of a reality show), and Leo Méndez Jr (participant of a reality show).

[51] *Prima* translates as "cousin". It is a term that is typically used among younger gay men in Chile to refer to each other. It could be compared to the English "sister".

[52] *Mujerear* is a term that cannot be directly translated to English. It refers to a language use in which things and people are referred to using feminine articles, nouns, pronouns, and adjectives. It implies, for instance, putting an "a" at the end of your name – which is the letter with which many feminine names in Spanish finish – or referring to yourself and your friends with feminine articles, pronouns, or the feminine version of adjectives. This is possible in Spanish because it is a gendered language in

> something now, even if it enrages some queers. There's so much diversity now inside of the gay community; we don't need *primas* anymore, it's a thing of the past […] Let me explain: I'm very gay, I couldn't be gayer even if I wanted to. And if sometimes I act a little effeminate, it doesn't matter. But being *mujereando* all the time is a different thing. It's badly seen in society. We don't do it among friends, it's an ugly thing to do.

Here, Castell masterfully mixes classist and *effeminophobic* discourses in just a few sentences. What he says is that it is not good to be feminine; it is erotically unattractive, and it is socially inadequate. He can be a little effeminate sometimes and play with it with his friends, though. It is something that their class position allows them to do. However, being a *prima* who *mujerea* – values that have been uplifted by an economically unprivileged homosexuality – is degraded as a rejectable position that is badly seen in society. Is it inadequate, however, only because of the gender-destabilising character of these practices or as a consequence of where, in which bodies, these practices have more regularly dwelled? Arguably, a combination of both. Even though this is an extreme example, it reveals some of the characteristics through which *funny locas* have received televisual visibility: as figures that reinforce various types of social norms.

In all types of programmes, as *funny locas*' own tribulations are only slightly addressed, there is a big area of social problems that is simplified or plainly ignored: the consequences of living in a homophobic society are either not addressed at all or depicted as mere individual/psychological issues. When they experience what could be singled out as a homophobic event, this is shown as an unserious matter that has a simple solution or does not need a solution at all and/or as a purely individual problem whose solutions are to be found within intimate bounds. These topics are rarely politicised or explained as something that goes beyond the individual suffering from it. Benito in *Los Treinta* (Demicheli, 2005), for instance, is continuously mistreated by his homophobic boss. All these episodes, however, are treated lightly, as funny occurrences. Even how Benito tries to put an end to this – by kissing his boss – implies a profound simplification of homophobia, as in reality this would be a potentially dangerous situation that would not even cross the mind of someone being abused. In other *telenovelas*, homophobic acts carried out by (heterosexual) friends are also simplified: Mateo in *Separados* (Demicheli, 2012-2013), Enrie-André's in *Pituca sin Lucas* (López, 2014-2015), and Rubén in *Si Yo Fuera*

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which articles are either "feminine" or "masculine" and adjectives are slightly different for both genders.

Rico (López, 2018) receive continuous comments about their sexuality from their "friends". Phrases such as "stop being a pussy" or "I don't want weird men here" are treated as innocuous interactions which are, in fact, received with laughter by the gay characters. Something similar happens with several *funny locas* in talk shows or talent shows, whose behaviours are ridiculed with off-screen screams or laughter. Via these strategies, homophobia is rendered harmless, just another aspect of gay life which is even depicted as enjoyable. These comments and attitudes are the prices *funny locas* have had to pay for being part of the heterosexist televisual world, therefore not only reproducing classist and sexist behaviours and attitudes, but also homophobic ones.

There have been opportunities in which homophobia has been more thoroughly assessed. In one episode that struck audiences for its cruelty and that received more diegetic attention, Rubén in *Si Yo Fuera Rico* (López, 2018) was brutally beaten by a group of men. While beating him up, one of these men said: "what are you going to say to the police? That we are discriminating against you? What's the name of the faggots' law? Zamudio law?", referencing the antidiscrimination law that was named after Daniel Zamudio, the young man who died in Santiago as a consequence of being beaten and tortured by a group of neo-Nazis. After this violent episode, an uninterested brother goes to the hospital to check on Rubén's state. He just stays for a couple of minutes, though; he is not interested in his gay brother. After this, the story focuses on Rubén's difficult recovery, rendering the assault a purely personal problem. We do not get to know if there was a judicial process, if the Zamudio Law was actually utilised, or if justice was served. Anything that could have further explained the ways in which homophobia "works" and how it can be legally faced in the Chilean context is elided from the narrative. Likewise, interviews in which *funny locas* have – at least partially – abandoned their humorous personas in order to talk about their lives have not gone further than the individual experience. Interviews with them are rarely contextualised, focusing only on the more "interesting" – sadder, more shocking – part of their lives. None of this is to say that the only purpose of *funny locas* – or any other gay or lesbian figure, for that matter – should be to reveal Chile's homophobic logics. Or that all of their stories should be continuously politicised, as this would also be an unexpected element of certain genres, for instance *telenovelas* (Lopez, 1995). However, oversimplifying or eliminating from the narrative the homophobic context in which they are placed is a very unrealistic account of the national

reality that constructs an image of the Chilean society in which these issues are not a problem.

The avoidance or simplification of the context in which their lives are placed is just one example of how *funny locas* have been represented in a one-dimensional way on Chilean television. The sight of a gay man that is effeminate and at the same time is politically involved, sexually active, not so funny, or with interests away from fashion and beauty is inexistent on Chilean TV during the analysed period. Of course, the opposite characteristics are not intrinsically bad, what is problematic is the fact that these features have been the *only ones* through which effeminate gays have been depicted, thus reproducing a series of socially hegemonic discourses.

Serious Machos

These are 27 masculine gay men who are always depicted in serious and/or dramatic ways. This is consistent with the *machista* gender order, which imbues masculinity with values such as seriousness and worth (Asencio, 2011; Cantú, 2000; Jeffries, 2009; Mutchler, 2000). Triviality is reserved for women (and effeminate gays); "real" men have important things to worry about. Consequently, *serious machos* take care of political issues (many of them are political activists or journalists), have important jobs (they are doctors or economists), and worry about their families (mostly their parents) and/or want to form one of their own. These characteristics underline their class position: the majority of *serious machos* could be characterised as upper-class (22 or 82%), while other class positions are marginal. In general, their upper-class position is coded as genuine, unlike *funny locas'* phoniness. They are members of well-off families, work in highly regarded occupations, and do not feel the need to show off their class position via pretentious attitudes. Seriousness, therefore, not only gets attached to gender conformity but also more regularly to privileged class positions. Audiences are supposed to suffer and think with *serious machos* and laugh at the popular and effeminate *funny locas*. This response is not only suggested by the differentiated narratives they lead but also by the utilisation of tools such as music – comic for *locas* and dramatic/tense for *machos* – and ways of acting – exaggerated and naturalistic, respectively.

Within fictional programmes, the majority of *serious machos* have appeared on *telenovelas,* only one on a series[53]. In all these programmes, they usually occupy a main diegetic position, appearing in plenty of scenes in each episode. They have occupied this level of narrative importance since their abrupt emergence in the *telenovela Machos* (Saquel, 2003), which for the first time on Chilean television dedicated a great part of its time to show the serious issues of a gay man. For this, however, this man had to be stripped of all the "gay markers" that had indicated homosexuality up until that point on Chilean TV and other forms of popular culture: Ariel, depicted in Figure 6, was a chaste masculine doctor, part of a rich and powerful family, who was coming back to Chile to gain his family's acceptance after living in Barcelona for several years. According to Amigo et al. (2014), Ariel was a character whose behavioural traits showed him as nothing but tightly connected with the heteronormative paradigm.

Of all *serious machos*, however, Ariel is the only one who does not enjoy the company of another gay man. Physical contact among gay people was something that was absolutely off-limits for Canal 13 (Cádiz, 2019), a TV station that until that point was still mainly owned by the Catholic Church through its university. In fact, the mere presence of Ariel was rare for the channel, which did not include any other gay character in its *telenovelas* for the next seven years. This is also due to the fact that *serious machos* started appearing more regularly on a new format that was strongly popularised since the beginning of the decade by another station, TVN; these were night-time *telenovelas*, which were broadcast around 10pm and in which more "socially adventurous" topics were regularly included. These programmes started concentrating the fictional representation of homosexuality, particularly of the serious type, while day-time *telenovelas* – which are constructed in a lighter way – were more regularly inhabited by *funny locas*.

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[53] Ariel in *Machos* (Saquel, 2003), Humberto and Efraín in *Puertas Adentro* (Ávila, 2003), Sebastián and Javier in *Cómplices* (Sabatini & López, 2006), Colin in *Vivir con 10* (Larenas, 2007), Martín in *Los Exitosos Pells* (Sabatini & López, 2009), Javier and Ignacio in *¿Dónde Está Elisa?* (Demicheli, 2009), Ronny and Valentino in *Mujeres de Lujo* (Basso, 2010), Juan and Nicolás in *La Doña* (Stoltze, 2011-2012), Ignacio in *Separados* (Demicheli, 2012-2013), Guillermo and Fernando in *Graduados* (Aguirre, 2013-2014), Alejandro in *Mamá Mechona* (Portilla, 2014), Joaquín in *Zamudio* (Bascuñán et al., 2015), and José Luis in *Casa de Muñecos* (López, 2018-2019).

Figure 6 Ariel comes back to Chile, in the first episode of *Machos* (Saquel, 2003)

Usually, therefore, *serious machos* are not the only gay character in the narrative. They are accompanied by their partner or love interest: another *serious macho*. The romantic pairing of a *serious macho* and a *funny loca* is still an almost inexistent narrative. Making a couple of this type implies the need to add some seriousness to the depiction of the *funny loca,* placing the character outside of the parameters of what producers and writers usually do with them. The idea of an effeminate man who loves and who is loved in return is a potentially destabilising image that has been strongly resisted. The presence of more than one gay character, however, does not imply that what can be considered "gay culture" is televised. These couples inhabit heterosexual worlds where they only have straight friends, rarely visit places directed at a gay clientele, and do not enjoy products of queer culture. *Serious machos* are also highly desexualised: even though the majority of them has a partner, more than half never kiss and only two of them engage in explicit sexual activity. They are, however, less desexualised than *funny locas*, giving these characters the possibility of a slightly more complex depiction. This higher sexualisation can be explained by these characters' more constant presence on night-time *telenovelas*, time slot in which channels can present "adult content". However, the fact that the only couple in one of these productions who did not kiss is the one formed by a *serious macho* and a *funny loca* – which took place in *Separados* (Demicheli, 2012-2013) – implies that there is more to it than that: effeminate gay men will be denied physical affection regardless of the time of the day in which the programme is broadcast.

Beyond their (lack of) sexual activity, *serious machos* usually lead their own narrative arcs. They are not only there to be companions or advisers to their heterosexual friends. This, however, does not mean that their lives are less defined by the straight people that surround them. *Serious machos*' main narratives are marked by "the closet", which has become "a common trope, an easy, tacit reference to queer culture that has a million uses" (Barnhurst, 2007, p. 4). Their preoccupations are usually delineated by who knows and who does not know about their sexual identifications. They are constantly trying to hide their sexuality and/or fighting for someone's acceptance. Homosexuality is then treated as an "issue" that must be dealt with and that, furthermore, has strong consequences for friends and family. These consequences are represented in a particularly poignant way in those cases where the *serious macho* is already married to a woman who does not know about her husband's "real" sexual identification, as the possibility of bisexuality is also erased, such as Ignacio in *¿Dónde Está Elisa?* (Demicheli, 2009) and José Luis in *Casa de Muñecos* (López, 2018-2019). The construction of these characters focuses on the harm they are causing to their families as a consequence of withholding information that *should* be revealed, since being gay is "not a problem", as José Luis' wife and sister-in-law say to him on several occasions. This is reinforced by the presence of other gay characters – Ignacio's love interest and José Luis' love interest and nephew – who show that homosexuality can be lived "freely" and "happily", while being "accepted" by those who love you. These programmes are then based on the understanding that the "real" problem are those "gay men who are *not* out – who fail to identify with the label waiting for them, who refuse to accept the straight world's tolerance" (Becker, 2009, p. 127).

The closet is then depicted in these productions as a space that must be urgently vacated. *Serious machos* are not expected to inhabit it for a long time; they must be brave – to "be a man" – and speak out. To "come out" and "confess" their sexuality is depicted as a decision that implies being responsible to others and oneself. Others have to know the truth, even if it causes surprise and suffering (at least at the beginning). For themselves, on the other hand, the "confession is regarded as cathartic, purifying and empowering" (Gill, 2007, p. 169), constructing the closet as a space that is filled with senseless fear, therefore placing the responsibility into gay men's own ideas and decisions and not into the homophobic society, which would produce an understandable fear. Ariel in *Machos* (Saquel, 2003), for instance, says:

> I've been fighting for my family's love and acceptance my whole life. But after ten years, I've discovered that the problem is *mine*. When I started loving and accepting myself, things started changing. Furthermore, this country is also changing, and it is now easier to live here.

Coming out of the closet is thus constructed as a purely personal event in which social factors play only a secondary role, if any. In this way, the socially produced suffering caused by the closet is presented "as an individual psychological problem" (Lovelock, 2019, p. 557) that can only be overcome through self-love and "being yourself". Putting all the responsibility of this suffering on the gay men themselves – their senseless fears – erases the existence and consequences of homophobia in the country, rendering pervasive social inequalities invisible.

Regarding non-fictional shows[54], on the other hand, *serious machos* usually appear on more serious programmes, such as political shows, the news, or some talk shows, where they can assess weightier political or cultural topics while also sometimes talking about their personal lives. They are either LGBTQ activists or journalists, thus very opinionated and apparently smart. Two of them rarely talk about their personal lives or even discuss broad social issues about sexuality in Chile. Being gay is just another part of their identities; one that can be easily "hidden" as a consequence of the privileged position granted by their conventional gender expression. The other six do talk openly about their private life; regularly about topics such as "dealing" with their homosexuality in Chile and coming out, but not about issues such as their romantic or sexual life.

For these *serious machos*, the closet has been an integral part of their public life, as they have had to decide, at some point of their careers, to "reveal" their sexual identification. Less than half of them – the activists – have always been known as gay, as this is an identification that is needed for their social role. The other ones – the journalists – have usually come out in interviews either on TV or in glossy magazines. They have done this for several reasons: being forced to do it because of an extortion, doing it in the middle of an antidiscrimination judicial process, or as a way of "being honest" with the public. Noteworthy are the reasons given by José Miguel Villouta, who has stated that he

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[54] José Miguel Villouta (journalist, talk show presenter), José Antonio Neme (journalist, talk show presenter and news anchor), Rolando Jiménez (activist), Pablo Simonetti (writer, activist), Luis Larraín (activist), Ignacio Gutiérrez, (journalist, talk show presenter), Juan Manuel Astorga (journalist, news anchor), and Ítalo Passalacqua (journalist).

"revealed" his homosexuality as a way of fighting a stereotype that, in his explanation, sounds rather similar to what has been here defined as *funny locas*. In a 2016 interview on the talk show *Mentiras Verdaderas* (Parra, 2011-present), illustrated in Figure 7, Villouta said:

> We gay men used to appear on TV just as make-up artists or fashion assistants [...] The only ones that were out of the closet were Gonzalo Cáceres, Ítalo, and Jordi. I wanted to be the first one that could present the news to the public.

Through his words, the differentiation is made clear: we, gay men, are not *all* the same, I am not *like them*. We can also be serious (like *you*) and therefore *we* deserve respect.

Figure 7 José Miguel Villouta, on *Mentiras Verdaderas* (Parra, 2011-present), explaining why he wanted to be perceived as a "different" gay

In general, *serious machos'* interventions establish connections between their personal experiences and broad social issues, illustrating some of the complications of living in Chile as a gay man. These interventions are usually marked by these men's class privilege. Although evidently classist attitudes were not identified, the fact that the vast majority of gay men that appear talking about their lives on non-fictional TV programmes are upper-class implies that there is a specific type of homosexuality that is being constantly reproduced on Chilean television. Audiences get to know about coming out inside of a rich conservative family, about "discovering" or "accepting" one's sexuality while living abroad, and about wanting to become a father using expensive reproductive methods. These are all very interesting and legitimate life-stories, of course that is not the problem; what is problematic is the fact that these are class-marked discourses that do not offer a reflection about the ways in which privileges are also unfairly distributed inside of the

LGBTQ communities. TV, in that sense, has not yet thoroughly analysed how it is to be gay in a poor area of Santiago or a small town far away from the capital or how gays and lesbians grow old in a country with a pension system that does not provide what is needed in order to satisfy basic needs (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2017). Over the last few years, these framings have started appearing on some non-fictional programmes. However, life-stories marked by class privilege continue to be the "standard" narrative for homosexuality, particularly – although not exclusively – on serious programmes.

Family Women

The majority of these lesbian characters/people (11 out of 13) are represented as mostly behaving in gender conforming ways, while the other two represent, at least in image, what could be considered butch lesbianism. Here, a noticeable difference between the televisual visibility of gays and lesbians is identified: while the depiction of the former gets completely differentiated depending on their gender expression, the representation of the latter is not so marked by this category. This might be due to the aforementioned fact that gender nonconforming lesbians have rarely been depicted on different forms of national cultural production, including television, so producers, writers, and directors have not developed a specific role for them to occupy. When they do appear, it is only a matter of appearance – "masculine" clothes, short hair – but not of other characteristics, ways of acting, or a specific set of dramatic situations, as is the case with gender nonconforming gay men. The *machista* ideal femininity has been pervasive enough to homogenise the desires, identities, and plot positions of the depicted lesbians even if they do not look or behave in the ways this ideal mandates them to do. In that sense, these 13 women's representation is marked by the two poles that have been defined within this gender order: a domestic role as partners or mothers and a sexualised existence. Something similar has been found in analyses of straight women's representation on Chilean television, which "usually relates to one of two aspects: she is either a mother or a sexual object" (Bucciferro, 2011, p. 21). Although both of these roles are present in these figures, in the case of *family women* the first one is highlighted, while the second is foregrounded in the last type, which will be explained below. As a consequence of their

association with maternity and domesticity, *family women* are always depicted in serious and/or dramatic ways; according to the *machista* gender order, these are crucial issues that must be assessed accordingly, as they are what define women as such, regardless of their sexual identification. Regarding other belongings, *family women*'s position is fairly similar to the other types: the majority of them is coded as upper-class and could be considered white within the Chilean context.

Regarding fictional programmes, these *family women* are all characters of *telenovelas*[55]*,* where they usually occupy a main diegetic position, although there is also a high presence of incidental characters: Verónica and Claudia in *Socias* (López, 2013-2014) and Francesca in *Matriarcas* (Saquel, 2015) appeared only on one or a few episodes, as circumstantial parts of the main characters' narrative arcs, giving them the possibility to be "open" or "progressive" about their politics on sexuality. Regardless of their level of diegetic relevance, none of these characters is the only lesbian on the programme. They are all accompanied by their partners, albeit surrounded by straight people, inhabiting heterosexual worlds. In that sense, the representation of lesbian motherhood is restricted to couples: there are no lesbians who want to become single mothers or as part of other forms of family arrangements. The maternal instinct gets only activated within "traditional" distributions. There are, however, different ways to reach this goal: *family women* try adoption, assisted reproductive technology treatments, or even having sex with a male friend. All these options are always depicted as a couple's project, never only individual. Likewise, those who are already mothers – as a consequence of past relationships – are shown as having the full support of their partners, making maternity a shared issue anyway.

Different to what happens with *serious machos*, in this case, the fact that *family women* are depicted in couples does involve their sexualisation: four of them kiss and two of them engage in sexual activities. On Chilean television, lesbian sexuality has thus been singled out as way more *watchable* than gay sexuality, which can be framed as the result of the masculine porn fantasy of lesbianism (Ciasullo, 2001; Diamond, 2005; Jackson & Gilbertson, 2009; T. Jenkins, 2005; L. D. Taylor, 2005). In that sense, the possibility that a

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[55] Verónica and Claudia in *Socias* (López, 2013-2014), Daniela and Carla in *No Abras la Puerta* (Kri, 2014-2015), Isidora and Renata in *Las Dos Carolinas* (Basso, 2014), Francesca in *Matriarcas* (Saquel, 2015), and Elsa and Paola in *Preciosas* (Abreu & Muñoz, 2016-2017).

scene of lesbian sexuality can be enjoyed by straight men has arguably increased the televisual visibility of this type of encounter. The fact that the two characters who engage in sexual activity – Daniela and Carla in *No Abras la Puerta* (Kri, 2014-2015), who are depicted in Figure 8 – can be considered conventionally beautiful reinforces this explanation: the type of queer sexuality that will be televised is the one that can be enjoyed by who, in a *machista* social order, holds the preferential right to sexual pleasure.

Figure 8 Daniela (right) and Carla (middle) in *No Abras la Puerta* (Kri, 2014-2015) with the boy they want to adopt

Family women in non-fictional programmes[56], on the other hand, appear on talk shows, reality shows, and the news. Notwithstanding the type of programme, they are always depicted in serious ways. When they are invited to talk shows, they usually discuss their personal lives, focusing on their roles as partners, mothers, or mothers-to-be. They are usually invited to these programmes with their partners even if they are not "famous" (as shown in Figure 9); in non-fictional programmes, maternity is then also a couple's issue, never an individual one. The fact that the great majority of these women can be considered middle- to upper-class implies that family arrangements are discussed in ways that normalise and render privileges invisible. Assisted reproductive technology treatments, for instance, are highly expensive mechanisms that are discussed as possible options. In that sense, these women's families or desires to have children are rarely contextualised or

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[56] Karen Atala (lawyer, activist), Scarleth Cárdenas (journalist, news anchor), Viviana Flores (participant of a reality show), and María Jimena Pereyra (singer, participant of a talent show).

explained through broad intersectional ways that could provide televisual visibility to others' problems, needs, and material shortcomings.

Figure 9 Scarleth Cárdenas (in a blue shirt in the left picture) and her partner Maribel, talking about their family in *Mucho Gusto* (Alvarado & Véliz, 2001-present)

Each one of these *family women*'s experience, both in fictional and non-fictional programmes, are narrated in ways that reveal the different complications they have gone through in the process of forming a family in a homophobic country like Chile. However, these narrations are mostly done following a "case logic" that hinders the understanding of broad social phenomena. Some of the *family women* that appear on non-fictional programmes try to establish this kind of connections. Nonetheless, these interventions are regularly disregarded by the presenters, who prefer interviewees to focus on personal or intimate events. In that sense, although these experiences have the potential to reveal the homophobic functioning of several institutions, the facts that the televised stories dwell mainly on the personal experiences of class and race-privileged subjects and that the solutions are mostly achieved via economic and not socio-political terms – with the clear exception of Karen Atala, whose case was explained in Chapter 2 – impedes a broader explanation of the ways in which homophobia works, particularly in intersection with other forms of discrimination.

Camionas

Similar to what has been observed in other countries (Ciasullo, 2001; Escudero-Alías & Calvo-Pascual, 2012; Kessler, 2012; Lee & Meyer, 2010), butch lesbianism is rarely present

on Chilean television. As has been explained, it simply goes against too many of the values that the *machista* gender order reserves for the ideal femininity. In the rare occasions when gender nonconforming lesbians do appear, the difference is only a matter of appearance: although with short hair, they are devoted, loving, and sympathetic women that find plenitude in caring for their families, particularly their sons or daughters. There has been only one character that has disobeyed all these characteristics: Raco, the main character of the series *Cárcel de Mujeres* (Goldschmied, 2007-2008), who is illustrated in Figure 10. All this defiance, however, did not come alone: Raco was a violent criminal living in a prison where she frightened other inmates and "used" them for her own sexual pleasure. The only way in which Chilean TV made a gender-destabilising butch lesbianism visible, therefore, was through a completely abject character, an unlikable villain that paid a high price for her disobedience: she ended up dead.

Figure 10 Raco (left) and another inmate called "la Negra" in *Cárcel de Mujeres* (Goldschmied, 2007-2008)

Clear Lesbians/Confused Lesbians

This type refers to women whose sexual identification is being "discovered" or "questioned" throughout the programme. They are only present on fictional shows, specifically *telenovelas*, where they generally occupy a main diegetic position. Even though this type takes different forms, it always keeps as main narrative the changeable conditions of women's sexuality. Its more common design is formed by two women: a clearly identified lesbian and a woman who identifies as straight but who, during the programme, shows different levels of "openness" to lesbianism, embodying what

Diamond (2005) has called heteroflexibility. This is what happens with Lucrecia and Herminia in *El Señor de la Querencia* (López, 2008), who are shown in Figure 11; Perla and Zafiro in *Mujeres de Lujo* (Basso, 2010); and Macarena and Nina in *Infiltradas* (Basso, 2011), who respectively take the role of *clear lesbian* and *confused lesbian*. Their stories, however, end in rather dissimilar ways: the first two end up dead; the second two as friends, as Zafiro "goes back" to heterosexuality; and the last two get married. Slightly different is the story of Emilia and Denisse in *Ídolos* (Ávila & Sabatini, 2004-2005), where both take the role of *confused lesbians* or initially self-identified straight women who start questioning their sexuality, to end up together. They, however, go through this process as a couple, unlike Pastora in *Vivir con 10* (Larenas, 2007), who "discovers" her sexuality without a partner. The last arrangement features lesbians who fall in love with straight women who never develop same-gender desires, but who, nevertheless, are always understanding about the situation, never reacting in a negative or violent way. This is the case of Úrsula in *Conde Vrolock* (Demicheli, 2009-2010), Jacqueline in *Reserva de Familia* (López, 2012), and Trinidad in *Wena Profe* (Campos, 2017-2018). Regardless of the specific configuration, by the last episode the *confused lesbian* has to make a decision: either to become a "full time" lesbian or to "go back" to heterosexuality. Other options are absolutely disregarded: there is no space for bisexuality or other sexual formations.

Figure 11 Lucrecia (left) and Herminia (right) in *El Señor de la Querencia* (López, 2008)

This is a narrative that is not occupied by men in any programme in Chile. For them, sexual identification has to be clearly defined from beginning to end. Women's sexuality, therefore, is depicted as more mutable, less clearly defined, and open to seduction. This

could be interpreted as a positive feature, since it could contribute to destabilising the conceptualisation of sexuality as a strict binary identification. However, the ways in which these narratives are constructed – demanding a firm decision by the end of the story – and the fact that this is a position exclusively occupied by women makes it possible to argue that these narratives are not contesting the *machista* gender/sexuality order but being complicit with it.

Out of all the gay and lesbian characters that have been here reviewed, this type is the most sexualised one: the majority of them kiss and four engage in sexual activities; encounters that are led by a *clear lesbian* and a *confused lesbian* that can be considered conventionally attractive. The fact that these relationships and sexual encounters can only be led by women – and particularly women who look and act in a certain manner, since all these women mostly behave in gender conforming ways – emphasises these characters' coherence with *machismo*, as sexuality will only be televised if it is pleasurable to the *macho*. These characters are made possible through the "hot lesbian" narrative (Jackson & Gilbertson, 2009), where same-gender sexuality between women is preferably presented for the men's gaze. However, opposite to what is described by Diamond (2005), in the case of Chilean *telenovelas* sexual acts between women are not presented as experiments that are premised on stable heterosexual identities: lesbian sex is not a one-night adventure, but the expression of a sexual identity that is being "questioned" in the context of a caring relationship. Throughout the programme, there is nothing stable about the *confused lesbians'* identities; it is constantly in the process of construction. The ending, however, always breaks these potentially destabilising narratives, as a firm sexual identification has to be achieved.

While "questioning" or "discovering" their sexual identifications, these women never take into consideration the social conditions of homophobia and heterosexism in Chile. This is a purely individual/psychological process in which broad social phenomena are ignored. When it is depicted, the "resistance" to lesbianism comes from friends and/or family members and not from big social institutions. In that sense, lesbianism is not represented as an "option" or something to "decide upon" – which would be a questionable feature as well – but as the result of a natural process of "discovering" that is conducted on purely psychological terms. The *confused lesbians* never discuss or talk

about how this potential "new identification" would alter her material conditions of living, thus rendering homophobia and discrimination as a whole less visible.

Beyond the Five Types: New Opportunities

In different ways, the aforementioned types of representation of gays and lesbians have been complicit in the reproduction of dominant social discourses. Through different characterisations and narrative strategies, these *watchable* images have not profoundly challenged the heterosexual norm. Although some of them have been framed as more "appropriate", as a consequence, for instance, of their closer adjustment to gender norms, they are still treated as hierarchically inferior. These figures are shown as living incomplete and simplified lives from which certain aspects of homosexual existence, such as intimacy, sexuality, and queer friendship are avoided. Also regularly eschewed are the social conditions through which homosexuality is lived in Chile, with homophobia and its effects being ignored or only lightly addressed. Likewise, not many programmes have broken the fixed characterisation of individuals in terms of their features and social identities. This is, however, not to say that all the figures mentioned in this chapter are *essentially* bad or detrimental, since many of them have rightfully contributed to the advancement of gays' and lesbians' visibility, creating characters that, although problematic, have helped to state "we exist". This has been achieved, nonetheless, through representations that have not shown the immense plurality of the experiences and identities of Chilean gays and lesbians.

Over the last few years, some exceptions have appeared. These are figures that have avoided some of the aforementioned static characteristics, thus at least partially disrupting what audiences have come to expect in terms of gay/lesbian representation. This does not mean that these figures are *necessarily* or *completely* favourable or that they do not share with the five types some of their characteristics. They have, however, shown some of the new ways in which Chilean TV has been moving forward regarding how gay/lesbian experiences can be framed.

As has been repeated throughout this chapter, one of the social positions that has been more constantly ignored or simplified is the one inhabited by economically unprivileged gays and lesbians. When it does take place, therefore, it instantly stands out.

The series *El Reemplazante* (Goldschmied et al., 2012-2014), for instance, which narrates the lives of a group of students at a secondary school in one of the poorest areas of Santiago, includes among its characters two young gay men, Ariel and Javier. Both of them escape the effeminate type mostly associated with working-class homosexuality, without necessarily appealing to a purely masculine one. Although they occupy a secondary diegetic position, the series utilises a good portion of its airtime to show their lives, particularly Ariel's. This is done, furthermore, in ways that diverge from the storylines typically used for portraying gay lives. In that sense, for instance, none of them comes out. Their classmates know from the beginning that they are gay and after a few months, a couple, difference that is not emphasised nor ignored. As a consequence, each one of them is just "another member" of the group, leading a regularly natural and healthy relationship with their peers. This, however, does not mean that homophobia is ignored, as the possibility of violence is always latent, being materialised, for instance, in the arrival of a new classmate who self-identifies as neo-Nazi or in the different ways in which Javier and Ariel deal with the "problem" of kissing at a park: while the former is afraid, the latter states that he will not let others limit his life. A further element that characterises Ariel's storyline is his political participation as president of his school's student union. This contributes to make his representation more complex, showing a gay man in a position of leadership that is not necessarily connected with LGBTQ issues. Ariel and Javier are characters that are political, affective, and not limited by their gender expression. They, furthermore, live with the possibility of homophobia without letting it fully restrict their lives. In sum, they are two gay men whose "difference" is not defined as their main characteristic nor ignored or assessed as "just one more aspect" of their identities.

Although in quite different ways, the intersection between homosexuality and an unprivileged class position is also shown by Daniel, the main character of the miniseries *Zamudio* (Bascuñán et al., 2015), programme that narrates the events that led to Daniel Zamudio's death. Although the programme uses this homophobic episode as its centre, it refuses to show Daniel only as a victim. It depicts him as a party gay man, willing to do anything to achieve his aims: to become famous as a TV personality and leave behind his days living with his family in a poor area of Santiago. This representation contrasts with the one made by news media, which showed the "real" Daniel as a sweet young man; a "good" victim that could be any of us, or our brother, son, etc. Through this

characterisation, the audience was encouraged to suffer with his story and repudiate homophobia because it claimed a "good" person as its victim. The series refuses this simplified depiction, showing Daniel as a self-absorbed young man that was indeed passed out drunk in the park the night when he was attacked. This has been read as a way of placing some of the responsibility on Daniel himself; however, it is also possible to argue that, through this characterisation, the programme invites to condemn homophobia regardless of the "moral" conditions of the victim, inviting also to understand how it works in intersection with an unprivileged class position. The series, however, also dwells on the attackers' stories of deprivation and violence exerted upon them, showing points of similarity between their and Daniel's lives. It therefore contextualises their actions as the result of their "difficult" lives, falling short in its description of homophobic violence as something that, although contingent to its context, is never justifiable or understandable as the result of a deprived life.

Some of these new possibilities have also taken place in non-fictional programmes. For instance, the representation of Hernán Arcil and Andrei Hadler, participants of *Rojo: el Color del Talento* (Cordero, 2018-2019), departed from the ways in which homosexuality had been represented in other talent or reality shows: they did not have a "staged" coming out moment and their participation was not focused on their sexuality or their gender expression, which was not markedly feminine nor masculine. Their sexual identification, however, was not hidden – what has happened in other talent shows – but shown naturally through their romantic relationship. In that sense, their love story was depicted following the same playful characteristics that frame heterosexual participants' relationships. There were also more serious moments when their lives as gay men came to the forefront. Both in *Rojo: el Color del Talento* as in other programmes – for instance, talk shows where they have been invited – they have discussed family and material problems that can only be understood in the intersection of their sexual identification with an unprivileged class position, thus broadening the ways in which homosexuality has been regularly discussed in these programmes.

The docuseries *Happy Together* (Hidalgo & Vega, 2015) can also be mentioned as a place where more complex representations have appeared. The programme focused on two couples (one gay couple and one lesbian couple) that wanted to have children, showing all the difficulties that mark this desire in a country like Chile. Even though this is a

narrative that has been used in other representations – particularly in those cases, such as this one, where it is led by upper-class gays and lesbians – this programme goes a step forward, showing them not *only* as gays and lesbians who want to form a family, but also as individuals who, for instance, actively participate in political organisations and enjoy having fun with their gay/lesbian friends, thus adding layers of complexity to the representation of gay/lesbian lives. Similarly, the ways in which the presenter Isabel Fernández has been depicted has escaped a single-path mode of representation, being shown as a politically engaged commentator *and* as a good-humoured young woman.

Among these exceptions, two of the newest are Mercedes and Bárbara, characters of the period *telenovela Perdona Nuestros Pecados* (Demicheli, 2017-2018), who are illustrated in Figure 12. During a year and a half, audiences witnessed Mercedes and Bárbara's strategies to hide their love, how they engaged in sexual and romantic encounters, how they were violently rejected by their families in the context of homophobic 1960s Chile, and how they defended their identity and love. What more prominently stood out is the fact that neither Mercedes nor Bárbara were looking for their family's acceptance. They just wanted to live their lives on their own terms. In a dramatic scene, for instance, when Mercedes' family find out about her relationship with Bárbara, she claims:

> You won't treat me like that! [...] Who do you think you are? Judging me... You? For years I've been putting up with your sins and lies, and now you have the nerve to judge me? No, I won't tolerate that. Particularly from you! I... I'm in love with Bárbara Román. And I don't feel ashamed about it. If I could, I would scream my love for her! And I'm not asking for your understanding. I'm not!

Although Mercedes' and Bárbara's lives are delineated by their (heterosexual) families in the context of a homophobic country in a highly conservative era, they refuse their ruling, constantly developing strategies for overcoming their authority. This marks a powerful difference with other characters, which were constantly looking for someone's "acceptance", therefore being complicit in the reproduction of heterosexist domination patterns. Similar ideas were embodied by Mauro, Matías, and Polo, characters of the *telenovela Casa de Muñecos* (López, 2018-2019), who refuse to let others define the ways in which they could live their sexualities. None of these characters, of course, was "perfect", but they represent interesting deviations from the rather fixed types described in this chapter.

Figure 12 Bárbara (left) and Mercedes (middle), in *Perdona Nuestros Pecados* (Demicheli, 2017-2018), trying to escape from their families

Although interesting cases, however, all these figures are still no more than exceptions in a television system that continues to privilege representations of gays and lesbians that do not destabilise the *status quo* and that, actually, can contribute to the reproduction of sexist, homophobic, and/or classist discourses. In that sense, possibilities of "queer television" where heteronormative practices are disrupted and subverted, which have been identified in other national contexts (Chambers, 2009; Dhaenens, 2014; Murrell & Stark, 2013; Vanlee et al., 2018), are still rather hard to find on Chilean TV. Notwithstanding these textual conditions, it is central to assess gay and lesbian viewers' responses and interpretations of these characters. This, in order to comprehend the ways in which members of the audience have contextualised, understood, and used these programmes in their own lives. These are the aims that guide the remaining chapters of this thesis, beginning with the methodology that was used for achieving them.

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Chapter 3   Methodology

</div>

Introduction

This project has been based, since its inception, on an approach that recognises that knowledge production is not impersonal nor neutral, but a socially constructed and situated endeavour that is firmly grounded in the experiences of the researcher and the context in which it takes place (England, 1994; Valentine, 2002; van Zoonen, 1994). As was mentioned in the Introduction, this study originates in my own experience as a Chilean gay man who grew up watching local television, and that continues to do so, thanks to the Internet, even after immigrating. It is, therefore, from my own life – and the lives of others, particularly friends, with whom I have talked about these issues over the years – from where the intellectual motivation to analyse the connections between representations of homosexuality and the construction of sexualised identifications emerges. The origin of an idea, however, is not the only place where the situated nature of knowledge production is revealed. As Pillow (2003) explains, with the "interpretive turn" in social sciences, the "objectivity" of the whole research process was brought into question, including discussions about the ways in which the researcher's subjectivity frames and shapes the production of knowledge.

Feminist theory is one of the areas in which these discussions have been more profusely furthered, stating the need to not only investigate how power is embedded in the research process but also to devise ways to do research differently, in a form that makes a constant and deep assessment of all the ethical and political issues that are at play

during the research process (Pillow, 2003). Feminist researchers have thus proposed a radical politicisation of the whole process of knowledge production, both internally and externally (van Zoonen, 1994), establishing research agendas that have placed particular emphasis on the ways in which gender influences the production of knowledge and how research can contribute to feminist political projects. The epistemological bases of this tradition have been mobilised further, in different disciplines and areas of knowledge, where they have shaped approaches that highlight issues such as the researcher's positionality in terms of gender but also several other social positions, such as sexuality; the power relations between researcher and participants; and ethical discussions around the ways in which results can have an effect on respondents' lived realities and also on society more broadly, for instance on the ways in which homosexuality is socially framed.

According to Austin (2008), qualitative audience studies – like this one – have generally embraced some of the aforementioned values more willingly than other sectors of media and cultural studies. Following that tradition, in this chapter I will describe my methodology and methods[57] while explaining the ways in which my project engages with these discussions. I will do this using the organising principles suggested by Johnson and Madge (2016), who explain that the approach to knowledge production advanced by feminist researchers and then mobilised in different disciplines and areas of knowledge can be understood through its division into three main issues: critiques about *ways of knowing*, challenges to *ways of researching*, and debates surrounding the *politics of research*. In that sense, the first section of this chapter will encapsulate discussions around *ways of knowing*, explaining how I have crafted this project as a fully qualitative one, where my subjectivity is "understood as a resource [...], rather than a potential threat to knowledge production" (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 591). The second section, which engages with *ways of researching*, will describe the procedure I have followed for conducting this research, explaining the process of sample construction, the use of interviews and focus groups as methods of data generation, and the use of thematic analysis as the method of data analysis. These descriptions will be intertwined with reflections explaining the ways in

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[57] Gray (2003) explains the difference between these concepts, stating that "method refers to those different techniques of research which any researcher employs in order to construct data and interrogate its sources, while methodology describes the overall epistemological approach adopted by the study" (p. 4).

which I understand these techniques and how they connect with my broader approach. Finally, the last section will cover issues associated with the *politics of research*; there, I will focus on ethical considerations regarding the act of speaking *about* others (Alcoff, 1991) and the potential socio-political consequences of knowledge production.

Ways of Knowing

My main goal was not to find generalisable patterns of behaviour, but to gain deep and nuanced understanding of the ways in which individuals perceive and give meaning to a specific area of their social reality. Therefore, one of the first decisions I made when embarking on this project was to adopt a fully qualitative approach. Following authors such as Ang (1996) and Braun and Clarke (2019), I see qualitative research as an active and generative endeavour that is not engaged in the discovery of certainties or truths, but in the creative production of meaning, in telling "stories" about the data, and in the construction of interpretations and specific ways of understanding the world. As these forms of knowledge are produced by a researcher and are thus imbued with their subjectivity, they have to be understood as partial, contextually shaped, and historically located; they cannot claim to be definitive, as "they are necessarily incomplete (for they always involve simplification, selection and exclusion) and temporary" (Ang, 1996, p. 38).

Consequently, it has been stated that in any form of knowledge production, but particularly evident in qualitative research as described above, the researcher's position is *epistemically salient* (Alcoff, 1991). This means that their location – permeated by historical, political, physical, intellectual, and emotional factors, among others – will necessarily affect the questions that are asked, the procedures that are undertaken, and the meanings of what is said (Code, 1991; Haraway, 1988; McRobbie, 1982; Rose, 1997; Valentine, 2002). Under a politics of "positionality" or "location", then, knowledge is understood as situated and thus "can no longer claim universality" (Rose, 1997, p. 308).

This project has then to be understood as a venture that is imbued with my position in each one of its components and stages. As a Chilean gay man who has enjoyed throughout his entire life watching local television and dissecting its elements – particularly those associated with LGBTQ issues – and who, furthermore, has turned this into part of his academic and professional formation, I did not approach this project with

an "empty head". I moved through it sustaining my experience of never feeling completely happy or satisfied with the ways in which Chilean television represents gays and lesbians, and with some ideas about how these images have affected my own process of sexual identification. In that sense, I share the experiences that other researchers, such as Ryan (2006) and Kim (2012), have discussed: in doing this research, I was also reflecting about my own life, "answering the very questions that I myself had posed" (P. Ryan, 2006, p. 152) and, through that, rethinking the narrative of my personal history.

As Alcoff (1991) explains, however, saying that location *bears on* meaning is not the same as saying that it *determines* meaning. Recognising the fact that the knowledge we produce is partial and subjectively determined does not imply abandoning the attempt to showcase participants' points of view, experiences, and interpretations in an honest way (Austin, 2008; Moores, 1993; van Zoonen, 1994). I have, therefore, maintained through the whole project an open-minded attitude, being ready to be surprised in my own ideas, which are never positioned as fixed or immutable. This, while continuously assessing the ways and specific areas in which my position is shaping my work. The challenge, in this way, has been "to strike a balance, striving for enhanced self-awareness but eschewing navel gazing" (Finlay, 2002, p. 541).

This process of constant critical and thoughtful scrutiny of the self as a researcher has been explained through the concept of *reflexivity* (Dowling, 2016; England, 1994; Finlay, 2002; Pillow, 2003; Rose, 1997; Valentine, 2002), which means keeping a critical eye on one's own situation and status amidst systems of power and reflecting on the ways in which this positioning shapes the social relations that are being enacted in the research process, what counts as "findings", and the intersubjective dynamics between researcher and participants. Reflexivity is, in this sense, a method for situating knowledges and exposing the politics of meaning production (Pillow, 2003; Rose, 1997), which I have deployed during the whole research process by exploring how my ideas and experiences are shaping the production of knowledge, constantly asking myself questions such as "am I being fair with my participants?", "how are my ideas and opinions shaping what I interpret?", and "how do I feel about this?".

As Pillow (2003) warns, however, the use of reflexivity runs the risk of becoming a simple claim of distinction and sophistication, positioning "the knowing researcher as somehow having 'better,' more 'valid' data" (p. 184) and thus turning reflexivity into a tool

of "methodological power". This, furthermore, from a position that is dependent on a modernist form of subjectivity in which the subject is conceived as fixable, knowable, and singular. In turn, this author proposes a form of "uncomfortable reflexivity", which "seeks to know while at the same time situates this knowing as tenuous" (Pillow, 2003, p. 188). Following these ideas, I do not claim that my use of reflexivity has led to "more valid" findings or that it has given me neat resolutions regarding the workings of power in my research, but that it has indeed helped me in continuously "tracing and troubling the performative processes and effects of [...] [my] research practice, including [...] [my] subjective implicatedness and constitution in them" (Dosekun, 2015, p. 437). Likewise, I do not see my position as fixed or immutable, conceiving instead the research encounter as an instance of negotiation and mutual constitution between researcher and participants. These issues will be considered next.

Ways of Researching

One of the stages in which the theoretical discussions about reflexivity and the politics of location become particularly palpable and vivid is fieldwork, both during its preparation and its execution. This is not to say that this is concealed in previous stages, as I have already explained how, for instance, my position shaped the origin of the project and the questions I am asking. During fieldwork, however, in the relationship with the participants, I felt it more intensely, as I saw in practice how my ideas, identifications, and even the ways in which I present and conduct myself were negotiated, shaping our interactions, including the possibility to have an interaction in the first place.

As I have explained above, I share many things with my participants; particularly relevant for this project: we are all Chilean citizens, we currently self-identify as gay or lesbian – which, as stated, is of course not the same, but at least comparable within the LGBTQ possibilities in the country – and we share a lot of local televisual referents and associated knowledge. I could be considered, in that sense, an *insider*; a characterisation that could potentially ease – although never remove – the differential power relation between researcher and participants that, according to authors such as England (1994) and Gray (1995), is inherent to any research environment.

There are, however, many other things that we did not share. As I will describe in detail below, the age of the participants of this study ranges from 24 to 67 with an average of 31, while I was 29 during the period when I conducted the interviews; they have different professions or daily occupations – none of them was a PhD student – and they have different past and present class positions, while I have been a middle to upper-middle class person – within the Chilean context – throughout my entire life. And the biggest difference is that I was the one who was asking the questions and constituting them as subjects "to be studied" (Dosekun, 2015); it is in me, as a researcher, where the responsibility to interpret the lives of others lies. Although I took various possible measures to alleviate the power difference – such as the ones described by Nelson (2020): "mutual disclosure, less formal interview styles and a use of reflexivity" (p. 911) – our different characteristics, and particularly our different roles in our encounter, cannot be understated.

All this complicates my position as an *insider*, revealing what has been stated by several authors (e.g., Dowling, 2016; Gorman-Murray et al., 2010; Kim, 2012; McCorkel & Myers, 2003; Nash, 2010; Nelson, 2020; Song & Parker, 1995; Valentine, 2002): in any research situation, a researcher is never simply *either* an insider or an outsider. At all times, there are several overlapping social characteristics and roles at play, with multiple and changeable dimensions of sameness and difference operating, which makes it impossible for a dualism such as insider/outsider to "capture the complex and multifaceted identities and experiences of researchers" (Valentine, 2002, p. 10). In that sense, I could see how my status was continuously shifting during the research process' different stages, across encounters with different participants, and sometimes even during the course of a particular interview. There were moments when I could identify with my participants, seeing myself in their responses; there were many others, however, when I could patently see our differences. There were also other moments in which my own personal positions were expanded and reinterpreted by their views. In any case, the fact that we all share a current gay/lesbian identification was indeed beneficial in establishing rapport[58] and a sense of mutual basic understanding of what it means to be

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[58] According to van Zoonen (1994) rapport can be understood as "a relation of trust and respect that stimulates and facilitates the participant's articulation of her experience, is crucial to the quality of the interview" (p. 137).

gay/lesbian in a country where, as explained in Chapter 1, our life possibilities are strongly curtailed as a consequence of our sexual identification. I, nonetheless, never considered that this commonality would give me complete or immediate understanding of their experiences, as we all live and interpret this part of our identities in different ways. This conviction upheld the aforementioned attitude of open-mindedness that I have kept throughout this project.

Participants

One of the instances in which the fact that the participants and I share an identification as gay/lesbian was particularly beneficial was during the recruitment process. Given the aims that I wanted to achieve with this research, I established that the only requirements for participation were: to currently identify as gay or lesbian, to be 18 years old or over, and to have watched Chilean television regularly throughout their life. Also, participants needed to be available to be interviewed in Santiago between March 23rd and May 5th, 2019, as time and economic constrictions made it impossible for me to travel to other cities of the country. Within these broad limitations, I wanted to achieve a sample as diverse as possible, with similar numbers of men and women and covering different age groups and social classes. In order to achieve this, I decided to use social media as the main initial recruitment tool. I utilised my own social media presence in Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and the networks I have established there, for attracting potential participants. Then, following a snow-ball method, I asked the first volunteers if they could think of someone else that would be willing to participate.

I think that the fact that I openly identify as a gay man on my social media accounts was helpful in attracting potential participants. It is possible to speculate that our shared identification was beneficial in producing in them a sense of anticipated trust regarding the ways in which I was going to address the topic. In that sense, I consider that this strategy was indeed successful. It was not, however, without its shortcomings. At the beginning, and possibly because of the characteristics of my network of contacts, many of the individuals who showed interest in participating shared with me not only our sexual identification but other features as well: they were mainly professional gay men of around 30 years of age. I tried to overcome this through contacting several organisations and

asking for their help in order to reach their members. This approach, however, was not successful, as organisations mainly ignored my requests. It then took some more time, and more focused work on the snow-ball procedure, to diversify the sample. I still believe, nevertheless, that a greater diversity – particularly in terms of age – could have been achieved had I had more time in the field to utilise other sampling strategies, as "the particular sources one uses to obtain samples of gay men[59] will affect the characteristics of the resultant sample" (Harry, 1986, p. 26).

Following these procedures, the final sample was formed by 28 participants, a number that was appropriate for the general approach and aims of this research, as "sample sizes in qualitative research should not be too large that it is difficult to extract thick, rich data. At the same time, [...] the sample should not be too small that it is difficult to achieve data saturation" (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, p. 242), which was indeed achieved. Although mentions of a particular gender identity were not part of the recruitment process, it is worth noting that all participants self-identified as cisgender or did not raised issues about this part of their subjectivity. In terms of the specific characteristics considered for recruitment, 17 participants (61%) identify themselves as gay and 11 (39%) as lesbian; their age ranges from 24 to 67 with an average of 31; and, regarding their social grade, 16 (57%) could be classified as ABC1 and 12 (43%) as C2/C3/D[60]. Each participant's characterisation – including the pseudonym I have given them in order to protect their anonymity – is summarised in the following table:

Pseudonym	Sexual identification	Age	Social grade
Alberto	Gay	42	C2/C3/D
Amanda	Lesbian	29	ABC1
Benito	Gay	29	ABC1
César	Gay	67	ABC1
Clara	Lesbian	27	C2/C3/D

[59] The same could be argued in the case of sampling lesbians.
[60] This is an estimation. I have dichotomised it into two broad categories (ABC1 and C2/C3/D, according to Chilean standards), which I have estimated using information such as their level of formal education, their occupation, and the area of Santiago in which they live, factors that are taken into consideration by the Asociación de Investigadores de Mercado (Chilean Association for Market Research) to calculate these categories (Asociación de Investigadores de Mercado (AIM), 2019).

David	Gay	39	C2/C3/D
Elena	Lesbian	39	ABC1
Elisa	Lesbian	28	ABC1
Emilio	Gay	26	C2/C3/D
Eugenio	Gay	29	C2/C3/D
Inés	Lesbian	27	ABC1
Isidora	Lesbian	36	ABC1
Julia	Lesbian	28	C2/C3/D
Leonor	Lesbian	33	ABC1
Lorenzo	Gay	29	ABC1
Luciano	Gay	23	ABC1
Luis	Gay	23	C2/C3/D
Manuel	Gay	27	ABC1
Matías	Gay	24	C2/C3/D
Maximiliano	Gay	39	ABC1
Miguel	Gay	31	ABC1
Olga	Lesbian	30	C2/C3/D
Pedro	Gay	29	ABC1
Rita	Lesbian	42	ABC1
Rodrigo	Gay	27	ABC1
Rubén	Gay	26	C2/C3/D
Tomás	Gay	24	C2/C3/D
Valeria	Lesbian	27	C2/C3/D

Table 1 Participants

Data Generation

Two methods of data generation were used in this project: 25 participants were invited to take part in an in-depth interview to discuss issues associated with their use of television and their opinions regarding programmes that have been broadcast on Chilean TV since 1990, focusing on the representations of gays and lesbians, and three participants were

invited to participate in a focus group covering the same topics[61]. I decided to complement the information produced in the interviews with a focus group as a way to gauge participants' opinions and interactions regarding specific programmes that I picked as illustrative of the patterns of representation that are explained in Chapter 2. As will be described below, the focus group included a section in which I showed participants extracts from these programmes in order to incite more focused discussions. The results from both methods were fairly similar, so extracts from the interviews and from the focus group are used interchangeably throughout the following chapters.

In general, I see interviews, whether individual or in groups, not as methods for "collecting" data, but as methods for "generating" data (Baker, 2004). Following Holstein and Gubrium (2004), this implies conceiving participants not as repositories of information awaiting to be brought to the surface by a researcher, but as constructors of forms of knowledge that are generated in association with the interviewer. It is in the interview encounter, while participants are making sense of their experiences and organising their points of view, where meaning is "actively and communicatively assembled" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004, p. 141). This, of course, does not invalidate the information provided by these techniques since there is no social method that gives the possibility to access "transparent reflections of [...] viewers' 'lived realities'" (Ang, 1996, p. 39). This perspective, however, invites to think about interviews as "meaning-making" ventures (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004) in which participants, through talk, are making sense of their lives. In that sense, my interviews were not necessarily interested in getting precise factual information, but in understanding the ways in which participants interpret their experiences, both past and present.

The procedure for conducting both the interviews and the focus group included an initial part in which participants were provided with an information sheet explaining the aims of the research and the measures that were in place for protecting their anonymity and private information[62], as well as consent forms to consider and sign. Upon obtaining

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[61] The small number of focus group participants is due to the fact that only three, out of the five that had confirmed their participation, attended. The aims that I had established for the focus group, however, were met satisfactorily.

[62] In that document, participants were explained that pseudonyms were going to be used for the analysis and writing of the report, so the information provided could not be associated back to them; all information was going to be stored in a laptop protected with double password; the audio documents were going to be deleted as soon as the interview/focus group was transcribed; and that all

participants' consent, interviews and focus group were conducted by me, in Spanish. All of them were audio-recorded with each participant's consent.

Interviews lasted up to two hours and were held in mutually convenient locations, mainly chosen by the participants in order to ensure their comfort, since "the location in which the interviews take place may [...] affect the level of disclosure" (P. Ryan, 2006, p. 157). As an initial part of the encounter, participants were presented with a list of 66 gay or lesbian characters/people that have appeared on Chilean television since 1990, for them to mark the ones they knew[63]. This gave me a broad idea of the topics and characters that could appear during our conversation. After that, semi-structured interviews were conducted. This form of interviewing, as is described by authors such as Dunn (2016) and van Zoonen (1994), has some degree of predetermined order while maintaining flexibility regarding the ways in which the issues are addressed. Consequently, the interview guideline was not constructed as a list of questions, but as a script that proposed topics, ways to tackle them, and a sequence. These topics were thought as invitations to the respondents to talk at length, answering open-ended questions, on their own terms, with time to think, speculate, and offer opinions. For constructing the proposed sequence of topics, I utilised a hybrid of the funnel and pyramid structures, as described by Dunn (2016): "the interview might start with simple-to-answer [...] questions, then move to more abstract and reflective aspects, before gradually progressing towards sensitive issues" (p. 157). This allowed me to progressively build rapport and achieve a comfortable environment. In that sense, the first part of the interview aimed to understand the participant's general use of television, the second one focused on their memories of programmes/characters and how they evaluate these representations, and the last one paid attention to the interviewee's personal experiences of watching these representations.

The focus group, on the other hand, lasted one hour and was held in a central area of Santiago. As the initial part of it, participants were also presented with the aforementioned list of characters/people. The guideline of the focus group was

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the private information that could appear on the recording (for instance, their name) was going to be eliminated from the transcription.

[63] This list was a selection of the 103 figures that were considered for the analysis presented in Chapter 2. It mainly included characters/people that have/had a bigger and more permanent televisual presence.

constructed using the same principles that shaped the interview guide, with only small changes. Since this method allows for the generation of an interaction in which a diversity of opinions can potentially be expressed (Hamui-Sutton & Varela-Ruiz, 2013; Wilkinson, 2004), I included topics and activities that could encourage a dialogue, specifically in terms of what the respondents thought about different TV representations. In that sense, the first section of the focus group aimed to understand some features of the participants' general evaluation of TV shows, the second one focused on their memories of programmes/characters, and the last one aimed to produce a conversation about five specific TV representations by showing them video clips of these programmes[64].

After all the interviews and the focus group were conducted, verbatim transcripts were made by me. Authors such as Castleberry and Nolen (2018) and Gray (2003) have explained that, even though transcribing is an onerous task, doing it oneself is recommendable. They explain that, through this process, one gets the opportunity to have an early engagement with the material, familiarise with it, and thus "jumpstart" the process of data analysis. This was definitely my case: while transcribing, I was continuously taking notes about elements that could be later applied during the analysis. In that way, when I started that process, I had already acquired a sense of the entirety of the data and I had developed initial ideas for its analysis.

Data Analysis

Once the interviews and focus group were transcribed, a thematic analysis was conducted. At its most basic definition, thematic analysis is a method used for identifying and analysing patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Within this method, themes are then understood as patterns of shared meaning that are underpinned by a central organising concept, encompassing data that may appear to be disparate, but that is however united by what the researcher considers to be shared meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2020).

Particularly, I am using thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke in their extensive exploration of the method (Braun et al., 2015; Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019, 2020;

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[64] The list of characters and full guidelines of both interviews and focus group are included in the Appendix section, as Appendix 2, 3, and 4 respectively.

Clarke & Braun, 2018), where they explain it as a fully qualitative approach that is "underpinned by a distinctly *qualitative* research philosophy that emphasises, for example, researcher subjectivity as a resource (rather than a problem to be managed), the importance of reflexivity and the situated and contextual nature of meaning" (Clarke & Braun, 2018, p. 107). Their approach – which they call "reflexive" – involves six stages: familiarisation; coding; generating initial themes; reviewing and developing themes; refining, defining and naming themes; and writing up. These phases do not necessarily follow a sequential order but are recursive; they involve a constant moving back and forward between the data set, the codes, and the themes that are being produced.

After an initial familiarisation with the data, which was done through transcribing and then reading each transcription several times, I started the coding stage, for which I used NVivo. In simple terms, codes are labels – a word or a brief phrase – that are assigned to segments of any document "to help catalogue key concepts while preserving the context in which these concepts occur" (E. H. Bradley et al., 2007, p. 1761). I carried out this procedure in an inductive or data-driven manner, which means that I developed my codes "along the way". I did not have a pre-existing coding frame; I was developing it as I was coding[65]. Consequently, the process was iterative and therefore lengthy, as I went through the entire data set several times, applying new codes, refining the existing ones, recoding, and checking for consistency. Although onerous, this process allowed me to gain deep understanding of the data and develop a set of codes that covers all the issues that were discussed during the interviews which I consider to be relevant for the aims of this research. As Braun and Clarke (2020) explain, coding is an "inherently subjective process" (p. 3) that demands a reflexive researcher that is continuously scrutinising the ways in which their shifting position is shaping their work. In that sense, and even though the inductive approach allowed me to create codes that I had not even anticipated, the final coding scheme has to be understood as the result of my own involvement with the data.

I carried out this process keeping an open mind, respecting participants' opinions and points of view, and as meticulously as possible, since coding is the essential process from where themes are constructed. Themes, in that sense, can be understood as "analytic *outputs* developed through and from the creative labour of our coding" (Braun & Clarke,

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[65] The list of the codes that were used can be found in Appendix 5.

2019, p. 594). They, therefore, do not passively "emerge" from the data, but are "*actively created by the researcher at the intersection of data, analytic process and subjectivity*" (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 594), including their interpretative frames, theoretical assumptions, and research values and skills, among other elements. The resulting themes, around which the following chapters are organised, are then the result of my own reflective engagement with the data and the analytic procedure. Through this whole process, as Austin (2008) recommends for the case of audience studies, I have remained aware of my own interventions "in producing audience statements as knowable data" (p. 184). This, while always keeping in mind the goal of not obscuring participants' experiences and interpretations. In that sense, I have written the following analytical chapters in a way that constantly highlights respondents' opinions, always showing the interview extracts that have inspired the construction of my interpretations.

These extracts are the only parts of the transcripts that I have translated into English. As many authors have theorised from a perspective concerned with research practices (e.g., Gawlewicz, 2016; Kim, 2012; Mas Giralt, 2016; Temple, 1997, 2008; Temple & Young, 2004; van Nes et al., 2010), translating is not a straightforward endeavour that only implies finding equivalent concepts and terms; it involves making crucial decisions about the ways in which participants and their ideas are represented, as changes in meaning are an inherent part in the process of moving an utterance from one language to another. As a consequence of this, I decided to delay translation as long as possible; all the analysis, therefore, was conducted in Spanish, which allowed me to develop my analytical framework "in a richer and less constrained manner" (Mas Giralt, 2016, p. 197). The selected extracts were then translated only during the writing up stage. This was done, following Gawlewicz's (2016) advice, trying to maintain *conceptual equivalence*. In that sense, for instance, when concepts did not have close direct equivalents, I used combinations of words that allowed me to keep the meaning of what was said as much as possible. Similarly, when words carried specific historical, cultural, or emotional marks that made their direct translation difficult or inappropriate, I did not translate them, choosing to explain their meaning in footnotes.

In general terms, then, this was the full procedure that I followed for conducting this research. During the entire process, from the inception of the idea all the way to the writing up of the thesis, I have been moved by the aim of producing valuable knowledge

that highlights and respects the experiences of those who so disinterestedly gave me a couple of hours of their time. And, through them, also the experiences of many others who might feel represented by their words. At the same time, I have been moved by a political conviction that conceives television as a space where all sensibilities and forms of being have to be present in a way that honours society's diversity. All this brings to the fore certain ethical discussions that will be considered next.

Politics of Research

As Alcoff (1991) recounts, the notion of research as an act of "speaking for others" or "giving others a voice" that had historically underpinned social scientific undertakings has been problematised from a perspective that understands that this conception further places those "spoken for" in a subordinate position. I, therefore, do not claim to be speaking *for* the participants of this study. They are fully agentic subjects who do not need me to voice their opinions or experiences. I cannot, however, escape the responsibility that I hold in speaking *about* them. From their initial constitution as "subjects to be studied" and through the whole process of assembling part of their life stories into the narrative that I have designed, I am engaged in the act of representing them, giving meaning to their "needs, goals, situation, and in fact, *who they are*" (Alcoff, 1991, p. 9). That is why I have tried to be completely respectful with their stories, always trying to portray them in an honest manner. As Gray (2003) suggests, however, any possible measures of this type does not eliminate the need for the researcher to take full responsibility for the ways in which they have chosen to present their research.

Any researcher, however, does not only hold responsibility regarding those who have participated in their study. As authors such as Ang (1996), Dowling (2016), and McRobbie (1982) state, a researcher is also responsible to the social world they inhabit, since any study can have an influence on society and the people in it, having at least the potential to alter social conditions, even if slightly. Within ethical considerations, it is then also necessary to "look at where the speech goes and what it does there" (Alcoff, 1991, p. 26). As I have already stated, for me, this means recognising that this project is not *only* inspired by intellectual and/or theoretical motivations, but also by political ones. Ideally, with this study I would like to contribute to the production of social conditions that allow for the

construction of more diverse and complex televisual representations of gays and lesbians. This, because I believe that a more just representational environment is indeed associated with the production of better conditions of life not only for gays and lesbians, but also for society more broadly, as these representations could contribute to destabilising the sexual norms that have created manifold experiences of marginalisation and precarity. My study, then, follows a tradition of feminist researches that place the change of *status quo* as the starting point of the scientific quest (Kobayashi, 2003; Mies, 1983).

With these considerations expressed, I turn now to the interpretations I have constructed regarding the meanings and narratives that were assembled during my encounter with 28 individuals. The next five chapters, which lay out the analysis of interviews and focus group, have been constructed around the main themes that I produced as the result of my engagement with the data.

Chapter 4 To Be Visible: Seeing Yourself/Being Seen

Introduction

Announcing "the death" of television has become a cliché, a re-utilised expression that appears to be more inspired by technological developments than by understanding the place that televisual images occupy in people's everyday life. Viewers might have altered the *way* they consume these images, but they have not stopped enjoying them, thinking about them, despising them, or using them as community-making devices. In the post-broadcast era, television may have lost *centrality,* but it certainly has gained in *presence*, as diversified practices of access have not stopped flourishing, giving viewers much greater control over what to watch, when to do it, and on which devices (Ashley, 2019; Buonanno, 2016). The televisual world, therefore, appears to be expanding instead of contracting, as its images are now potentially available *everywhere* and at *any time*, always ready to be seen on our smart phones, tablets, and laptops and producing not only face-to-face conversations, but continuous interactions through social media, blogs, and many other forms of communication. Television is then decidedly still with us, as "part and parcel of an expanded media environment in which the old media persistence meets the new media revolution" (Buonanno, 2016, p. 97).

Building on the studies that the Observatorio Iberoamericano de Ficción Televisiva, OBITEL (Iberoamerican Fictional Television Observatory) has conducted since its founding in 2005, Orozco and Miller (2016) explain that the aforementioned scenario is particularly vivid in Latin America, where the spread of screen options and audio-visual

possibilities has lead into a present in which "Latin Americans watch more television than ever before" (p. 101). According to these researchers, furthermore, TV in the region has never been just determined by technological advances or programming schedules, but mostly by its role as one of the main "programmers" of the everyday life of viewers who develop firm relationships with texts that "are not necessarily over when they disappear from screens" (Orozco & Miller, 2016, p. 102), but that continue to live through their thoughts, interactions, and daily lives.

This is confirmed by the participants of this study: they claim to be consistent consumers of national and/or international televisual images, which are watched on different types of devices. Similar to other studies conducted in the country (e.g., Antezana et al., 2016; Arriagada et al., 2014), participants associate their television use with their daily routines (e.g., waking up and watching the news and morning shows while getting ready for the day) and/or their leisure time (e.g., getting back home and watching a night time *telenovela* or a series). When talking about the past, however, the television consumption appears to be much more constant and focused on the time spent in front of a television set. All participants state that, during their childhood and adolescence, they were heavy users of television; particularly of national television, which some of them have now stopped watching, as they consider it to be "not good enough" or ideologically offensive. Nevertheless, the fact that all of them are or were heavy users of national television has consolidated the existence of a set of televisual referents that are broadly shared.

As was explained in Chapter 3, at the beginning of the interview and the focus group, participants were presented with a list of 66 gay or lesbian characters/people that have appeared regularly on Chilean television since 1990, for them to mark the ones they knew. 30 of them were marked by at least two thirds of the participants, which confirms the idea of the existence of a strong televisual culture. Some participants explained that even though they do/did not regularly watch the programmes in which some of these figures appear/appeared, they know *about* them, they have watched clips of them on social media and YouTube, have read about them on news media, and have heard about them in conversations with friends and family members. They are *aware* of their existence as images through which homosexuality has been represented on Chilean TV. Participants continue to have a developed knowledge about Chilean programmes, particularly those

that include gay/lesbian characters, even if the act of consuming these programmes has undoubtedly changed during their lives. As Luciano states: "I think I know what happens on TV, but I don't watch TV". An example of this pattern of use is shared by Clara, who explains the ways in which she watched the *telenovela Perdona Nuestros Pecados* (Demicheli, 2017-2018): "I only watched the scenes where they [the lesbian characters] were involved, because I wasn't very interested in the other ones and the programme was too long. So, I found some YouTube videos that showed only their scenes, their story". For the participants of this study, this type of TV consumption coexists naturally with the "classical" one that encompasses sitting in front of a TV set – although now it can be in front of a smart phone or laptop – and watching an entire episode.

Whichever type of consumption, participants claim to enjoy watching TV, independently if they do it alone or with someone by their side. They also enjoy talking about televisual images: almost all of them claim to take pleasure in discussing what they are watching. The desire to share experiences and connect with others remains a crucial part of media consumption (Buonanno, 2008, 2016) and the participants of this study do it in different ways. Benito, for instance, explains: "I like to pause it. I like to rewind it and say, 'let's watch that shit again'. Yes, I think if I'm with someone, I'll make the most of it, instead of saying 'shut up, let's eat and watch'". For the lonely viewer, on the other hand, social media provides immediate sharing tools, as Pedro illustrates: "I like watching TV with someone. Yes, I think that's fun. I like sharing things just after they happen. And generally, if I'm alone... my friends and I, we watch similar things, so we text about it right away". For the participants of this study, television is then not only a purveyor of images that entertain and inform, but a medium that forge conversations and therefore community; it is a way of connecting with others through images.

Following these bases, that describe how participants of this study consume televisual images and relate to TV as a medium, this chapter seeks to explain the ways in which they relate particularly to the televisual visibility of homosexuality. In the next pages, I will explain that the intense feelings that gay/lesbian images produce in the participants are not only associated with the perceived scarcity of televisual representations of homosexuality but are also imbued with an abiding awareness of the fact that these representations are being consumed by society at large. This is crucially significant for them, as they claim that TV has a big social influence over diversely

identified individuals whose understanding of what homosexuality "is" is *defined* by what television shows. In a different manner, participants explain that their own understanding of their sexual identifications is only *influenced* by television, via its proposal of figures through which their own feelings and social positions can be understood. The impact of the televisual images of homosexuality over their own lives, however, extends beyond this, as they explain that mainstream viewers use the televisually produced ideas about homosexuality for "understanding" and "reading" them as gays/lesbians. This impact is seen as mostly detrimental or favourable depending on the specific characteristics through which TV makes homosexuality visible. In that sense, depending on the type of representations, television can be either a regressive instrument or an agent for social change. Whatever the case, a sense of dissatisfaction remains; from their own perspectives, most of the images are still "far from perfect". In that sense, they seem to have a positive relation with visibility, but not with the terms through which that visibility has been achieved in Chile. In general, these findings lay the groundwork for understanding what will be analysed in further chapters: the particular interpretative strategies that participants utilise when reading gay/lesbian images and how they have used these depictions for the construction of their own sexual identifications.

Looking for Images, Conflicted Feelings

To look for and find something that is considered scarce or to be lacking is a process that is lived with anxiety and abiding anticipation. The ways in which many participants relate to the televisual representation of homosexuality resonate with these feelings, as they express a continuous eagerness to see these images on TV. They explain that the presence of a gay/lesbian character "immediately" makes them want to watch the programme. As Elisa and Inés, respectively, state: "if there's something related to homosexuality, I watch it right away, particularly if it's about lesbians", "I literally started watching *Perdona Nuestros Pecados* when someone told me there was a lesbian character [...] as soon as they told me about her, I got interested". For some of them, however, the presence of a gay/lesbian character only acts as a factor that increases their interest in the programme, but that does not guarantee their prolonged enthusiasm. For instance, Clara affirms: "if

there are gay characters, that's immediately a plus. It catches my attention straight away. But if it's bad shit, I won't watch it, even if there are queer characters".

As explained, this eagerness seems to be connected with the scarcity of gay/lesbian images on Chilean TV. In Leonor's words: "since it's not common, you're obviously alert: 'uh, someone appeared!'". Any representation is then received with an expectation that is also socially strengthened, as every time that a gay/lesbian character will appear on a *telenovela* or series, newspapers and news websites publish articles describing the character, its location within the plot, and how the actor/actress "prepared" for the role. Participants explain that the cause of these feelings of anticipation is the need to see images which they can identify with. As Amanda affirms:

> I seek [...] to be able to identify with the character. A straight character, to me, is like "ok", instead, a lesbian character might not be exactly like you, but at least you have some elements which you can identify with.

These feelings are more constantly – and powerfully – reported by women participants, which is not unexpected, since lesbians have been less regularly depicted than gay men on Chilean television, as explained in Chapter 2. The scarcer an image, then, the stronger the eagerness.

Similar feelings are described by participants as present during their childhood and adolescence. In line with studies conducted in other countries (e.g., Bond et al., 2009; Dhoest & Simons, 2011; Evans, 2007), the participants of this study claim to have specifically sought out gay/lesbian television images while growing up. While some of these studies describe the experience of using media as a way of gathering information about homosexuality and some of its processes – for instance, coming out – the participants of this study explain their past eagerness in ways that are much less sharply defined or rationalised. Elisa, for instance, says: "I wasn't looking for anything in particular. I think I just wanted to see a woman being with another woman. It was just that", and adds: "I think I didn't learn anything; I think there was another... I don't know, it was like an anxiety to see those things that were not available on cultural products". By looking for these images, they were not seeking out information or trying to gain some specific knowledge but searching for ways to satisfy their need for visibility. It was not a rational need for learning, but an emotional hunger for seeing their own nascent feelings placed in others, and in that way creating a possibility for identification. The ways in

which viewers connect with images that make visible the marginalised "parts" of their identities are certainly shaped by the broader context in which these identifications are placed. In that sense, it can be argued that participants' hunger for gay/lesbian images while they were growing up was bolstered by their existence within a society where homosexuality was silenced, constructed with an aura of secrecy and abjection around it. As it was a topic that was not generally discussed in schools or within families, and internet was something that only a few had access to[66], TV was one of the few available options.

There is also another centrally important function that the televisual images of homosexuality have performed for the participants, both now and during their childhood/adolescence: the formation and strengthening of community. Each new character or programme constitutes an opportunity for discussion with gay/lesbian friends. As Kama (2003) explains, in the face of perceived presence, a lot of energy is invested in consumption. And also, in sharing and commenting: many participants narrate their experiences of being advised to watch a specific programme or sharing with their friends a character that "spoke" to them. Leonor, for example, explains: "it's like 'wow, this is a cool character!" [...] and generally, when you talk about the queer characters, you do it with your gay friends because everyone else couldn't care less". Likewise, Pedro states:

> Obviously, when I'd watch something relating to the matter, I'd also pass the information on: "hey, watch this because that appeared" [...] these were the only instances when you could maybe feel represented. That's the reason for the excitement, and for saying to your friends "hey, please watch this". It was something like an eagerness to share an image that you saw and felt was close to you.

Although these statements are focused on positively regarded images that are found to be interesting or appealing – which were, for the participants, more regularly found in international programmes – it is worth noting that sharing what one *dislikes* is also a strong community-building strategy. Talking about what is wrong and searching for flaws within the representations are also important ways to find and strengthen common grounds as members of a community. As Peters (2009) and Pratt (2012) describe in their respective analyses of Canadian viewers' response to *Queer as Folk* and American viewers'

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[66] According to the Subsecretaría de Comunicaciones (SUBTEL, Chile's telecommunications regulator), by 2000, only 17% of Chilean households were connected to the Internet.

relations with *The L Word*, even those characters/programmes that are regularly watched and even enjoyed can – and most likely will – be somehow critiqued. A lot of pleasure is derived from sharing with someone a critique of something that is commonly watched, enjoyed, but *also* found perfectible: "this activity offers a satisfaction akin to gossiping, where we enjoy our own abilities to critique and dish over a removed 'other'" (Peters, 2009, p. 20).

Whichever the evaluation, participants of this study describe the emergence of intense feelings in the face of visibility. The majority of them claim to be happy or excited when realising that a gay/lesbian character or person is or will be part of a programme. That initial positive response, however, is followed by a sense of uncertainty and distrust about the ways in which those images will be constructed. This statement, made by Alberto, illustrates these conflicted feelings: "I like to watch it, you know? That's my first impression. But I also feel I can't trust in how they are going to show it, how they are going to develop it, what's going to happen". Something similar is explained by Julia: "my first reaction is always positive. Then, let's see how they are going to construct the character, all the features they are going to give them". In that sense, participants are "ready" to be disappointed, as they do not trust the capacity of Chilean networks to produce representations that they will find pleasurable in the long run, or even just appropriate. In Luciano's words:

> The feeling of "cool that this character is there" always comes with... I know that eventually I will discover that it's stereotyped shit. I'm expecting a trap, I'm expecting it to be [...] something funny, or something stereotyped. So ok, they are doing a good job for a couple of weeks and then, that's it! They did it, they started using the same old shit.

This is a distrust that is fed by decades of watching television and not liking what is there. As Briggs (2010) explains, any representation is always interacting with other images, those that are taking place simultaneously and also those that have gone before it, forming an intertextual relationship (Fiske, 1987) where any text is read through its relation with others, thus activating readers' responses in specific directions. Consequently, it will take more than just a few positively regarded representations to alter this deeply rooted disposition.

Participants *know* that they will be disappointed because they do not have confidence in those who are in charge of constructing these representations. They argue

that producers, writers, and directors do not have the experience or the first-hand knowledge that is needed in order to produce representations of homosexuality that are fully enjoyable or, in some cases, even believable. This is, according to many participants, a consequence of the fact that the great majority of them are straight. Television production is regarded as a "straight world" where awareness about real life experiences of gays and lesbians is an extremely scarce good. About this, for instance, Clara states: "I think that's ignorance, because... I don't know, if the producers and writers were closer to the gay community, these nasty caricatures wouldn't exist".

According to participants' opinions, however, Chilean TV is not only making homosexuality visible *through* "straight eyes" but also *to* "straight eyes", as they understand national television as a medium that is continuously trying to reach broad audiences, thus constructing representations that will "speak" more directly to those that fit producers' ideas of a "regular" viewer. According to Ang (1985), television's purpose is to offer objects of pleasurable consumption and "to achieve this aim the producers have to have a definitive idea of what the audience will find pleasurable" (p. 19). In participants' opinion, this pleasure has been conceptualised within heterosexual bounds, thus restricting the possibilities for gay/lesbian representation. As Miguel states: "by targeting a broad audience, they lose the richness of having other genders and other characters". This is, however, understood by some as a "natural" characteristic of TV. In Rodrigo's words: "I think TV always leaves some things out. Like, not only when representing homosexuals, because in essence they have to deliver a message that can be commercialised". The distrust that marks participants' relationship with the televisual representation of homosexuality is then not only a consequence of how disappointed they have been, during their lives, by various images of gays and lesbians. It is also the result of a broader distrust of television as a medium, as they understand Chilean TV to be an "institution" that is mostly defined by economic imperatives. This, according to their point of view, implies the production of programmes that are reduced in complexity and possibilities, as they are designed to target as many viewers as possible; viewers that are, furthermore, defined by certain identifications, particularly their heterosexuality.

Whatever the origin, the powerful emotional investments that define the relationship between participants and the televisual visibility of homosexuality, particularly the uneasiness that accompanies the possibility of a new image which

characteristics are still unknown, seem to be imbued with an always-present awareness of the fact that these images will be seen by *others*. As Luis explains:

> I always think "please, not the usual stereotype. Please, no". I also feel a little bit scared... because of the same thing, you know? It's like "ok, what are they going to say now? What are they going to show?" Because one is aware that there are more people watching the show. Your siblings are watching, your family, your friends, so there's always that feeling of "ok, what are they going to say? How are these characters going to be shown?" Because in the end, whether you want it or not, one's going to be associated to these characters. So that's complicated.

Participants are then reading television from their particular standpoints, but continuously adopting a *straight viewpoint* that allows them to anticipate the ways in which these images will be received by society at large. They, however, do not only want to speculate about these interpretations; they want to *know* them. Consequently, along with an eagerness to see images of homosexuality, there is also an eagerness to comprehend how these images are being received and interpreted by others.

Understanding the ways in which TV representations of gays and lesbians are apprehended by mainstream society is another of the media activities where the coalescence of "old" and "new" media is revealed, inasmuch as many participants claim that social media is the space where they try to complete this mission. In Clara's words: "I like to check what's going on with the viewers, particularly when it's a [...] *telenovela* that is being watched by a lot of people". As her statement shows, the popularity of a programme is a factor that intervenes in this exploration: the more popular the programme, the more relevant it is for participants to know how the programme is being received, as it is understood that its images will have a much stronger impact within society. Intense feelings are also associated with this quest. Valeria, for instance, explains: "the presence of these characters or these representations produced a lot of comments that made me feel really angry". Social media comments about gays/lesbians on TV can – and very likely will – produce powerful emotional reactions, as they indicate the ways in which mainstream society not only sees these particular figures but homosexuality more broadly.

Certainly, the emotionality with which this is invested is associated with the fact that getting an idea of what viewers think about homosexuality means getting an idea of what they could think about *me* as a person that identifies as gay or lesbian. In that sense, it can

be interpreted that, for participants', any gay/lesbian that appears on television is not only representing themselves but "all of us". They are received as representatives of the whole gay/lesbian community and, therefore, also of each one of us. This is revealed, for instance, through the use of the pronouns "we" and "us" when talking about representations. Luciano, for instance, says: "they are there, we are there, we are present". Likewise, Benito states: "seeing a gay guy on TV, seeing him saying it or showing it, whether it is in a fiction or non-fiction programme, makes me think 'amazing, we are there'". He also uses this strategy for evaluating the consequences of specific images. For instance, he says: "I'm thinking of *Yingo*[67] [...] like, Lelo or Arenito, they did ridicule us all". Each character/person is then evaluated as an inciter of ideas about homosexuality that potentially will have consequences on the participants' daily lives. This is surely linked to the scarcity of images: since each one of them is still received as a "rare sight", they are invested with the responsibility of representing us all, which can be either a successful or failed endeavour.

I See, They See, I Am

The televisual images of gays and lesbians do not exist in a void. As has been mentioned, they are not the only discourses about homosexuality that circulate within Chilean society. Quite the contrary, diverse ways of constructing knowledge about gay/lesbian experiences coexist, being continuously (re)produced by different institutions, such as the education system, the churches, and the legal structure of the country. TV is then part of a discursive net in which different institutions may part or coalesce, stabilising forms of making sense of the world around us. Not all these forms of knowledge, however, will have a space on TV. As was already stated, a consequence of Chilean TV's rating-driven/commercial model of functioning is the fact that only some discourses will likely be (re)produced in images. Chilean networks have then made homosexuality visible through forms that have certainly been informed by institutional and contextual conditions, but in ways that are not direct or unidirectional. In that sense, participants conceptualise the relationship between television *and* society as one of "mutual feedback" in which the televisual

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[67] *Yingo* (Peredo, 2007-2013) was a variety/competition programme aimed at adolescents.

watchable images are consequences of what is made socially possible but also devices through which these possibilities are routinely reproduced and thus reinforced. In Luciano's words: "I think that TV does set some standards, that can't be denied [...] but it also reacts to things that are happening in our society". They see this connection as a non-linear one where causes and effects are difficult to differentiate. As Rodrigo explains: "I don't know if this has changed following a cause-effect relationship. I think it's interwoven, isn't it? It's like... mutually influenced".

In this sense, although television is not recognised as the main or only space where ideas about homosexuality are *generated*, participants identify it as one of the main mechanisms through which these ideas are *spread* to broad sectors of the population, including those individuals who have never directly met a gay/lesbian person. The abiding presence of televisual images on the everyday life of viewers of different ages, genders, and social classes, among many other axes of identification, would explain TV's crucial relevance in the reproduction of discourses around homosexuality. Television is then understood as a "sounding board" that has the power to popularise these ideas, materialising them into "models" through which modes of understanding, social norms, and (dis)identifying opportunities are proposed. This social role gains crucial relevance as a consequence of the specific type of relationship that audiences hold with TV. Participants claim that television has an immense influence over the ways in which people "see" and "understand" the world that surrounds them. In that sense, TV may not be the place where these ideas are *originally* produced but it certainly has a critical share of responsibility in their reproduction within everyday settings. As Isidora and Julia respectively state: "it [TV] has an influence over the ways in which people understand things. I mean, nowadays people are not challenging many things", "people who watch a *telenovela*, they watch it and don't question what they consume, so they keep that point of view". This certainly extends to the ways in which audiences understand homosexuality. As Lorenzo points out:

> Television [...] can manipulate a lot of people. There's a lot of people who only consume television and, for them, what's on TV is the truth. So, if someone grew up watching television and they've been shown a gay character behaving in a certain way, for him, all gays are meant to behave in that same way.

The ways in which the participants of this study talk about the relationship between television and society imply a distinction between "macro" and "micro" levels of social life. At the "macro" level – the one formed by social structures – they consider TV to be part of an ensemble of several other institutions that (re)produce forms of knowledge about homosexuality. At that level, television and society – the other institutions – mutually influence each other. On the other hand, at the "micro" level – the one formed by individual agency – they consider television to be a powerful device that has the capacity of defining viewers' understandings of the world. TV would then have the capability to take certain things that are happening in society and turn them into images that will in turn strongly influence viewers' perceptions. In this sense, they believe that the relationship between "macro" and "micro" levels of social life, or between social structure and viewers' agency, is strongly delineated by what television makes possible.

Participants, then, characterise TV as a device that has the power to (re)produce and stabilise ideas about homosexuality among mainstream audiences. This, however, functions differently for themselves, as claimers of a gay/lesbian identification. They explain that the ways in which they negotiate their homosexuality is not directly *determined* by television but only *influenced* by it. In that sense, the models through which TV depicts homosexuality become available for gay/lesbian viewers as mechanisms through which their own social positions and feelings can be understood, thus contributing to the construction of their sexualised identities, albeit in ways that are not fixed nor total. As Eugenio explains: "they definitely play a role in constructing your own identity. I mean, they show different characters, they show some characters that are a little closer to your own reality and you think 'wow, that's great'". Similarly, Inés states: "when I see a lesbian character, I love it, because it makes me think 'damn, they will be telling a story I might identify with' or maybe someone else will feel identified or perhaps motivated to do something".

For participants, TV representations have certainly had an impact over how they see themselves as gays/lesbians. This, however, is not only marked by the personal relationship between each one of them as viewers and the televisual images of homosexuality, but also by TV's endurance and popularity among *others*. As Buonanno (2008) explains, "watching television means 'watching with'" (p. 24); that is, entering into a connection with others, as we know that there are more people who are watching/have

watched/will watch what we are consuming. Participants are always aware of the fact that the televisual images of gays/lesbians are being received by many others. According to Herrera's (2007) analysis of lesbian identity construction in Chile, the question "who am I?" is answered by each individual, but in relationship with others' sight. And that sight, according to participants of this study, is strongly informed by television. They think that the ideas that TV produces about homosexuality – ideas that inform *others'* understanding of it – will be then applied to them as a gay/lesbian individual, thus having a significant influence over their lives. Following participants' claims, it can be argued that either through their own (dis)identification or (mis)recognition with these images, or through understanding the ways in which they, as gays or lesbians, are seen by others – two processes that are, nevertheless, profoundly intertwined – television has certainly played a role in moulding participants' sexualised identifications.

This relationship can take many specific forms depending on the types of representations that more commonly appear on TV. The shape of the connection between representations and identification is contingent on viewers' assessment of the images they are watching. In the case of the participants of this study, this relationship is marked by the constant criticism they direct at the ways in which Chilean TV has made homosexuality visible, since the majority of them think that national television has represented gays and lesbians in ways that are negatively skewed. As Leonor and Luis respectively explain: "in general, TV has had a very biased way to depict homosexuality", "I think it has been mostly negative". The depictional patterns they identify as more regularly present – which will be described in Chapter 5 – are singled out as detrimental devices that further marginalise gays and lesbians, as they 1) offer a restricted representational range that makes them feel belittled, and 2) strengthen mainstream society's hostile positions vis-à-vis homosexuality.

In this way, participants claim that these images have shown an extremely basic and reduced version of the gay/lesbian experience, which makes them feel unrepresented. As Pedro states: "we're more than party people, we're more than virus carriers, we're more than people who come out to our families. I feel we're more than all of that". Since television rarely shows broader possibilities for the gay/lesbian life, participants feel discredited, not recognised in their full capacities, and thus disregarded as "less-than". In Benito's words: "I think that TV has certainly made some new possibilities available to us,

but I also think TV still plays a role in making us feel second-class citizens". These feelings are associated with participants' belief that these images have the capacity to reinforce the restricted and/or plainly adverse positions about homosexuality that exist among members of the audience. As Manuel and Rodrigo, respectively, claim: "these images legitimise people's prejudices", "TV makes these ideas possible, allowing people to form, not sure if prejudiced ideas, but definitely preconceived ideas about what we should do or what we should be like".

Along with these images, however, the emergence of other ways of depicting homosexuality is recognised. These are figures that, according to participants' opinion, have gone beyond the detrimental depictions, showing "other ways" of being gay/lesbian. Participants state that these new, more complex, representations are the result of social changes that television has had to react to and thus include as a way of "keeping up" with the times. In Miguel's words:

> You can see these [legal/social] changes being reflected in reality shows or fictional programmes, where you find more recognition and more rights. Topics also change. They go beyond facing discrimination or coming out. Now you can see stories about the whole process of people recognising their sexual orientation, which can be shown as being hard, but not only defined by repression or violence, I don't know. And also, you can see characters and people who are more self-confident, who can be happy.

Others, as Valeria, are more cynical in their positions, arguing that these changes are the result of TV networks' strategies for concealing their prejudiced past records: "I think that's whitewashing their politics. People are complaining, so they couldn't keep being that homophobic forever". In that sense, while some participants talk about these new representations as part and examples of the progressive changes that are taking place in Chile, others sustain a more critical stance that frames these images as devices that are subjected to certain "conditions" that have emerged as necessary in order to make a more complex homosexuality representable. About this, Elisa argues: "you can see how certain topics become socially possible, but always under certain conditions. And on TV those conditions are really important. If you're a lesbian, you have to be pretty; if you're gay, you have to be masculine".

As is evident, complete agreements regarding representations' qualities and value are non-existent among participants. Very few of them are regarded as *absolutely* detrimental or favourable. More common are positions that evaluate them as movements

in different directions that might open as well as close possibilities, depending on their effects over viewers' understandings of homosexuality. In that sense, many participants explain that they can see value even in those representations that they do not like. Manuel, for instance, when discussing a particular romantic scene of the *telenovela Cómplices* (Sabatini & López, 2006), says:

> Personally, I don't like the way they are depicting this situation, but I do believe that it can have a positive social effect, because this *telenovela* was broadcast at 8pm in a period when a lot of people were watching television at that time of the day, and they showed this scene in a very normalised way. They even played a romantic song as background music, so it can shock people; a shock in everyone who is not used to watching this type of things, because it was always omitted.

In this way, many representations, even if they are regarded as "not good enough", are recognised as mechanisms through which homosexuality has been made visible, which has had a positive influence over the participants' own lives. In that sense, participants of this study think that TV images *can* function as agents of cultural change, as they are understood as devices that can contribute to positively alter the ways in which homosexuality is treated in the country. According to their views, these changes are produced, firstly, by increasing the number of gay/lesbian images. A more constant presence would have the capacity to state "we exist", which is considered to be an important "first step" to achieve social inclusion. As Pedro explains: "in general I celebrate every time they show something queer. Just because they show it. I like visibility in general". However, although the *pure* presence helps, it is considered to be "not enough". In Amanda's words: "at least they have shown it, and that's something. It's not a lot, but it's something". Most participants also include qualitative factors when thinking about TV images' potential social influence as change agents. In that sense, although for some participants this social value is localised in *any* representation – Julia, for instance, states: "I think it's always positive, you know? Whether it is a good or a bad image, I think it's positive" – it is more usually found in those "new" depictions that are regarded as more complex. These are the images that are more regularly considered to be devices through which homosexuality gains a type of visibility that contributes to its positioning as a "respectable" part of society. In line with McInroy and Craig's (2017) findings in their analysis of Canadian LGBTQ individuals' media use, the participants of this study focused on affirmative depictions' broad influence, highlighting their capacity to create "a

common dialogue that is widely accessible, and can contribute to opportunities for meaningful understanding" (p. 38). As a consequence of this understanding, enhanced empathy, less violence, and a recognition of everyone's worth would be produced. As Luciano states: "there's a recognition of human dignity that has been mainstreamed, and that's because of television. Be it by force or by self-initiative, they have modified the homosexual 'imaginary'". These effects, however, are not considered to be absolute or applicable to everyone. Some participants state that no amount of non-stereotyped representations will change the positions of some strongly homophobic viewers.

The same connections between representations and social change that participants describe for society at large are invoked when talking about their households, particularly their relationship with members of their family. They claim that the affirmative depictions have made new ways of connecting with their family possible. This has contributed to achieve parents' and others' understanding and acceptance of their homosexuality. As Luis explains: "I think it's been really positive, that's why I particularly highlight *telenovelas*, not only because I enjoy them, but because of the fact that my family started talking about homosexuality when these topics started appearing on *telenovelas*". Similarly, Rubén states:

> Thanks to Jordi Castell, a guy that was a photographer and not only a gay man, my mum was able to understand that we are rounded people, you know? I think that his presence helped ladies get used to see gay men on the streets.

Because of the positive influence that these images are perceived to have over society at large and, specifically, over family members, they have contributed to the process of enhancing participants' sense of validation in their sexual identifications. In that sense, the presence of depictions that go beyond simplified visions of homosexuality is singled out as a development that, in different moments of their lives, has contributed to the emergence of beneficial feelings, such as courage and pride. In Luciano's words:

> Just when there was more fear, there were also new possibilities of being visible, of being out [...] There's the gay writer, but also the gay activist. There's the gay man reading the news on TV [...] They are out there; we are out there. So, when I feel I can be present in those spaces, the fear goes away.

Likewise, they state that these images can have a positive influence over children/adolescents that are beginning to articulate their sexualised identities, as they

represent "life options" that are not marginalised. This is singled out as something that was mostly absent while they were growing up.

However, while these beneficial effects are continuously discussed, senses of distrust and frustration remain. Participants' accounts show that "a sense of group or personal invisibility may persist even in the face of widespread popularity for queer characters in the media" (Barnhurst, 2007, p. 2), as they state that even those characters/people that potentially have positive social effects are simply just not good enough; there is always something missing. In that sense, while they mostly reject the existence of the persistent negatively skewed representations, some of them also claim that the "new" images are producing an invisibilisation of many other ways of being gay/lesbian.

Participants then hold an ambiguous relationship with visibility. They *do* like it, as they think that being visible through any type of image – particularly televisual images, because of their popularity – is a beneficial step forward within a country where homosexuality's existence is erased altogether in many contexts. However, they *do not* necessarily agree with the ways in which this visibility has been achieved in Chilean television, as representations are usually characterised as too simple or plainly stereotyped. Clara's explanation illustrates this situation:

> It would be a love/hate reaction. I wish there were lots of documentaries available, lots of *telenovelas* and other programmes with gay content so my parents can see it as a natural thing. But at the same time, I would think "ok, I want them to see it as something that is natural, but not in this particular way".

The relationship with the particular ways of making homosexuality visible has played a role in how participants think/have thought about themselves and, therefore, in the articulation of their sexual identifications. The following chapters will look at these matters more profoundly, explaining the interpretative strategies that participants utilise when reading televisual images of homosexuality and also the ways in which they have used these representations, throughout their lives, for articulating their sexualised identifications.

Chapter 5 Limited Experiences: the Televisual Construction of the Possible and the Real

Introduction

Seeing a "part" of yourself turned into image is an experience that will leave everyone, at least to some extent, agitated and moved. Whatever that "part" of your identity is, seeing on TV someone with whom you share a certain identification will likely make you pay closer attention to what is being said and shown. This is particularly the case when that identification is recognised as minoritarian, opposed to a "norm", and/or stigmatised. I certainly do it: while living in the UK, I have been paying closer attention every time I see immigrants on TV, I have been turning the volume up in those rare occasions when someone from Latin America appears, and I turn it up even higher if it is someone from Chile. The same occurs, of course, when I see gay people. Along with this enhanced attention, an immediate evaluation is performed: whatever is being watched will likely be assessed, commented on, and critiqued. The participants of this study do the same. As was already explained, they want to see televisual images of gays and lesbians. The presence of a gay/lesbian individual will likely make them pay attention to the TV, and they will form strong opinions about these images. All participants, therefore, offered firm and detailed views regarding the ways in which Chilean TV has made homosexuality visible. These opinions were multiple, not agreed upon, and sometimes even contradictory. They

were, however, always intense, emerging from something participants considered to be important.

In that sense, when asked to make a general assessment of local television's representation of gays and lesbians, the great majority of the participants stated decidedly that Chilean TV has made homosexuality visible in negatively biased ways through which gay/lesbian lives have been simplified, stereotyped, and, consequently, further marginalised. Even though many of them then described some other more favourably regarded ways in which homosexuality has been depicted, the images that came to their minds more quickly are the ones they qualify as hostile or detrimental. In that sense, while they do think that some changes have taken place, the general evaluation keeps being tainted by an overall comprehension of television as a space that has been harmful and even violent against gays and lesbians. Olga, for instance, states: "I think [TV] is more open now, but not quite... I mean, it's closer to real life, but there are still loads of stereotypes". Undoubtedly, this position is the result of the cumulative number of negatively regarded images that the participants have consumed during their lives. As was explained in the last chapter, each representation is read in an intertextual relationship (Fiske, 1987) with other images, past and present, activating viewers' responses in specific directions. Only time and more consistent changes in the representational patterns could then potentially alter this general interpretative scheme.

It is then not surprising that the main exception to this general evaluation comes from the oldest participant, César, who has had more time to assess the changes that have taken place. In general, he thinks that Chilean TV is doing a "good job", as he states: "I think Chilean TV is rather tolerant. It goes well with the day and age we're living in, right? [...] today TV is open, dynamic, spontaneous. There's no discrimination". From his statements, it can be interpreted that he is making his evaluation by comparing today's TV with what took place in the past, when homosexuality was either completely ignored or absolutely vilified. What happens in the present seems then like an obvious improvement. Younger participants, on the other hand, do not think that radical changes have taken place. While some modifications are indeed recognised, the general assessment is marked by what they characterise as the persistent presence of the harmful images that they have watched during their whole lives. Although it is quite telling that the most significant exception to this interpretative scheme comes from the oldest

respondent, future studies with bigger samples of participants should clarify if this is a more consistent age-related pattern.

Whichever their age, participants of this study make their evaluations in ways that seem to be strongly situated within spatiotemporal conditions. In that sense, it is possible to argue that the ways in which they interpret what television is offering is not only moulded by their individual characteristics but also by their impressions about homosexuality's position within Chilean society. The close relationship that they think exists between televisual images and social change – or social stagnation – is always present as a base from where their interpretations are constructed. An image that is considered to be "negative" would potentially be less strongly criticised if it was situated within a social context where gays and lesbians hold the same rights as heterosexual people. As this is not the case in Chile, "negative" images are seriously rejected; they are accused of both reflecting and being part of a broader problem. The scheme through which their interpretations are made is then not only fuelled by their experiences of watching images they disapprove of, but also by the crucial role that they consider TV has in the reproduction of regressive discourses within a homophobic society.

Building on these bases, this chapter seeks to elucidate the interpretative strategies that respondents utilise when reading gay/lesbian televisual images. Firstly, the representational patterns that participants identify will be described. In general, they explain these patterns in temporal terms, as they think that television has progressively changed and diversified the ways in which gay/lesbian identifications are depicted. As Julia explains: "I feel that Chilean TV has evolved in the way these characters are portrayed, slowly though, at a snail's pace". They describe a transit from the depiction of homosexuality as an absolutely condemnable identity to the representation of *some* gays and lesbians as respectable members of the Chilean society. However, although these changes are positively regarded, participants still think that Chilean television is not representing homosexuality in an appropriate manner, as images are considered to be vastly limited and simplified. Respondents explain that TV is completely disregarding many "ways" of being gay/lesbian and that those "ways" that are indeed being represented are still shown as having a restricted range of possibilities and characteristics.

Taking examples of how participants describe these different depictional patterns, it will be argued that they do not only comprehend representations as *limited*, but also as

polarised, as they generally organise them in two opposed groups in which crucial characteristics are disparately assigned. By understanding these patterns as opposing elements, participants are assessing representations as "packages" of information where certain features are *naturally* and *necessarily* connected with others, making other intersections unthinkable or out of the conditions of possibility. Parallel to this, participants constantly utilise "reality" as a device for interpreting and evaluating TV representations. When doing this, they do not direct their criticism to the images' "unreality" but to their "partiality". Therefore, it will be explained that TV, in order to be considered realistic – and thus appropriate and fair – by the respondents, does not only have to show images that are accurate in accordance with the "real world", but also has to broaden the range of identifications and stories that are being shown.

Hiding Places: Silences, Suggestions, Sordidness

What was watched while growing up, in those years when queer feelings were starting to be more consciously present, has left firm marks on the participants' minds. All of them share distinct memories of what television was offering decades ago in terms of gay/lesbian representation. In general, they agree: what was there was not good at all. Almost all of the respondents characterise the nineties and the first years of the next decade – when the majority of them were going through their childhood and/or adolescence – as a period in which television held a strongly unfavourable position towards homosexuality. As David states: "TV was very aggressive regarding homosexual topics".

This position, however, was almost exclusively materialised through the representation of gay men. As was also explained in Chapter 2, participants remember that during these years, lesbianism was seldom present on television. In Elisa's words:

> Women were invisibilised. I mean, until I think 2000, until that moment, there wasn't any lesbian on TV, not that I recall [...] So, according to television, it was as if there weren't lesbians out there. Like, as if there weren't relationships between women.

Although both, men and women talked about this, almost all of the women participants raised the issue, while only half of the men did. It can be argued then that the invisibilisation of lesbianism, understood as the absence of lesbian characters/people on

TV, is a much more salient topic for lesbians than it is for gay men. This reiterates the relevance that participants give to the presence of images that represent *their own* identifications in a more direct way.

Given this erasure, only gay characters/people are remembered as present on television during these years by both men and women. According to their accounts, this presence was marked by a number of representational patterns through which television's hostility was materialised. In the first place, they describe the existence of documentaries and news stories where homosexuality was directly associated with what was framed as "sordid" ways of life. Prostitution, drugs, promiscuity, the night life, and HIV/AIDS were the main topics through which homosexuality received visibility on non-fictional programmes. As Miguel and Emilio remember:

> On the news or late shows, they talked a lot about taxi boys[68]. Yes, so they would talk about drugs, prostitution, like when they talked about the case of Spiniak and Judge Calvo[69]. Someone claimed they went to gay saunas and that there were underage children there, so underage children, gay saunas, paedophilia. So yeah, they'd show sordid news more.

> They would always tell stories about STIs being more prevalent among homosexuals, or HIV. They were very dramatic shows that would tell you that the world was messed up and that there wasn't a cure for HIV and so on [...] And it would always be in a negative way, but in the early 2000s that began to change.

Participants recall that, through these issues, homosexuality was categorically framed as an abject identity that encompassed a series of anti-social behaviours. It was considered to be an unacceptable part of society that had to be rejected. As Elena summarises: "they would refer to homosexuality as a negative disease that had no cure and had to be eradicated".

They also discuss the existence of other non-fictional programmes in which homosexuality was not so violently vilified, but nevertheless shown as an identity position that produced serious problems in the lives of those who claim it. Participants state that, through these images, homosexuality was conceptualised as a shameful identity that had

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[68] In Chile, young male sex workers are called "taxi boys".

[69] The "Spiniak case" is a legal proceeding that took place in Chile at the beginning of the 2000s. The scandal began when the entrepreneur Claudio Spiniak and six of his associates were criminally charged on allegations ranging from rape to inciting "child prostitution". Daniel Calvo, the judge leading the investigation, was filmed with a hidden camera stating that he visited gay saunas. The images were broadcast by Chilevisión, producing a major scandal that ended up with Calvo being removed from the investigation, as he was not considered to be an "appropriate person" to conduct such an enquiry.

to be hidden in order to avoid those problems. Alberto, for instance, shares his vivid memories of a specific programme in which the life of a "regular gay couple" was depicted:

> The aesthetics, the environment [...] I remember it all was very dark. Like, the light was dim. The whole story was like: we are talking about it but, at the same time, we're hiding it. Like, "this is their place and while being here, they don't have any contact with the outside world", you know what I mean? It was a very weird news story because, yes, they talked about what the life of a gay couple was like, how it worked, how they met, their love and stuff, but that's what you'd end up feeling, you know? Like yes, that was a reality at that time, but let's keep it hidden, let's not talk much about it.

For fictional programmes, on the other hand, participants identify a slightly different representational pattern, which coheres with what I called *funny locas* in Chapter 2. This pattern, according to respondents, is marked by the silencing of the gay identity, as they remember the persistent presence of characters whose homosexuality was never directly named or assessed as part of their narrative development, but only suggested. According to their accounts, these were characters that never verbally claimed a gay identification and whose stories never included episodes that would reveal their sexual orientation in a clear-cut manner, such as a romantic involvement with another man. Rita, for instance, shares her memories of a specific *telenovela* character: "there was this gay character in *Marrón Glacé*, but you didn't know if he had a partner, he was asexual so to speak, because he didn't have a partner, he didn't have anything".

According to the participants, however, it was possible to read these characters as gays as a consequence of the ways in which they behaved, since their homosexuality was suggested through their mannerisms and effeminacy. As Maximiliano explains, during these years, all fictional gay characters "were basically sissies. Like very effeminate". In that sense, these characters cohered with one of the main ways through which homosexuality was socially recognised in the country, effeminacy, as was explained in previous chapters. The fact that they were depicted using this model, that had socially stabilised as a way of visualising homosexuality, was the only reason why they could be recognised and read as gays.

An effeminate behaviour, however, was not the only feature these characters had. In general, participants associate them with a specific occupation, as they remember them to be hairdressers; a particular way of relating to others, since they state that they were very much inclined to gossip; and a certain social stratum, as they explain that these characters

were part of the working class. In Benito's words: "the effeminate gay; effeminate, poor and prone to gossip. I think that was like my first gay reference when I was younger". These characteristics, furthermore, were framed by a humorous tone. Participants remember that all these characters were used as one of the "comic foils" of the programmes in which they appeared. In that sense, as their only role within the narrative was to be laughed at by others, participants do not only refer to these figures as stereotypes, but more regularly as "caricatures". Through this simplified representation, based mainly on humour, these "caricatures" were stripped of any other diegetic possibility; their own stories and feelings were unknown. As Elisa describes:

> Early on, gays were laughed at, they were the ones that were meant to be funny. People had to laugh at them. They also had to be sissies, you know? Since they had to be funny, any content relating to their sexual or affective life was taken away from them.

They consider that these figures were never taken seriously, but continuously ridiculed. As a consequence, through them, homosexuality was scorned, rejected as a valid or respectable identification. In Tomás's words:

> In the past, it was [...] a way to laugh at them, to denigrate them. The gay guy was the hairdresser, the character that knew about make up, you see? All those stereotypes and that prejudice were made up to denigrate them.

According to participants' views, all these depictional patterns had the same effect: vilifying homosexuality. Either by depicting gay men as macabre and/or comic figures, by ignoring lesbian characters/people, or by showing gayness as a discreditable position that had to be concealed, Chilean television during the 1990s and early 2000s is remembered as a space where gay/lesbian identities were attacked and denigrated. Gays/lesbians were seen as pitiful people whose social space was extremely reduced and whose personal lives were insurmountably restricted by their abject feelings. As Benito summarises: "Chilean TV either ridicule us or portray us as victims, but I think we are always second-class people. We're less than the others [...] you're a second-class person, and poor you".

This, however, is not all there is. Many participants characterise the next decade as one in which the televisual representation of homosexuality started mutating. In that sense, they state that, although many of the "old" patterns continued to exist, from early 2000s onwards, new figures started populating the televisual environment.

Advances and Limitations in the Emergence of "Other" Gays and Lesbians

There seems to be an agreement among several participants: the appearance in 2003 of the character Ariel Mercader in the *telenovela Machos* (Saquel, 2003) – which I identified in Chapter 2 as the emergence of the *serious macho* – marks a clear departure from the "old" ways in which Chilean television depicted homosexuality. As Inés explains:

> I think that *telenovela* marked a turning point regarding the stories that were told, the love stories that were shown, and what happens to the relationship between a father and a son when the son wants to be open about his sexuality, when he wants to be out. I think it set a precedent.

In that sense, participants explain that from early 2000s, homosexuality was taken "seriously" on television. Within fictional programmes, this change implied making gay/lesbian identifications explicit. Characters were no longer only *assumed* to be gay, but *known* to be gay, as they clearly self-identified as such in their dialogue, marking their diegetic developments. This was also the case for lesbian characters, who experienced a direct transit from total absence to explicitness. In Manuel's words: "it's more explicit, in that they showed it. They showed how it would turn into a conflict, it was a turning point in their life".

This movement also entailed that gay characters were no longer only represented through a humorous tone. Although the gay "comic foils" continued to exist, the new characters, both gays and lesbians, were depicted following dramatic storylines. Through some of them, gay/lesbian lives were not just represented but respected, as they were shown in a broader way that encompassed a dignified depiction of what Rodrigo calls the "homosexual emotionality". According to participants, these were rounder characters that had "something to say". Yes, they were gays/lesbians, and that was clear, but this was not *all* they were. As Rodrigo explains, while assessing the changes that took place during the 2000s: "they started writing stories about gay characters that weren't just about being gay. There was something more to it". These characters were depicted doing their everyday lives, in what participants call "quotidian" and "natural" settings. They lived among others and lived *as* those others. That is how, for instance, Lorenzo remembers the character Ariel: "he wasn't a caricature. He was a person with a normal life like that of his brothers who weren't gay".

The positive evaluation of the role these characters played at the beginning of the century, however, does not necessarily stand the test of time. While participants recognise that these figures were crucial for broadening the "homosexual spectrum" at that particular point in time, they are also singled out as the place where other stereotypes and fixed narratives that are still present originated. In that sense, although they are celebrated for being represented as "any other character", some participants also highlight the ways in which their narratives' continuous fixation with a certain aspect of the gay/lesbian experience – "the closet" – has contributed to the representation of homosexuality as a tragic identification that is in fact problematic for those who claim it. In that sense, gay/lesbian lives are depicted as a "struggle", a relentless pursuit of acceptance. Through that, gay/lesbian happiness is placed on someone else: those who have the capacity of accepting – or not – a friend's, sibling's, son's, or daughter's sexual orientation. As Luciano and Clara explain:

> [TV shows] the homosexual drama or trauma, but trauma of what? They don't show a heterosexual trauma. I wish the stories didn't have to be about coming out, and the drama and shit like that, and the understanding family, and the family that doesn't understand it, the supporting family, the non-supporting family. All that shit, all that well-known drama. It's like stop making gay shows about it, we know that already.

> The characters are always fighting with the mother, the father, or the boss. Right, so the family now supports them, but now they have to fight against society, against I don't know what, everything, you know what I mean? And a gay man's or a lesbian's life isn't a constant struggle. You're obviously fighting because you don't have the same rights compared to the rest but it's not a constant struggle [...] [on TV] it's always about a fight, about being accepted and being gay is not something that has to be accepted, you know?

Respondents also talk about the ways in which these "struggles" sometimes not only carry painful consequences for the character themselves, but also for those around them. In that sense, participants identify the emergence of gay characters that "live a double life". These are characters that are depicted as going through secret gay experiences, while maintaining a heterosexual façade, including a wife and children. These figures are not esteemed by participants, as they consider that, through them, gay men are shown as "villains" whose lies are the source of the suffering of others. They do not identify anything likeable in these characters. The imperative to "tell the truth" is the frame through which they are interpreted, not mentioning the social factors – such as homophobia – that could hinder the possibilities for personal disclosure. As Alberto describes: "married, with children, you see? He's been hiding his homosexuality for many years, which will

ultimately come up any time, for sure. And it ruined his life, because he didn't accept what he was from the beginning". Similarly, Julia remembers the two gay characters of the *telenovela ¿Dónde Está Elisa?* (Demicheli, 2009):

> I sort of empathised with the character that Caillet played, but Álvaro Morales's[70] character was an arsehole. I mean, he cheated on his wife and the wife was a very miserable woman, you'd feel sorry for her, you see? So, in the end, I feel like that was always the case, they were evil characters in the story.

Among lesbian characters, on the other hand, participants mainly identify three representational patterns, which share some characteristics with what I described as *camionas, clear lesbians/confused lesbians,* and *family women* in Chapter 2. Firstly, they talk about masculine lesbians who are nasty and violent. That is how Julia, for instance, remembers Raco, character of the series *Cárcel de Mujeres* (Goldschmied, 2007-2008): "it would reproduce the stereotype of a lesbian in jail [...] very masculine and, defiant and violent and aggressive". Likewise, the representation of lesbianism through its sexualisation is recognised. These are feminine and conventionally good-looking women who are shown, in Pedro's words, as "objects of desire". As Elisa explains: "more sexualised, maybe similar to porn, you know? Women that are [...] very sexual and feminine as well. Yes, very appealing for men's fantasies". Finally, participants identify the presence of lesbian characters whose storylines are marked by their desire to become mothers. As Inés states, while talking about the lesbian characters of the *telenovela No Abras la Puerta* (Kri, 2014-2015): "it was very linked to maternity. A lesbian woman always sort of wants to be a mother". Although these three representational patterns are singled out as reductive ways of representing the lesbian experience, participants establish some differences between them. While the first one is totally rejected, it is considered that the other two have incorporated – although in different levels – certain elements that have at least moved the representation of lesbians in an appropriate direction. They are still, however, interpreted as not complex enough and, furthermore, as complicit in the reproduction of certain stereotypes about lesbianism that are anchored in *machista* discourses.

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[70] In *¿Dónde Está Elisa?* (Demicheli, 2009)*,* the actor César Caillet played the role of an openly gay man that has a love affair with his best friend's husband, who was a closeted gay man, interpreted by the actor Álvaro Morales.

Although, when identified, these positions are firmly stated, in general they are not as commonly or elaborately talked about as the ones referring specifically to gay characters. The majority of participants either do not identify representational patterns of lesbians at all or explain that they are harder to determine. According to their view, this is a consequence of a broader social effacement of lesbianism that has hindered its visualisation, even in stereotyped ways. In that sense, participants explain that lesbian characters, unlike gay ones, have not been given distinct spaces for them to inhabit. This is conceived as a further invisibilisation, as stereotypes, although rejected, are recognised as ways through which gay identifications have been mainstreamed. In Isidora's words: "if homosexuality is a taboo, at least there is the stereotype that all fashion designers are gay, I don't know, that all fashion designers are gay, but there are no stereotypes about lesbians".

These patterns mostly refer to the representation of lesbians in fictional programmes, as participants explain that lesbianism is still seldom present on non-fictional productions. They state that there are almost no visible lesbians among TV presenters, journalists, or news sources. The representation of homosexuality in non-fictional programmes is singled out as a still almost exclusively masculine territory, as was also described in Chapter 2. In Leonor's words:

> There are no lesbians on TV now. Well, Scarleth, but I don't know if she is working on TV now or not. On the other hand, when you put any morning show on, in all of them there is one [gay men], you know?

Effectively, these gay presenters and journalists are continuously highlighted by participants. In general, they talk about them as affirmative figures that have broadened the visibility of homosexuality. Participants celebrate the representation of these men as serious professionals that "happen to be" gay, while standing out for their work-related achievements. Respondents explain that this is a stark difference in regard to former patterns of representation in which "real" gay men were absolutely denigrated. In contrast, these professional gays are offered as figures that can be respected and even admired. LGBTQ activists are also included in this evaluation, particularly the representatives of *Fundación Iguales*.

The last depictional pattern identified by the respondents is the one formed by the representation of homosexuality as a tragedy. This is usually the case in news

programmes, where homosexuality is made visible through stories about homophobic violence. As Maximiliano explains: "in the news, it appears when there's a case of bullying or when there is violence involved". This is not necessarily conceptualised as a negative feature, as these are issues that need to be made visible in order to create social awareness. However, the fact that homosexuality gains visibility in these programmes *exclusively* through the representation of homophobia is considered to be reductive, as it means that gays/lesbians are continuously placed either in the positions of victims or defenders of those who have been victimised, in the case of LGBTQ activists. This hinders the placement of gays/lesbians as specialists in other areas, reducing their field of action.

In general, participants' opinions about the majority of the representational patterns through which Chilean TV has made homosexuality visible cohere with Evans's (2007) findings in his analysis of American gays and lesbians' assessment of national TV: "today's portrayals are much better than the images of the past, but they are far from perfect" (p. 14). In that sense, while changes are continuously recognised – changes that, in Tomás's words, are "much more positive than negative" – the general assessment continues to be tainted by an interpretative scheme that conceptualises television as hostile. Respondents continue to be frustrated by many of the ways in which Chilean TV makes homosexuality visible, including the persistent older patterns but also the newer ones, as they think that they generally show simplified narratives from which several aspects of the lesbian/gay experience are curtailed. Although with different intensities, then, the majority of characters/people are singled out as limited in their possibilities and lacking real complexity. They might be better, but they are still problematic or insufficient.

This is different to what has been found in other studies – for instance, Dhaenens's (2012b) research about Flemish gay, lesbian, and straight viewers' responses to American TV – in which current gay/lesbian representations are considered to be diverse, nuanced, and round. This difference could be explained by a combination of two factors. Firstly, it cannot be ignored that American television – and also TV from other Western countries – has indeed been progressively producing images that, although not without criticism, have expanded and diversified the possibilities for gay and lesbian representation. Programmes such as *Queer as Folk* (2000-2005), *Six Feet Under* (2001-2005), *The L Word* (2004-2009), *Ugly Betty* (2006-2010), *Modern Family* (2009-2020)*, Glee* (2009-2015)*, and *Looking* (2014-2016), to name just a few, and presenters and journalists, such as Anderson

Cooper, Robin Roberts, Graham Norton, and Ellen DeGeneres, among others, have mainstreamed gay/lesbian narratives that have not been present on Chilean television[71]. However, it is also worth considering the context in which these interpretations are made. As was already argued, interpretations made from starkly different contexts in terms of gay/lesbian rights and everyday life are expectedly going to be quite different. The fact that Chilean TV's depictions of homosexuality are part of a restrictive broader context – and, in part, are also understood as one of causes of that context – contributes to participants' harshness in regard to them.

In fact, thinking about what these newer patterns of representation "do" or, in other words, the consequences they have in "the real world" is always present in participants' evaluations. In that sense, a widely shared opinion, here expressed in Lorenzo's words, is that "TV has just begun to normalise gays and lesbians, so to speak". The meanings of this normalisation will be thoroughly explained in the next chapter; however, some implications are worth exploring here. Participants point out that Chilean TV's progressive diversification of gay/lesbian images – as Emilio explains: "TV has shown that homosexuality is not a single thing, but that there is wide range of ways in which it can be expressed" – has encompassed the inclusion of characters and people who, even if not perfect, are understood as "natural", "human", "not stereotyped", or "neutral", among other characterisations. As Luis argues:

> *Telenovelas* progressively started to show us in a more human way. In fact, I always remember that in *Machos* there was a character that, interestingly enough, one sort of found out that he was gay. Like at some point he was talking over the phone and like all my family went like "hey!" [...] I think it's becoming something more human now. Early on, the main issue was about being gay or lesbian, but now I think the stories are associated with other kind of issues.

According to participants' views, a "natural" or "human" character/person is the one that meets two main characteristics: 1) their homosexuality is explicit, a clear part of their identities; and 2) at the same time, this identification does not "restrict" their narrative, story, or diegetic possibilities. These are characters/people whose sexual orientation does not completely define their interests or narrative developments. They can do whatever

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[71] Analyses of some of these narratives, including its problematic features, are available in Aslinger (2013), Ávila-Saavedra (2009), Becker (2006), Beirne (2006), Brown & Westbrook (2013), Chambers (2009), Demory (2013), Dhaenens (2012a), Farrell (2006), Graf (2015), Kunze (2013), Lee & Meyer (2010), Mitchell (2005), Murrel & Stark (2013), Raley & Lucas (2006), and Reed (2018), among many others.

others do. In contrast, those figures that materialise the older and persistent representational patterns are the ones whose existence is entirely defined by their homosexuality, even in those cases in which it is not directly named. There are, however, some features that get unaccounted for in respondents' analyses of these representations. This highlights the specific strategies of interpretation that they are utilising, which will be explained below.

Conditions of Possibility: Representations as "Packages" of Information

Participants are certain in their opinion that Chilean TV's representations of homosexuality – both the highly rejected images that are constructed following older depictional patterns and the newer ones that, although better received, are still considered to be problematic or insufficient – are not showing several aspects of the gay/lesbian experience. Even many of those characters/people that are regarded as an improvement are singled out as lacking in complexity. Participants recognise that, in general, there is a limited range of narrative possibilities and characteristics. Likewise, they explain that there are many "ways" of being gay/lesbian that are being completely disregarded. It is then not only that those that have appeared are shown in a simplified and limited manner, but also that there are many "options" that are not appearing at all. As Elisa and Manuel explain:

> The are many lesbians like me in the world. There are loads of nerd looking people who are not too feminine nor too masculine. There are too many lesbians like me, but on TV there are none. It will never happen, you know? There aren't any on TV, but the world is full of them.

> I think there should be more people on TV representing the wide rainbow we are. Like not only the stereotyped characters there are now, the clean gay man or the sort of normal woman. Or the typical *camiona* or the extremely effeminate, pink gay guy. In between those there are many other ways of being gay or lesbian that are not being shown, unlike all of ways of being straight which are indeed being shown.

From statements such as these, it can be interpreted that representations are not only being thought of as *limited*, but also as *polarised*, since participants tend to organise current TV images of gays and lesbians in two main groups that are understood as opposed extremes. All other nuances and possibilities get mostly diluted.

The main way through which participants organise this opposition is paying attention to elements associated with the figure's class position. In that sense, respondents explain that those representations that took place during the 1990s and that engendered patterns of depiction that are still alive focus on figures that, in Miguel's words, are "popular working-class characters". This contrasts to the "new" characters/people that have been progressively populating the televisual environment since the early 2000s. Respondents explain that, with the exception of the "gay/lesbian as victim" image, all these "new" figures share, as one of their main features, a belonging to the privileged strata of Chilean society. In that sense, the great majority of both, the characters in series and *telenovelas* that have been constructed following the more recent representational patterns and the journalists, presenters, and activists that have appeared on non-fictional programmes over the last years, are interpreted as upper-class figures that have restricted the representation of homosexuality in intersection with other class positions. As Luis points out: "it seems that the homosexual identity [...] is sort of absorbed by the Chilean classism. So gay men are always shown as successful characters, who are well-dressed and follow western beauty standards perfectly". Similarly, Miguel explains:

> They constructed a figure that stated that gays were professional men with strong purchasing power, surrounded by beauty, youth, trips. Of course, constantly repeating that ended up confusing people. People assumed everyone had those lives. Perhaps they didn't show the life of less privileged people, people who have to face more violent forms of discrimination.

This, nonetheless, is not an issue that is raised by all participants. All of the respondents who talk about the class-skewed representation of homosexuality have a critical position in regard to it. However, only a third of all participants addressed this issue explicitly. For the rest, it was not a topic that needed to be highlighted. It is worth noting that some differences arise when including the participants' age into the analysis. In that sense, for instance, none of those aged 39 or above talk about class issues. This shows, once again, the more complacent position that exists among older respondents in regard to the newer ways through which Chilean TV has represented homosexuality, even including its class-skewed characteristics. An excessive focus on the more privileged stratum of the national society seems a price worth paying for getting what they interpret as good or better images. Among younger participants, on the other hand, this is a fairly divided view: little less than half of them criticised the representations in terms of its classed characteristics. Even

when analysing the interviewees' opinion about this topic vis-à-vis their own class position the results are the same. In other words, among the participants of this study, their own social class does not seem to be a differentiating factor in the explicit salience of this topic for the construction of their interpretations.

There are, however, some other ways in which the "class issue" emerges in the discussions, even if it is not *directly* named or addressed as such by the respondents. Sometimes, for instance, it is materialised through the opposition between "professional" gays and lesbians – when that profession is one that is highly regarded within the Chilean society and that implies a comfortable economic situation – and those who have an "unskilled job". As can be seen in Benito's words:

> Today, when I see that discussions about sexual orientation or condition are much more common to see at least in Chile, […] it's like you can say now "I can identify with someone", you know what I mean? I can say "I'm gay, I'm professional and I work at a certain place", and I can see another gay guy who's a professional and works at a certain place. It's not only the hairdresser anymore.

Some other characteristics are also distributed along this polarised differentiation. Attractiveness, for instance, is considered to be disparately assigned, with privileged gays/lesbians regarded as beautiful or stylish and unprivileged ones as unattractive or plainly bad looking. As Rodrigo explains: "I haven't seen a middle-class professional gay man that is not fashionable. We can't imagine non-attractive gays that aren't miserable and working class". Likewise, characters' aims and life purposes get completely differentiated, assigning certain ambitions to certain classes. As Elisa exemplifies:

> There are the poor lesbians in jail, which is the only place where poor lesbians can be found […] Jail is the place where you can be lesbian and working class. The other ones are these aspirational couples, 35-30-year-olds who want to marry, and buy a house and who have typical young adult aspirations.

Gender expression is other of the features that respondents consider to be differently assigned when comparing these two "poles". In general, they recognise a persistent association between unprivileged class positions and gender nonconformity. According to their view, masculine lesbians and effeminate gays are the figures through which the intersection between homosexuality and a working-class position has been made visible on Chilean television. As Inés illustrates: "the gay man who is more effeminate is someone who's poor". The other side of the association, however, gets absolutely unaccounted for.

No participants directly assess the fact that those figures who inhabit the other economically defined "pole" act in gender conforming ways. This is naturalised, made obvious, taken for granted. The opposition is then explained as one that exists between "successful" gays/lesbians, on the one hand, and butch lesbians/effeminate gay men, on the other. As can be seen in these statements, made by Leonor and Julia:

> Homosexuals are shown as privileged people, I don't know, like a guy or a woman who's professional, who's doing well in life, who's successful, do you know what I mean? Compared to the effeminate gay [...] I think those are the only two representations you can find [...] The same happens in the case of lesbians, they're either *camionas* or excessively successful.

> Ariel Mercader, who is a very iconic character. I think he was a character that [...] broke the stereotype of the *loca*, or the effeminate gay, a gay who wants to be a woman. It rather shows a guy who is a doctor, a cardiologist, someone who could examine you in your next medical appointment, you see?

Participants are then evaluating characters by comparing features that are of different orders. By conceptualising depictional patterns as completely opposing elements, representations are assessed as "packages" of information in which certain characteristics are *naturally* connected with others, making alternative intersections impossible. A gay character is then effeminate *or* professional; a lesbian one, masculine *or* successful. In general, these associations are only described by participants and not directly criticised. The call for the inclusion of "other" ways of being gay/lesbian is never directly imbued with a need to disrupt these strict associations. It can be argued, consequently, that this differentiation has been naturalised. Other intersections are unthinkable. In the next statement, for instance, in which Leonor makes a stark contrast between scandalous *locas* and professional activists, it can be seen how these figures are understood as opposed, making illegible the crossing of their features:

> That's another thing in favour of *Iguales*, they sort of show another kind of people. Not like the *loca* who's always causing a scandal, you know? Not only the gay guy who dances at pride and has nothing else to do. They show that you can be a professional who is, I don't know, working for gay rights.

Here, the existence of a figure that is both, a *loca* that dances scandalously but is *also* a serious activist is unconceivable; it is out of the conditions of possibility. As was already stated, none of the participants challenged these strict associations, but rather actively

used them when explaining the poles that have dominated the representation of homosexuality on Chilean television.

As is evident in the last few statements, one of these poles gets more intensely scorned by the respondents. Words as "serious", "successful", and "professional", which are used for describing one of the poles, are concepts that carry a positive connotation. Their reverse – the effeminate, the butch, the scandalous – is then decidedly placed in a position of abjection. In all this, the gender conformity of the first group keeps being unaccounted for.

This has to be understood within the Chilean context, where, as was explained in Chapter 1, gender nonconforming homosexuality has been historically resisted/rejected. This dismissal is the result of how gay/lesbian identifications have been negotiated by several institutions, including LGBTQ organisations and the media, which has cemented discourses that establish "good" and "bad" homosexual positions to inhabit. In that sense, the fact that participants discuss these representations as "packages" of information where certain features are automatically connected with others is the result of what they have seen – not only on television, but broadly in society – during their whole lives. So, for instance, since effeminate gays and masculine lesbians have always been depicted in highly simplified manners, the existence of a more complex or round character is understood as *naturally* expressing their gender in a conventional way. The characteristics are sticky: if a gay character is effeminate, he cannot be a doctor or a lawyer; if a lesbian character is "successful", she has to be feminine.

This is similar to what Bird (2003) describes in her analysis of American viewers' relations with the televisual representation of Native Americans. For her study, Bird conducted focus groups in which she asked participants to design a fictional TV show that they would want to watch regularly. The only requirement was that this programme had to have both white and Native American characters. As a result of this assignment, she concluded that white viewers were unable to construct non-stereotyped indigenous images, as they did not have the cultural knowledge that would help them imagining a round and complex Native American character. As she explains:

> This study was not about how specific "audiences" respond to specific images, but rather was an attempt to explore how people construct their notions of reality by using imaginative tools that are largely given to them through mediated images. If White

> groups were largely unable to imagine Indians in non-stereotypical ways, it is not simply because they have watched *Dances with Wolves*. It is more because their cultural tool-kit contains only a limited array of possibilities, which have worked together over time and across media to produce a recognizable cultural "script" about Indians (Bird, 2003, pp. 116–117).

While Bird's findings focus on out-group representations (white viewers imagining Native American images), the participants of this study are talking about in-group depictions. However, their sense of separation from the two identified poles – particularly from one of them – allows them to treat these images in a way that share similarities to what is described by Bird: not as radical others, but as others who are "not quite" like them, even if they share crucial features.

As Fiske (1987) explains: "the only way we can perceive and make sense of reality is by the codes of our culture" (p. 4). The same happens with media representations: participants are interpreting them using what has become stabilised as the scripts through which certain types of homosexuality have been made *conceivable* within the Chilean society. When constructing their interpretations, which are marked by the immediate pairing of certain characteristics, participants are then summoning the ways in which gay/lesbian identifications have been historically made visible. TV representations are then reproducing "the dominant sense of reality" (Fiske, 1987, p. 21), as they carry the discursive formations that have been socially crystallised as real.

From a Foucauldian point of view, it can be argued that participants' statements reveal the ways in which TV representations contribute to the "symbolic construction of the real and the possible" (Orgad, 2014, p. 22). Power, according to Foucault's (1980) classic conceptualisation, is produced through the creation of forms of knowledge; these are discourses that render certain things possible and truthful, while others are singled out as false, beyond the bounds of possibility. In this, media representations work as devices that can reproduce and legitimise these discourses, inscribing them within what is mainstream and acceptable. These representations are then reinforcing certain "regimes of truth", where knowledge is formed, establishing "the truth and legitimacy of certain statements, and the illegitimacy and deviance of others" (Orgad, 2014, p. 67).

This is not, of course, to say that TV representations have singlehandedly moulded how participants imagine certain "ways" of being gay/lesbian. However, they have certainly been complicit in the reproduction of the stiff conditions of possibility through

which homosexual positions are envisioned. This has been done in accordance with other discursive institutions through which these positions have been constructed, while also materialising a hierarchy among them. As Gorton (2009) points out: "it is near impossible to pin down the meanings audiences take from what they watch or to separate meanings taken from television and those taken from everyday life" (p. 33). The strict associations made by participants have then to be understood as the result of the ways in which gay/lesbian identifications have been broadly mainstreamed within the Chilean society.

Broadening "the Real"

Parallel to what emerges as possible and real through their statements, participants continuously use "reality" as an interpretative device when making explicit evaluations of TV representations. Although they do not question the rigid "scripts" through which homosexuality has been made visible but use them in a naturalised fashion, they are constantly demanding for the televisual presence of "other", more complex and complete, "ways" of being gay/lesbian. Questioning what is *real* and what is *not real* emerges as the main form for framing these demands. This is consistent with what has been found in other studies. Peters (2009), for instance, in her analysis of Canadian LGBTQ and straight viewers' responses to the American programme *Queer as Folk* (2000-2005), explains that viewers "classified and conceptualized the quality of the show in terms of realism and accuracy" (p. 22). This allows this researcher to conclude that, in our lives as viewers, representation and "reality" are intimately intertwined, almost in an inseparable fashion.

According to Ang's (1985) conceptualisations, these results reveal an *empiricist* definition of realism, through which comparisons between the realities "inside" and "outside" a text can be conducted. This conception is based on the assumption "that a text *can* be a direct, immediate reproduction or reflection of an 'outside world'" (Ang, 1985, p. 37) and is usually expressed through "metaphors of transparency or reflection – television is seen either as a transparent window on the world or as a mirror reflecting our own reality back to us" (Fiske, 1987, p. 21). This is how participants of this study use "realism", as they are continuously evaluating the televisual figures vis-à-vis what they have seen or experienced in their everyday lives. This is preferentially done when talking about fictional programmes, as participants perceive that within non-fictional productions

there is a more direct and less "manageable" relationship between reality and representation.

In that sense, some respondents explain that certain images of gays and lesbians are not realistic: they do not express what they see in their own lives nor the lives of those who are around them. All of the participants that express this belief point their criticism to the effeminate gay characters that have been used as comic foils. In Miguel's words: "it was like 'okay, he's a *loca*', but I didn't give it much importance because the impersonations were too silly in that they looked like clowns, so you wouldn't think 'ok, he represents a real gay man'". Similarly, Lorenzo explains:

> Some characters were so absurd in terms of the way they represented certain characteristics that you'd say "this can't be real". Because I don't know people like them. I mean, when walking down the street or when meeting my friends, I don't see people that act like that.

For them, these figures – which they dislike – are "not real": they are the product of the imagination of those who are creating the televisual stories and *not* the reflection of someone they could see or meet in their everyday lives.

Other participants, however, think that today's representations of gays and lesbians are actually realistic. That does not mean, however, that these images are representing *their own* lives. Similar to what was found by McInroy and Craig (2017), participants of this study think that even though these characters are not representative of *their own realities*, they are reflecting *other people's lives*. They are showing the experiences of other members of the community; people that could be their friends, someone they could potentially know. Even some of the images that they dislike are singled out as realistic and thus deemed as worthy of having a space on TV. Comparable to Dhaenens's (2012b) analysis, the participants of this study "hurried to stress the validity of these stereotypes as pretty fair representations of *certain* [my italics] gay men and women" (p. 64). As Alberto, for instance, shows when talking about the effeminate gay "caricatures": "I don't really mind the stereotyped gays, the *colas* on TV, because there are gay guys who are like that". Participants evaluate in a similar way the gay characters that are "living a double life". As Julia explains:

> It is cool that they are trying to show homosexual characters in *telenovelas*. It's great that they're showing them, even if it is a married man who's hiding his homosexuality,

because these are real lives. I mean, I think the purpose of *telenovelas*, and TV's purpose in general, is to show different realities.

The problem, according to these participants, is then not necessarily the *presence* of these characters, but the *excessive focus* that is placed on them. The criticism is here directed not at the "unreal" characteristic of the representations, but to their "partiality". As Valeria and Manuel, respectively, explain: "on the one hand I think it's not bad that these stereotypes are out there because some people are actually like that. But if it's only that, over and over again, I think the richness of diversity gets lost"; "it's no bad per se, because I think, one way or another, we all do that. We are the gay friend and so on. But it's a repetitive stereotype [...] we are not like that everyday, you know?".

There is, therefore, an ample volume of "realities" that are not being shown. In that sense, television, in order to be fully realistic – and hence, appropriate, fair and "good" – does not only have to construct representations that are accurate in accordance with the world "out there", but also has to broaden the spectrum of identifications and stories that are being shown. Representations, then, in order to be "appropriate" would not only have to show unbiased and accurate images of "the real"; they also have to cover the wide range of options that they see taking place among gay/lesbian individuals. As Clara summarises: "there has to a diverse range of people, of lesbians and gays, in the same way there is a diverse range of straight people".

Where to focus for achieving this realism – in other words, what is left to show – depends on the respondents' identifications and interests. As is also shown by Gomillion and Giuliano (2011) in their analysis of the media use of American gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, "the content of 'realistic' portrayals most likely will differ across individuals, depending on their perspective" (p. 337). Broadening "the real" is then contingent on participants' desires about the ways in which gays and lesbians should be shown and, consequently, envisioned by mainstream society. As Press (1991) explains: realism is not only based on "closeness of fit", but also on "wish-fulfilment". In that sense, participants express they wish there was more space for showing: other generations apart from young adults, LGBTQ parenting, romantic and sexual relationships, and different nationalities and races, among other things.

Among those desires, however, there is one that appears constantly and seems to be encompassing what participants comprehend as realist and thus diversified

representations. That is the desire to be portrayed as "normal", which will be analysed next.

Chapter 6   The Meanings Of "Normal"

Introduction

In 1973, the American Psychological Association (APA) removed the diagnosis of homosexuality from the second edition of its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM). This movement, which meant that this organisation no longer considered homosexuality to be a mental disorder, was the result of discussions comparing two "competing theories, those that pathologized homosexuality and those that viewed it as normal" (Drescher, 2015, p. 565). What was then considered *normal*, as this decision seems to imply, was the result of observing society and recognising homosexuality as a "fact of life"; one of people's possible identifications, which, furthermore, did not need to be cured or "put right". Being considered normal under these terms, however, does not mean that homosexuality was suddenly accepted into the mainstream or even regarded as an "option" as valuable as heterosexuality. In that sense, while the decision to depathologise homosexuality might have marked a turning point in its transit into the social space of *normality*, thus consequently expanding its limits, it left *normative* constructions regarding sexuality mainly unquestioned.

Hall and Link (2004) explain these concepts as two distinctive constructions. On the one hand, *normality* is understood as a social achievement defined in relation to statistical sizes, which can only be grasped by *observing* what is already taking place in society; it is thus conceptualised as post-existent to action. In contrast, *normativity* is understood as pre-existent to action; it *dictates* what is considered valuable or respectable social

behaviour through the establishment of norms, a set of "explicit and implicit regulatives, which are reinforced through sanctions, pre-scribe a specific action to materially or formally determined groups of people" (M. M. Hall & Link, 2004, p. 17). Although differentiated, these two constructions are intimately intertwined, oftentimes overlapping and other times moving in slightly different directions. This close relationship is made evident in language, since in everyday use, *normal* is usually utilised also for singling out what is *normative*. As Warner (2000) states: "when people want to be normal they might be partly under the influence of an association [...] in which normal means certified, approved, as meeting a set of normative standards" (p. 56). As will be explain in this chapter, this is how participants of this study mobilise the concept, using *normal* to refer to normative ways of acting and behaving. They are, in this sense, engaging with a concept of "normalisation" that implies "constructing, establishing, producing, and reproducing a taken-for-granted and all-encompassing standard used to measure goodness, desirability, morality, rationality, superiority, and a host of other dominant cultural values" (Yep, 2003, p. 18).

Regarding the close relationship between these two constructions, Vanlee et al. (2018) explain that normativity "presupposes a certain normality that is then used as a regulative principle for society" (p. 614). Here then, heterosexuality's position as "the normal" – in terms of what is "normally" observed in society – shapes its placement as the norm through which people's lives are evaluated. This, nevertheless, does not necessarily imply the definition of homosexuality as *abnormal*. In other words, something can be discursively constructed as *normal* – for instance, through being depathologised by medical institutions or decriminalised by legal ones – and thus as something that does not have to be corrected[72] and still retain a tense position vis-à-vis social *norms* prescribing how society should function and which behaviours should be encouraged. In that sense, homosexuality's placement within the limits of normality – although still precarious and disputed – does not preclude the definition of heterosexuality as *normative*, the preferred encouraged social position.

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[72] This is, however, an "unstable status quo" (Vanlee et al., 2018, p. 614), as is made evident by the many cases of homophobic violence resulting in death that take place every day. It is, likewise, not a global view; there are 70 countries that still criminalise homosexuality, including 11 that criminalise it with effective or possible death penalty (ILGA, 2020).

This has usually been explained through the concept of *heteronormativity*, which can be defined as the set of "institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent – that is, organized as a sexuality – but also privileged" (Berlant & Warner, 1998, p. 548). Heteronormativity, in this way, is more than prejudice or phobia against gays and lesbians; it is "a structuring social force" (Ludwig, 2011, p. 44) that shapes every aspect of social life, inscribing heterosexuality into law, encoding it into the common understanding of how institutions work, and positioning it as the backbone of our day-to-day practices. Heterosexuality is placed as the "common sense", the "default" frame through which experiences and identities are constructed and understood. Heterosexual identifications and desires are then "not merely assumed, they are expected. They are demanded. And they are rewarded and privileged" (Chambers, 2007, p. 665). In that manner, heteronormativity structures "the basic idiom of the personal and the social" (Berlant & Warner, 1998, p. 548); it defines a sense of rightness, a horizon of expectations, "a set of ideals to which people aspire and against which they measure the value of their own and other people's lives" (Halperin, 2014, p. 450). Following Ludwig (2011), heteronormativity can then be understood as a hegemonic construction, as its power is not primarily rooted in direct coercion, but in the consensus of the majority of subjects, even those who do not always benefit from it.

Homosexuality's relation with heteronormativity is then one that is not *purely* marked by opposition. Notwithstanding the fact that, via heteronormativity, *any* non-heterosexual identification is placed in a lower position and is thus defined as "less-than", several authors have described the many ways in which gay/lesbian identifications and practices can indeed reproduce and reinforce heteronormative logics. Duggan (2002) has described this through the already explained concept of *homonormativity*, a sexual politics "that privileges same-gender attracted people who appear heteronormative" (Pollitt et al., 2021, p. 524). With this concept, according to Bryant (2008), Duggan is explaining the ways in which *certain* minoritarian subjects are domesticated into "good citizens" of the neoliberal state, as its core values of privatisation, self-discipline, and individual freedom are promoted as the primary way for constructing and understanding sexual identities (Grant & Nash, 2020; Grzanka et al., 2016; D. Richardson, 2005). In this manner, homonormativity explains how the limit of what is regarded as good citizenship has moved in order to include some non-heterosexual subjects, inviting to not only think

about *who* can be considered a good citizen, but also *how* individuals should behave in order to be regarded as such and how hierarchies between *normal* and *normaller* subjects (Warner, 1999) are established as a consequence of this process.

This echoes with the historical shift that took place during the 1990s, when gay and lesbian movements in different parts of the West started (re)developing assimilative strategies whose logics rest on the assumption that "to have dignity gay people must be seen as normal" (Warner, 2000, p. 52) or as as-normal-as-possible. It can be seen in Warner's (1999) following statement, which was made in a context in which these changes were still fresh, that these movements were mobilising a concept of normality that was shaped by ideas of normativity:

> Until recently, gay activism understood itself as an attempt to stave off the pathologization of gay life – by the police, by the McCarthy inquest, by psychologists and psychiatrists, by politicians, by health and sanitation departments. Now we are faced with gay activists who see the normalizing of queer life as their role (p. 131).

Social and political aims crystallised then around the demand for the inclusion of gays and lesbians into certain institutions and ways of life that were defined by their role in the reproduction of heteronormativity. In that sense, from its origin, the "politics of normalisation" has sought access "into mainstream culture through demanding equal rights" (D. Richardson, 2005, p. 515). At the base of these strategies lies an equalitarian conviction that deploys sameness while seeking equality: we are just like you, we have the same needs, feelings, and aspirations; we thus deserve what you have, the same rights and respect. As Seidman (2004) warns, however, this deployment of normality also carries a normative sense: "the normal gay is expected to exhibit specific kinds of traits and behaviors. He is supposed to be gender conventional, well adjusted, and integrated into mainstream society; she is committed to home, family, career, and nation" (p. 14). This leads Seidman (2004) to conclude that, in focusing on the achievement of minority rights while sustaining normative behaviours, the "politics of the normal gay/lesbian" is not seeking to challenge heterosexual privilege, instead supporting "the violence of heteronormative distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate lives" (Ahmed, 2014, p. 150). In the era of gay normalisation, then, gays and lesbians "have to be like everybody else (get married, raise kids, mow the grass, etc.)" (Love, 2007, p. 54) and also have to enjoy being like everybody else, as these are the ways of life and aspirations where the promise

of happiness and a "good life" lies (Ahmed, 2010; Love, 2007; Lovelock, 2019). All this, while locating sexuality as a non-politicised, "private, individualised experience that is merely one internal 'thread' of our identities, rather than a public, 'core identity'" (Grant & Nash, 2020, p. 594).

The ways in which many of the participants of this study relate to the televisual depiction of homosexuality can be understood through these concepts and discussions. Specifically, when asked how they would like national TV to represent gays and lesbians, participants state that they would like this to be done in a "normal" way. As will be explained in this chapter, they mostly use this word for highlighting the need to have images that show gays and lesbians who are aligned with *normative* cultural constructions. The televisual representation of homosexuality as an abnormal pathology or crime seems to be conceived as mostly defeated; the attention is thus now directed at the specific characteristics these figures should exhibit and how they relate to mainstream social norms. In that sense, participants declare that they would like to see characters and people whose stories do not focus on their sexual identifications, but on other aspects of their lives. "Normal" figures are then those whose sexuality is just "another part" of their identity; one that, furthermore, does not define any differentiating set of cultural, emotional, or experiential patterns. The focus should be placed on everything that makes gays and lesbians similar to heterosexuals. Participants consider this to be the "reality"; they think of themselves as "normal" members of mainstream Chilean society. Representations should therefore be constructed accordingly. This type of representation would make this "reality" available to others that do not have first-hand access to it, which is seen as helpful in the advancement of the social recognition of gays and lesbians' equality.

This is similar to what is described by Dhoest and Simons (2011) in their analysis of Flemish gays and lesbians' uses of media, as their participants also use the concept of "normal" as an umbrella for characterising "good" representations. However, unlike that study, in which participants avoided extremes and radical portrayals and mostly appreciated the incorporation of gays and lesbians in mainstream media – which leads the authors to conclude that "most respondents sounded anything but queer in their approach to representations" (Dhoest & Simons, 2011, p. 273) – some of the participants of this research do indeed show some dissident views. In that sense, even though the ways

in which the majority of the participants relate to these issues reveal what could be singled out as a "normalising" attitude, at least half of them also exhibit some dissident moments in which, although fleetingly, they state the importance of articulating, via television, some of the manners in which gay/lesbian lives can depart from the socially established heterosexual norms.

To Be Like Everybody (Straight) Else

Against what participants indicate as simplified and limited representations in which characters/people are mainly singularised by their non-heterosexual identifications, they would like to see figures who are not "only" gays/lesbians. As was explained in Chapter 5, respondents make a more positive evaluation of those figures whose main narrative is not directly associated with their homosexuality: they are a gay man or a lesbian woman, but they have so much more to say and show. In general, this is referred to as "normalising" homosexuality: not making it invisible, but neither shining a too-bright light on it. This is similar to what was found by Dhaenens (2012b), Kama (2002), and McInroy and Craig (2017), whose participants also regarded positively those figures whose identity and role are not only defined by their sexuality, thus eliminating "sexual orientation as a pretext for differential coverage and symbolic construction" (Kama, 2002, p. 200). As Rubén, for instance, says, while explaining what would constitutes a "good" character:

> [I wish] the main storyline wasn't about being homosexual. [I wish] it was about their life and that being gay was only one more aspect of their personalities. I think that's the way it should be portrayed, though it's also good to make homosexuality visible in our culture, because we still need it to be more accepted. But I think that if we normalise it [...] then it's not something we'd talk about. They're just people.

In general, participants refer to this in terms of "not making homosexuality an issue" or "making it irrelevant". That means avoiding, at all costs, a differentiated representation of gay/lesbian experiences, behaviours, and desires. While recognising its presence, homosexuality should not emerge as a topic for discussion. It should be there, but in a subtle way. Participants are then continuously negotiating the delicate balance between invisibilisation and normalisation. The goal is to avoid the former and achieve the latter via representations that do not ruminate on the figure's non-heterosexual identification. This does not mean avoiding the gay/lesbian "label", as has been described in studies

conducted in other national contexts (e.g., Adams et al., 2014; Grant & Nash, 2020), but to not mark it with characteristics that focus on its difference. In this sense, while the identificatory "label" should be kept, it should be placed "as being just one part of their lives and not the most important part" (Adams et al., 2014, p. 465). For the participants, then, being "normal" means being "unexceptional" in regard to one's sexual identity. As Rita exemplifies:

> [I wish] it was more normal [...] that it wasn't relevant whether they're gay or not. That's it, it shouldn't be an issue. I mean, I don't know, if there is a group of people on a programme and a guy says 'well, last weekend I travelled to Buenos Aires with my partner and we had a great time'. I wish it was something more normalised.

Sometimes, the figures that fulfil these expectations are not only characterised as "normal" but also as "human". Luis, for instance, says: "those characters that I'd say are more humanised too. Humanised in the sense that their storyline isn't only about being gay, there are other sides to them as well". A "normal" or "human" figure is then one that shows a broad range of experiences and feelings; they are not "restricted" in their narrative possibilities because of their sexuality. As Julia, for instance, describes when talking about Mercedes and Bárbara, characters of the *telenovela Perdona Nuestros Pecados* (Demicheli, 2017-2018):

> They showed like, truly like a wife, a teacher, you know? They represented a person, a friend, a daughter, someone who was a mother, who was a relevant person in the town, you know? So, they showed a whole character, all sides of them.

This also means leaving certain "classic gay narratives" behind; particularly the ones that are closely related with those aspects of the homosexual experience that have been continuously televised. As Inés explains: "another story that's about coming out, about your parents not accepting you [...] No, we've had enough of those stories". The focus should not be placed on the things that make gay/lesbian characters and their stories *different*, but on the ones that make them *similar* to the heterosexual others. The goal is for gay/lesbian people to be shown "like everybody else", aiming attention at those experiences that anyone, regardless of their sexual identity, can go through.

McKee (2000), in his analysis of media's role in the formation of Australian gay men's self-esteem, explains that participants' calls for "normal" images should be understood as claims for the existence of a *range* of acceptable images and not as a normative attempt of controlling the behaviour of gay men. Consequently, the author

concludes that "this is not 'normal' as opposed to 'deviant': it is 'normal' in the sense of being unexceptional" (McKee, 2000, p. 14). As was already explained, for the majority of the participants of this study, showing a broad range of possibilities and making homosexuality unexceptional is an integral part of its normalisation. However, this is also continuously intertwined with making it as similar as possible to the heterosexual *normative* life. Here, then, to be "normal" is both, to be unexceptional *and also* non-deviant. Gays/lesbians should be shown as "everybody else", doing what everybody else does. The examples of the things that "everybody else does" through which the participants sustain their arguments, however, are mainly based on the particular practices and experiences where heteronormativity is more vividly revealed. In that sense, participants claim for stories that show the "regular day to day" life of gays and lesbians. This, in order to demonstrate that we are "no different": *we*, like *them*, can and do live "normal lives" which are guided by the same social norms that shape *their* lives. As Pedro and David, respectively, state: "[I wish] they showed more of this person's everyday life [...] that they do everything a normal person does"; "you can have a completely ordinary life. Completely normal. The only different thing is what happens in the privacy of your home and that's it. It would be good if they showed that, a completely normal life, as it is".

When explaining what constitutes a "normal" life, certain things emerge repetitively. In the first place, elements associated with intimate couple formations are frequently called upon: it can be interpreted from participants' statements that one of the characteristics of what they conceive as "normal" gays/lesbians is their involvement in monogamous committed relationships that are united by love. As authors such as Annes and Redlin (2012), Doran (2013), Herrera (2009), and Herrera et al. (2018) – the last two discussing the Chilean context – have shown, "normality" is usually materialised through a compliance with dominant intimate norms: gays/lesbians must demonstrate "a desire for, and commitment to, loving, stable, marital-style couple relationships" (D. Richardson, 2004, p. 397). It is not surprising then that participants associate this particular type of romantic/familial involvement with the quotidian tribulations of domesticity. A "normal" gay/lesbian is not only in a committed relationship, but they also have a household to manage with that partner. As David explains, when describing the elements that should inspire the televisual presence of homosexuality:

> You fall ill like everyone else. The only difference is that the person that is with you is a man, and that's it. That's all. The arguments are the same, the problems are the same. You don't argue over your baby, but you do fight over your cat or over a plant that's dying.

Similarly, Alberto states: "we all have to wake up early, go to work, fulfil our responsibilities, [...] look after our home and our family, pay our bills". Certainly, as can be interpreted from this statement, the concept of "duty" is one that resonates with participants' explanations of "normality". This concept is mostly associated with economic issues and the comprehension of "normal" gays/lesbians as "people who work". In that sense, along with the committed partner and the house, "normal" gays/lesbians also have a job, but not *any* job; preferably, it has to be one that gives them the possibility to be considered "successful". In other words, it has to be a job that has the potential to provide a comfortable lifestyle. About this, Richardson (1998) explains that the conceptualisation of gays and lesbians as consumers has historically been understood as an integral component of their "normalisation" and, consequently, of their integration as acceptable citizens. As Emilio illustrates, when assessing the televisual changes that have taken place over the last few years:

> They have shown cases of homosexual people that tend to be seen as successful, showing that someone who is homosexual can indeed be as successful as someone who is heterosexual and that they can have a life, a normal life according to the society's standards, so to speak.

In general, then, for describing what they conceive as "normal", participants are summoning the elements of what constitutes normative domesticity, irrespective of sexual identification: "family, monogamy, romantic stability, childrearing, economic autonomy, and privatized consumption" (Doran, 2013, p. 98). In that sense, it is not that they want gays and lesbians to be represented as *any* heterosexual individual, but particularly as those who embody the norms of what constitutes socially respectable behaviour. What is appropriate, then, cuts across differences in sexual identification; the normative constructions are upheld for everyone: a "good" gay/lesbian is similar to a "good" heterosexual, which is what should be taken into consideration for constructing televisual images. In this manner, when participants state that "normal" gays and lesbians have committed relationships, families to take care of, a house to manage, and an important job, they are saying that their lives are shaped by the same values and aspirations that mould heterosexual lives and that, therefore, representations of

homosexuality should be constructed accordingly: focusing on all these elements that render gays/lesbians like any other "good" citizen. As Clara points out: "gays and lesbians should be portrayed just as heterosexuals are portrayed, it should be exactly the same because it [sexual orientation] is not relevant". In this sense, what the majority of participants are looking for are images that make possible the embracing of gay/lesbian identifications within mainstream society; they are mainly interested in images that allow non-heterosexuals to be incorporated into "normality's" fabric, "not enlarging its boundaries" (Kama, 2003, p. 89).

A "normal" gay/lesbian, therefore, "is one who is situated at the heart of consensual society" (Kama, 2002, p. 200), being successfully integrated into it. They have a partner, a house, and a job. These are the things that define them, and *not* their sexuality. As a consequence, this part of their identity should not be visible at first sight; it should only become salient once the non-heterosexual character/person decides to make it so. "Normal" gays/lesbians, then, do not only have to do – and enjoy doing – what the heterosexual others do, they also have to *act* like them, in order for their homosexuality to not become so "evident" or "obvious". As Tomás explains, while assessing how the televisual treatment of homosexuality has changed over the last decades: "*telenovelas* have been normalising this, they've been demonstrating that gays and lesbians [...] can work in any environment and don't necessarily make it evident that they're gay unless they decide to talk about it".

It can be interpreted from participants' statements that, for them, not making homosexuality salient means to avoid acting in gender nonconforming ways, as this would be a powerfully strong indicator of a non-heterosexual identity. In general, respondents make a stark contrast between the socially integrated characters/people and the ones they characterise as stereotypes or caricatures. In contrast to the latter, then, "normal" gays are envisioned as masculine and "normal" lesbians, as feminine. Authors such as Clarkson (2008) and Halperin (2014) explain that what nowadays counts as sexually normal is more directly and firmly associated with gender performativity than with sexual object-choice. In line with this explanation, participants make a direct association between "normality" and gender conformity. The gender nonconforming stereotypes and the features that have been associated with these figures – as explained in Chapter 5 – are revealing of what is "not-normal" and "not-human", what separates

gays and lesbians from mainstream society; what, therefore, should be avoided in televisual representations. As can be interpreted from Clara's and Alberto's respective statements:

> It is always a caricature, particularly in the case of men. Not as much in the case of women. Like, I don't know, there could be a woman that is more masculine than the rest, but that's about it. But gays on TV are always like Tony Esbelt, always like Yerko Puchento[73], the man who knows about fashion, you know what I mean? Like there's always this caricature that doesn't reflect a normal gay man.

> There are times when I've seen representations or news, I don't know, about gays and lesbians that are absolutely normal so to speak, they have a normal life, they're very, very discreet, I don't know, and there are times when they've shown characters that are much more feminine, more flamboyant, or, if they're lesbians, much more aggressive.

In general, participants' claims for images that show "normal" gays and lesbians, with all the characteristics that have been here outlined, make possible to argue that they are mostly constructing their interpretations through an outlook that conceives being gay/lesbian purely as having a sexual orientation and not "a distinctive culture or psychology or social practice or inner life, or anything else that is different from the norm" (Halperin, 2014, pp. 60–61). The aim, consequently, is to have images that avoid the specificities of the gay/lesbian experience, even if that means having the risk of diluting the "distinctiveness of queer life" (Halperin, 2014, p. 447), what Smith (1997) refers to as committing "cultural genocide" (p. 228). These participants do not feel represented by any "disruptive", "dissident", or even "differentiating" elements. They do not feel that these features are what define their lives; in general, then, the absence of these elements is at least ignored and at most, celebrated.

The desire for this particular type of "normalising" images has to be understood within participants' use of "realism" as an interpretative device: they want gays and lesbians to be shown as "normal" because they conceive this to be the reality, what they see in their everyday lives. As was explained in Chapter 5, some of the current representational patterns of homosexuality are considered realistic because they are reflecting *other people's lives* – someone the participants could potentially know, a friend or a colleague. However, when talking about what they want for the future in terms of

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[73] Tony Esbelt and Yerko Puchento are humorous characters that have appeared in several programmes over the last 20 years. Both very flamboyant, the former represents a fitness instructor and the latter a gossipy showbusiness journalist.

televisual depictions of homosexuality – and what they are already starting to see in a very limited number of national programmes – they utilise *their own realities* as an anchoring point. They think of themselves as "normal" members of the Chilean society; consequently, they want this "normality" to be represented. As is expressed by David, when discussing a particular *telenovela* character: "Matías from *Casa de Muñecos*. The one that got married, who showed his AUC[74]. I thought he was a normal guy, like most of us are, completely normal, with a normal partner and a normal family".

Although the majority of the participants utilise "normality" as the main frame for constructing their interpretations and television-related wishes, at least half of them also exhibit some dissident moments in which they question, although briefly, the need to follow heteronormative parameters. There is even a small minority whose interpretations are exclusively constructed following a dissident attitude. In these moments, participants recognise that the increasing presence of "normal" characters/people is complicit in the reproduction of norms that do not "disrupt" Chilean society's conservatism in regard to sexuality. For them, making homosexuality visible in these terms "is not the best way to move forward either", as Eugenio remarks. In that sense, participants criticise these figures' attachment to what they describe as heteronormative familial values and domesticating practices; all of the elements that render them "acceptable". As Luis and Valeria argue:

> It still is a very heteronormative image of homosexuality, you know? Like, you can't tell they're gay, they are politically correct, they want to form a family. Essentially, they just copy the typical traditional western family and there isn't a deeper reflection on like "ok, and why do they have to follow the same heterosexual gender model?".

> Because they're… how can I put it? They are less harmful within a conservative environment, you know? Because like I said, they are domesticated. Like, perfect, you know what I mean? Like, if they were to do something they'd do it privately, without flaunting their sexuality […] they're very discreet, so they don't make anyone feel uncomfortable.

Conversely, these participants state the need to make visible certain elements and experiences that, even if they are "disruptive" and could potentially be rejected by mainstream society, are part of the broad possibilities that exist within the "reality" of gay/lesbian lives. In that sense, a few participants wish for images that would show

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[74] AUC is the acronym for Acuerdo de Unión Civil, the Civil Union Partnership that was legalised in Chile in 2015.

elements such as the night life, consumption of illegal drugs, romantic configurations beyond the monogamous coupledom, and transvestism, among others. The fact that these are experiences that they see happening in "real life" transforms their televisual presence into a necessity, something that would make the representation of homosexuality more authentic and realistic. As Pedro exemplifies:

> There's a lot of things that are not being shown, you see? Why don't they show more explicit things, like orgies or scenes in saunas? These things do exist. Like, wasted people outside of clubs. Because that happens, it does [...] so I think they're missing this.

This type of accounts, although when present are decidedly stated, do not constitute the principal guiding narrative of the responses of the great majority of participants. As was already explained, these "dissident moments" are mostly fleeting; they constitute an attitude that is placed on the back of the participants' minds, reminding them of something that makes them feel uncomfortable, but not as uncomfortable as what they see as the alternative – stereotyped and/or "differentiating" images – makes them feel. They think that the public effects of these polarised set of images are different, so one type of representation is clearly preferred over the other, even if it is not considered to be the best option.

The quest for "normal" images, then, is imbued with the conviction that these images would represent the "reality" of gay/lesbian lives; a reality that is shaped by the same norms that define respectable heterosexual lives. This is, furthermore, a reality that must be known by others, particularly those who do not have first-hand access to it, as this would help in the process of achieving full social respect for gays and lesbians. In that sense, while participants know that homosexuality is currently placed within the limits of *normality* – in the country, it is not directly pathologised nor criminalised – they also know that this is an unstable and sometimes contested position which can be positively affected by the presence of (homo)*normative* gays and lesbians in television, a medium that, as explained in Chapter 4, they conceive as a powerful social influencer. For them, then, "normalising" homosexuality means aligning it with normative constructions of good citizenship and that is what they want television to do, as this would have beneficial social consequences.

"Normality" and the Avoidance of an Abject Life

Several authors (e.g., Eribon, 2004; Halperin, 2014; D. Richardson, 2004; Y. Taylor, 2011) have advanced contextual explanations in which the desire to be "normal" or recognised as "any other person" is understood as a response to discrimination; a consequence of the social positioning of homosexuality as a degrading identification. Normalisation, in this sense, emerges as a strategy for fighting against discrimination, overcoming homosexuality's shameful social position, and trying to leave the history of stigmatisation behind. As Warner (2000) explains, it seems that today nearly everyone "wants to be normal. And who can blame them, if the alternative is being abnormal, or deviant, or not being one of the rest of us? Put in those terms, there doesn't seem to be a choice at all" (p. 53). Being "normal" holds the promise of a liveable life, a more stable and comfortable position where sexual hierarchies can be – at least, some of the time – circumvented. In Eribon's (2004) words:

> A certain stability is ensured by family life, along with the powerfully heteronormative context of professional life and, when you get right down to it, the entire sexual order that makes heterosexual behaviors seem legitimate and "normal". That stability can allow one to feel at home with oneself, to feel that one coincides with established social roles and with well-known and accepted social identities that are themselves presented as normative models by and for heterosexuality (p. 114).

It can be argued, then, that participants' wishes for images that depict gays and lesbians as "normal" people are a product of a national context in which homosexuality continues to be placed in a lower social position; they are, at least in part, a consequence of what participants have seen and gone through while living in a country where the life possibilities of non-heterosexual individuals are still curtailed by institutional and everyday experiences of heteronormativity and homophobia. Respondents' use of "normality", therefore, can be understood as a recourse for fighting against discrimination and getting social recognition as worthy members of the Chilean society. In Coleman-Fountain's (2014) words, this point of view seeks "to be 'like everyone else' in order to be treated like everyone else" (p. 813). As David expresses, participants want to see "a completely normal same sex couple, not a joke or a caricature". It can be interpreted from this statement that the demand for "normal" images emerges as a consequence of past – and also some current – representations where homosexuality was ridiculed and/or vilified. Against this, then, the alternative is to have representations that will not have that

effect; these are the ones that cohere with the norms of good (sexual) citizenship that have been discursively constructed by several national institutions, such as the educational and legal systems.

Any society, as Foucault (1980) explains, is crossed by relations of power that can only be established and consolidated by "the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse" (p. 93). These discourses are forms of knowledge that are institutionally assembled, carrying a power that is not *possessed* but *exercised* through relationships; power, in this perspective, should then not be understood as a property, dividing the world between those who have it and those who do not, but as "a dynamic *situation*, whether personal, social, or institutional: it is not a quantum of force but a strategic, unstable relation" (Halperin, 1995, p. 17). The power these discourses consolidate is, in this sense, "not the juridical rule deriving from sovereignty, but a natural rule, a norm. The code they come to define is not that of law but that of normalisation" (Foucault, 1980, p. 106). These are, in turn, the rules that are used for judging and classifying individuals and each one of their undertakings. As Eribon (2004) explains, this is how a subject is produced: "in and through 'subordination' to an order, to rules, norms" (p. 5).

Halperin (1995) highlights that, with this conceptualisation, Foucault is not denying the reality of domination, as is still understood that power is unevenly distributed "and often stabilized in its dynamics" (p. 17). However, what he is indeed doing is stating that, when it comes to power, domination is not *all* there is to say. This, as Gauntlett (2002) explains, implies a change of emphasis: "from a world constructed from *without* – external discourses imposed on people – to a world constructed from *within* – the individual's own dynamic adaptation to their surroundings" (p. 116). The focus is then placed on individuals' relationship with power and the ways in which they relate with the norms that have been discursively constructed in any given society. This relationship, as Grzanka et al. (2016) explain, is one that is marked by what Foucault called *governmentality*, a form of self-monitoring and self-discipline that has been understood as power's main mode of operation (Ludwig, 2011), particularly under neoliberalism, a mode of social organisation in which "citizen-subjects are positioned as self-governing individuals who are responsible for their own individual choices, while state responsibility for social provision is withdrawn and privatised" (Grant & Nash, 2020, p. 594). Governmentality, in this sense,

requires subjects who are "free" to make their own everyday choices; as is through these choices how they "*freely and spontaneously* police both their own conduct and the conduct of others – and so 'earn,' by demonstrating a capacity to exercise them, the various rights assigned by the state's civil institutions exclusively to law-abiding citizens" (Halperin, 1995, p. 19).

As Ludwig (2011) explains, this mode of power operation implies what Foucault calls "technologies of the self", which can be understood as the ways in which individuals put their ethics – internal ideas and loose rules – into action, thus showing how modes of self-monitoring and self-discipline are actually enacted. These techniques are forms of subject constitution that are not forced upon the individual; instead, "the subject applies them to itself in its social practices" (Ludwig, 2011, p. 55). In this sense, then, "technologies of the self" reveal how individuals internalise social norms and integrate them into their everyday practices. It is in these processes of transforming norms, or hegemonic worldviews, into "technologies of the self" where the orientation towards "being normal" takes centre stage, as it functions as a "substantial lubricant" (Ludwig, 2011, p. 55). As this author explains, this is how normative ideas about what constitutes a "normal" individual guide the ways in which subjects feel, think, and carry out their everyday activities, shaping the measurements through which they evaluate their own – and others' – level of life success.

Participants' wishes for images of gays and lesbians who are "like everybody else" can then be understood as an instance in which social norms are transformed into "technologies of the self" that are "motivated by a desire not to fall outside of normality, but to live, look and *be* normal" (Ludwig, 2011, p. 55). This position, however, should not be conceived as an "option", but as a consequence of relations of power through which homosexuality has been discursively positioned – by television but also by several other institutions – as "less-than", on a spectrum ranging from "abhorrent" to "acceptable". Assimilating or transgressing social rules should consequently not be understood as "choices that are available to individuals, but are effects of how subjects can and cannot inhabit social norms and ideals" (Ahmed, 2014, p. 153). In this sense, participants' calls for "normal" images can be conceptualised as strategies that respond to a specific context, as they think these would be helpful in what they consider an urgent need: moving forward

in the recognition of homosexuality as more than an "acceptable" position, a "respectable" one.

"Normalisation", however, is an approach to fight against discrimination that inevitably implies the establishment and solidification of new boundaries. About this, Richardson (2005) explains that by determining the ordinariness and normality of *some* gays and lesbians, *others* are "figured as problematic and in need of control" (p. 522). It is in those subjects where the failure to gain social respect is placed; they become the ones to blame. As was explained in Chapter 5, participants of this study are indeed establishing these boundaries. Their interpretations of images as polarised "packages" of information are involved in the establishment of limits between appropriate/normal and non-appropriate/non-normal ways of expressing and living a gay/lesbian life, which are then utilised by respondents not only for making sense of others' identities but also of their own.

Jenkins (2014) explains that the process of identity construction is formed by two inseparable aspects: nominal and virtual identifications. While the former corresponds to the label's *name* – "gay" or "lesbian", for instance – the later describes the *experience* associated with it. According to this author it is then "possible for individuals to share the same nominal identity, and for that to mean very different things to them in practice, to have different consequences for their lives, for them to 'do' or 'be' it differently" (R. Jenkins, 2014, p. 46). In other words, there are many ways of inhabiting and giving meaning to these labels: a plurality of forms of being gay or lesbian is available. In this sense, the boundaries that are constructed through participants' assessments of "normal" and "non-normal" images serve as devices where these *virtualities* are crystallised and thus utilised as parameters for making sense of their own position. Through comparisons and contrasts, participants use the televisual images of homosexuality and the different "ways" of being gay/lesbian that they have seen on TV for reflecting about their own lives and how they have come to identify in the ways they do. They have constructed their identities as gay men or lesbians, at least in part, by operations of comparison and opposition in regard to the images that television has made available. These identity-making practices and the ways in which participants have negotiated their own identifications during their lives will be explained next.

Chapter 7   Differentiating from TV Representations: Shame and the Process of Gay/Lesbian Identification

Introduction

Constructing an identity and, through that, getting to feel represented by a certain label to the point of saying "this is what I am" is a movement that is far from purely individual; rather, it is crossed by social determinants that even define which are the positions that are available to be occupied. In this sense, following Hall (1996), identities can be conceptualised as points of attachment "to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us" (p. 6). This, however, not only requires a subject that is "hailed" into a certain position, but one that takes it up and invests in it; it is not a one-sided development, but an *articulation*. Identity should then be understood as a *process* and thus not as something that is *had*, but as something that is *done*. It does imply the attachment to a position, as Hall (1996) explains, but these are attachments that are conditional, temporary, and "lodged in contingency" (p. 3). Identity, in this way, is not something that is achieved as a completed "product" but assembled through a continuous negotiation: a constant process of *identification* and *self-production*.

More specifically, following Jenkins (2014), this process is performed through what he calls an "internal-external dialectic": a multiplex and simultaneous development in which the individual's positioning is constituted in the relationship between how they see themself and how others see them. According to this author, these "internal" and

"external" definitions are inexorably mixed, as they are "constructed in terms of the other and in terms of […] perceived similarity or difference to others" (R. Jenkins, 2014, p. 75). Identification is then marked by those around us; their definitions of ourselves and our own definitions of ourselves are intimately united in a process in which similarities and differences are utilised as anchoring points. In this sense, analyses of identificatory processes need to be carried out understanding that how I see me and how others see me – or, more precisely, how I think others see me – are mutually constitutive and thus inseparable in the everyday practice of identity construction. In this way, identity is not just a matter of "adopting" or "taking up" a position but working through an already meaningful label that is both, constituted by those around us and constitutive of our relationship with those others, thus having material effects on our lives. As Jenkins (2014) explains: the meaning of an identity lies "in *the difference that it makes* in individual lives" (p. 102).

Several models that aim to explain how individuals come to identify as gays or lesbians adopt these theorisations, as they describe a process in which subjects negotiate their feelings of same-gender attraction in tandem with the comprehension of the ways in which these feelings – and the people who "have" them – are socially perceived. In the process of gay/lesbian identification, the individual is then faced with a dilemma: a contradiction between society's expectations and the identity that is being crafted (Davies, 1992), as they have most surely grown up in a social context where negative ideas about homosexuality are abundant and easily available.

In general, as Coyle (1992), Harry (1993), and Sullivan and Wodarski (2002) explain, these models describe a process that can be organised in three broad stages: first, there is a sensitisation period in which individuals develop a sense of difference from their peers that is usually intertwined with the first experiences of recognition of feelings of same-gender attraction; this would then lead to a period of confusion and self-questioning in which individuals acquire a clearer awareness of their possible sexual identification while also realising the social implications of the stigma attached to it; later, after a more or less difficult negotiation depending on the individual's conditions of existence, they would move to eventually accepting their feelings of same-gender attraction and integrating them into their sexual identity, which would then possibly lead to disclosure and the everyday negotiations of being "out" or "in" the closet depending on the context. Although

these models have been criticised for presenting an essentialist perspective of the process of gay/lesbian identification that does not highlight individual conditions or cultural and historical contexts (Figueroa & Tasker, 2014), they can be usefully utilised as a general structure that can be adapted to specific situations, making it then possible to focus on the ways in which the articulation of a gay/lesbian identification is marked by the intertwined coexistence of individual and social perspectives.

In that sense, a similar path to the ones presented in these models has been described in Chile in projects such as Barrientos et al.'s (2016) study of gay identity construction in young men that live in Antofagasta, Figueroa and Tasker's (2014) analysis of young gay men's sexual identity formation, or Herrera's (2007) analysis of lesbian identity construction in Santiago. As is explained in these studies, participants describe an initial period, lived during their childhood, when they felt different from their same-gender peers – a continuous experience of "not fitting in" that has been described in canonical accounts of the gay/lesbian experience (e.g., Eribon, 2004; Halperin, 2014; Plummer, 1995). This difference, although not clearly articulated in their minds, was later associated with emerging feelings of same-gender attraction, which were rapidly and strongly rejected. These feelings, however, eventually turned into an inescapable part of their lives and were thus "confirmed", enhancing participants' awareness of their same-gender attraction but also a strong sense of self-recrimination, as they continued to reject their feelings. Figueroa and Tasker (2014) explain that this unwavering rejection is associated with forceful "family values" that stigmatise homosexuality, which they conceive as the result of religiosity's enduring presence in the Chilean society. Later, however, depending on the individual's conditions and as a consequence of their access to more information about homosexuality and their contact with others who were going or had already gone through the same process, they resignified and reinterpreted the category gay/lesbian, thus moving into self-acceptance and possibly disclosure.

As is clear from all these models, both national and international, the process of negotiating a gay/lesbian identification necessarily takes place while also understanding the ways in which these social positions are received and interpreted by society at large. The self-recognition as gay or lesbian is therefore shaped by the social discourses regarding homosexuality that are available at any given point. Since these discourses generally frame homosexuality, at best, as just an "acceptable" or "tolerable" lifestyle and,

at worst, as a totally abject position, it has been explained that the articulation of a gay/lesbian identification is a process that is marked by the emergence of "feelings of personal insufficiency" (Giddens, 1991, p. 65), an unwavering sensation of being "less-than". This is, as has been described by several authors (e.g., Eribon, 2004; Munt, 2008, 2019; Sedgwick, 2003; Seidman, 2004), an emotional state of *shame* that is produced as a consequence of apprehending the devalued social position of the identification that is being articulated. Shame, in this way, can be understood "as a kind of inscription of the social order into the subjectivity" (Eribon, 2004, p. xviii), which shapes in the individual an "inner certainty of unworthiness, of a baseness that one takes on and inhabits" (Connor, 2001, sec. Shame and guilt). Conceived in this manner, shame can be differentiated from *guilt*; while the latter relates to *actions*, the former relates to *being*, to what you will *keep on* doing (Connor, 2001; Sedgwick, 2003). It is, therefore, a deeply rooted emotional state that *invades* the consciousness (Eribon, 2004), enduring as a "form of life" (Connor, 2001) that "can flow unrecognisably through the subject" (Munt, 2008, p. 3), potentially marking their experience even when it is not consciously recognised as an emotion that "is had". Accepting one's feelings of same-gender attraction and "coming out", therefore, "does not rid us of feelings of shame" (Seidman, 2004, p. 7), as they are the result of an experience that already took place, leaving an enduring mark. Shame is a sticky emotion that "tends to leave a residue to which other emotions are easily attached" (Munt, 2008, p. 2), so it can be experienced in many different ways: not only as self-contempt, but also, for instance, as a desire to "stand out" *in spite of* one's stigmatised identification or as a rejection of anyone who makes the stigmatised characteristic more blatantly visible.

Taking all this into consideration, this chapter aims to explain the role that the televisual images of homosexuality and the manners in which participants have interpreted them have had in their processes of developing a gay/lesbian identification. It focuses particularly on respondents' accounts of their childhood and adolescence and the ways in which the information, models, and images of homosexuality that were made available on TV had an influence on how they understood themselves and their place in society. In general, it will be explained that the stereotyped images that participants watched while growing up contributed to the production of harmful feelings that fed into and reinforced a ubiquitous sense of shame, having a negative impact over their processes

of self-identification. Their self-acceptance as gays or lesbians could only be articulated by disassociating themselves from these images. This process of opposition and differentiation took place in a context of involvement within gay/lesbian subcultures, which helped them in understanding that there were many "ways" of being gay/lesbian and that those that were predominantly present on TV were not the ones that represented them. Only then, participants were capable to lead less conflictive processes of self-acceptance; by disassociating themselves from the "shameful others" and showing that "one does not belong among those laughable folk" (Eribon, 2004, p. 73), they constructed self-characterisations that made them feel at least comfortable. It will also be explained that this whole process is not only lived "internally", but also "externally", since a crucial part of the role that televisual images had in participants' identifications is the ways in which these images circulated in their everyday contexts, particularly among their families and their peers in school, as participants understood that these images were creating fixed ways of conceiving homosexuality through which they were going to be read as individuals who identify themselves as gay/lesbian.

It is important to note that none of this is to say that television *single-handedly caused* troubled processes of self-identification. How television was depicting homosexuality certainly cohered with the ways in which other social institutions were framing it, creating a generally hostile environment. TV, however, brought these ideas directly into participants' everyday life, to their living rooms, kitchens, and bedrooms, giving them the possibility to witness how those that were most close to them reacted when seeing gay/lesbian individuals. TV, likewise, was a continuous and pervasive presence on participants' lives, as almost all of them state that during their childhood and adolescence they were "heavy users", watching several hours a day. Almost all of them, furthermore, believe that TV was – and still is – extremely powerful, having the capacity to shape public opinion and create fixed cultural meanings. All this explains the intensity with which participants talk about TV and the effects its portrayals of homosexuality had in them, which will be explained in the next pages.

"Is This It?": Emergent Feelings and The Challenges of Self-Acceptance

All children, including those who later in life are going to identify themselves as gays or lesbians, grow up in societies where heterosexuality is the norm. They are expected to be heterosexuals; everything around them – including different forms of media – shows them that there is a certain path to happiness and a "good life": a partner of the "opposite" gender, children of their own, a house for the family, a decent job. The same operations usually – if not always, with a clear exception being families formed by LGBTQ parents – take place within their own families. Many times, at least initially, it is not even that homosexuality is explicitly vilified or condemned but plainly ignored in its existence. Homosexuality, in this context, is not even an option; if it is not named, it does not exist.

Somehow, however, at some point they acquire awareness of its existence. Whether it is through an overheard conversation or getting a glimpse of something that seems "odd" and that catches their attention, it emerges as a possibility; they begin to know that there are people who form intimate relationships with same-gender partners. As soon as they know that, though, another reality is revealed: these people are not like the rest, anyone can say mean things about them and probably get away with it. Although things have truly changed over the last couple of decades, the fact that gays and lesbians are placed in a lower social position *vis-à-vis* cisgender heterosexuals remains an undeniable fact. This is particularly the case in countries such as Chile, where still – as has been explained throughout this text – not even legal rights recognise gays and lesbians' full citizenship.

The years when many of the participants of this study went through their childhood and/or early adolescence cover a period in which same-sex consensual sexual activity was still a criminal act, since it was only decriminalised in 1999. However, its decriminalisation – as was analysed in Chapter 1 – did not produce an immediate or even notable improvement in gays and lesbians' everyday wellbeing (Garrido & Barrientos, 2018). Even if it is true that by the beginning of the new century some of the harshest ways of referring to homosexuality – as an abnormal deviation or a sickness, for instance – had waned in their use, it is also a fact that, after the decriminalisation was achieved, homosexuality continued to be either mainly invisibilised or framed – publicly and privately – as a questionable "lifestyle". As part of this environment, the public

mainstream visibility of homosexuality remained scarce: it was not addressed in political activities; it was rarely depicted in newspapers; and it was ignored in school's curricula, as sex and relationship education was not – and continues not to be – a compulsory subject. The only space where it continued to appear, in specifically pointed ways, was in religious discourses. As Rodrigo's account regarding this total absence illustrates: "when I was at school, I didn't have any references about what it was like to be a homosexual man. It wasn't a part of my worldview, and so it wasn't a possible option". In this context, some participants point at television as one of the first spaces through which they became aware of homosexuality's existence. TV, in this sense, became a "window" into the possibility of same-gender attraction. It allowed for participants to move beyond their immediate contexts and see that other possibilities, apart from heterosexuality, existed. As Elisa explains: "with series and all that, you can see and learn about all those things you don't see in your every-day life. One can now be surrounded by gay people, but when you're a kid that doesn't happen". About this, there are some slight differences between the experiences of men and women. Since lesbians were less present than gay men on TV – at least until mid 2000s – the first images of homosexuality that women saw were of gay men. Some of them, therefore, had to perform a "two-step" accommodation process, so to speak: envisioning the possibility of lesbianism via the visualisation of gay men. This becomes quite clear through the fact that women participants, when talking about this period of their lives, regularly refer to images of gay men and how these images made them feel, whereas men participants place a more constant focus on those images that depicted what could be "their own" potential experiences.

These initial images resonated with the feelings of "estrangement" that were felt by some participants, both men and women, during their early years. Although certainly an identification with the televisual gay/lesbian characters was not immediately lived – or directly recognised – as such, they are interpreted now as moments when a certain "curiosity" was sparked; they are understood as instances that somehow initiated, via curiosity, an early connection between feeling "different" and interpreting that difference as a possible non-heterosexual identification. As can be interpreted from Amanda's and Manuel's respective statements: "at the beginning there was a lot of curiosity, because it was like 'oh, women can like other women' and it was like 'that's weird'", "it caused lots of

different emotions. Like shock when I first saw it, curiosity about what was going on […] so it made me feel curious: 'is this it?', 'is this not it?'".

From the beginning, however, those images marked a particular perception of what homosexuality was and the hostile ways in which it was received and socially perceived. In that sense, while feelings of same-gender attraction were becoming an inescapable part of participants' own lives, thus turning homosexuality not only into an abstract possibility but a possibility *for themselves*, television was showing images that were feeding into feelings of self-recrimination that were originating from multiple avenues. The ways in which TV was depicting gays and lesbians are interpreted now as devices that were producing harmful feelings that strengthened participants' shame in regard to their non-heterosexual identifications, which were becoming increasingly "certain". As Gomillion and Giuliano (2011) explain in their analysis of American gays and lesbians' media use, both the complete absence of gay/lesbian figures and their presence only in stereotyped and narrow ways – what they call "absolute" and "relative" invisibility, respectively – can have adverse consequences on gays and lesbians' wellbeing, exerting "harmful psychological effects" (Gomillion & Giuliano, 2011, p. 348). This certainly coheres with participants of this study's accounts, as they explain that the televisual representations of homosexuality did indeed contribute to them rejecting their emergent feelings of same-gender attraction, turning TV into yet another one of the social devices that were feeding into their sensations of unworthiness, thus negatively affecting their processes of self-acceptance. As Rodrigo and Benito describe:

> [TV] had an influence, in that it delayed the possibility for me to connect with my own sexuality […] more than a positive influence, like being constructive, it had a negative influence in that it restricted me […] that restriction had to do with the invisibilisation of characters whom I could have identified with and whom I could have considered a role model, because I rejected the ones that were there.

> The only fact that [the character] was gay, automatically made me feel guilty like "I failed the world, I failed my family, I failed society, I failed the world". And it would make me feel sad and think "damn, there is something wrong with me".

Likewise, participants recount that in the midst of this self-questioning, while feelings of same-gender attraction were becoming more certain each day, gay/lesbian narratives made them feel scared about what the future was going to look like for them. They explain that these images, which were showing life possibilities that were, at best, too simple and,

at worst, plainly wretched and unhappy, produced in them a feeling of helplessness about how their own lives were going to be, thus having a negative impact on their self-acceptance. As Maximiliano explains: "it made me feel a bit sad, because in the end it would make me think 'damn, that's what I will have to deal with'". Similarly, Julia – who is talking specifically about the lesbian characters in the period *telenovela El Señor de la Querencia* (López, 2008) – states:

> It was sad, because they had a bad time during the whole *telenovela*, and then they were killed. So, it was sad, like the fear of "is this what will happen to me?". I mean, it's not the 1920s anymore, but "will I have to face this level of rejection?".

Something similar is described by Luis, who explains that the fear that the televisual representations of homosexuality made him feel is associated with the fact that he used to take what TV showed at face value:

> Back then, it made me feel a bit scared [...] when I was a kid I would think, "will I end up like them?", something like that, because at the end of the day TV does teach you certain fixed patterns, and not only aesthetic patterns but also cultural ones, and those are very powerful [...] that was the case when I was a kid. When you are a kid, you don't have a critical approach to television, and you think that what they are showing is real life [...] you think that this can be your own reality and that you can go through the same experience.

An essential part of the harmful feelings that the televisual representations of homosexuality produced in the respondents is how these images circulated in their immediate contexts, particularly within their families and among their peers in school. About this, some participants describe how uncomfortable the sight of a homosexual character/person made them feel. They were highly interested in these images but did not want their interest to be noticeable, as they thought that this would make evident their feelings of same-gender attraction. Since TV was usually watched with others in a domestic environment, the presence of a gay/lesbian figure implied an immediate deployment of tactics of concealment; a "poker face" tactic, so to speak. As can be interpreted from Valeria's account: "when there was a lesbian on TV and my mother was next to me, it was awful. I would think 'don't give yourself away'. Obviously, I wanted to see the damn show, but I was very tense".

Apart from this uneasiness, however, some participants also narrate experiences in which they witnessed the reactions that these representations elicited in members of their families. In this way, they were able to observe directly what homosexuality produced in

others and, therefore, the ways in which those others would potentially see them as gays or lesbians. These experiences were all the more crucial as they were revealing how *significant* others reacted when "exposed" to homosexuality. As these were primarily adverse – or, at best, just neutral – reactions, they reinforced the feelings of insufficiency that are part of shame (Giddens, 1991), thus hindering participants' processes of self-acceptance. As Matías recounts: "it was awful. My family are very conservative and my dad very homophobic. When they showed something gay on TV, they would say nasty things immediately, so it was awful". Similarly, Clara explains, while taking about some humorous characters that appeared on Chilean TV during the 1990s and 2000s:

> Tony Esbelt and all those idiots that my parents found so funny. To my parents, humour is humour, because they're old and shit, but I think it's offensive, so I remember being a kid and finding it offensive, like they were laughing at me, you know? [...] it was painful and humiliating that they would laugh at me, that there would be loads of people laughing at me.

Likewise, in more extreme cases, these images were used by their families, in a direct manner, as devices for trying to produce fear and convince the young gay/lesbian individual to relinquish their emergent feelings of same-gender attraction. As David's experience illustrates:

> When I was very little, they would make me watch those programmes and they'd say, "do you want to be like them when you grow up?". It was a sort of psychological violence. And of course, they would show you all the dark bits, the ugly ones, prostitution and all those things that make you think "no, I don't want to be like that".

These types of experiences, however, did not only take place within their families; they extended well beyond the limits of the household. The aforementioned "humorous" representations, for instance, circulated vigorously among peers in school. In this sense, several participants share their memories of how these figures were used as "tools" for bullying. As Rubén's account exemplifies: "Yerko Puchento or Tony Esbelt [...] At school kids would bully you because of them, they would bully me". Similarly, Eugenio explains:

> When I was a kid, I saw Cochiguaz on TV. He was like the typical representation of the effeminate gay man [...] in the end they [school peers] would use this, and they would call anyone that was effeminate or spoke differently Cochiguaz, and that was the joke, you know?

In this sense, the ways in which these popular representations were used strengthened participants' feelings of estrangement. They were being compared to certain

characters/people just on the basis of an allegedly "shared" sexual orientation, even when they themselves were not yet "sure" that they identified as gays or lesbians. These comparisons, however, and the reactions these images produced around them inflicted yet another complication in participants' processes of self-acceptance. It is important to note, however, that not all participants went through experiences of this type. A small minority of them state that they do not remember particular ways in which these images, at least consciously, affected them.

Following these accounts, it is possible to read participants' relationship with the televisual images of homosexuality that they grew up watching through Eribon's (2004) concept of *insult*. According to this author, insults are a "constitutive part of gay identity" (Eribon, 2004, p. 46) that have a mnemonic as well as a sensorial aspect: they "stay" both in the memory and in the body as producers of shame and fear in regard to a hostile world, thus defining the comprehension of our place in that world. As a consequence of insults, a relationship with others is shaped; through them, it is learned that there are some people who have the capacity and the power to say things about others, utilising words that mark the recipient's consciousness with hurt and inscribe shame in their subjectivity.

Stereotyped images and caricatures, in this theorisation, "allude" to insults; they draw upon the same mental schemas through which homosexuality is assigned a social position of inferiority. The ways in which participants describe how they related to past popular representations of gays and lesbians reveal that through these images – and their uses and forms of circulation – they were positioned as subjects who inhabited (or potentially inhabited) a devalued social place. As a consequence of this shameful positioning, a stronger resistance against their feelings of same-gender attraction was enacted, "'slow[ing] down' their life in the dimension of the sexuality that will later be their own" (Eribon, 2004, p. 64). As can be interpreted from Elena's account:

> [TV] hurt me I think, because it made my whole journey more traumatic and slower. Maybe I could have enjoyed it earlier on, much earlier on, and in a different way. Maybe I could've accepted or felt part of this society long ago, you know? And I could've seen myself as a normal girl and not been afraid of what I am, because fear ruled my life since I was little until I was 26.

None of this, of course, is to say that television *single-handedly* delayed or complicated participants' processes of gay/lesbian identification. However, how homosexuality was framed – particularly the representational patterns that, as was explained in Chapter 5,

were interpreted by respondents as hostile and damaging – did severely hinder this process. This had a negative impact over participants' wellbeing, as they were faced with a situation in which, in order to identify as gay/lesbian, they had to define themselves "in terms of a socially devalued category which may pose an enormous threat to [...] self-esteem" (Coyle, 1992, p. 197). As a consequence of this, it was strengthened what researchers have called "minority stress" (I. H. Meyer, 2003), the excess stress to which gays/lesbians are exposed "as a consequence of the stigma attached to homosexuality" (Sandfort et al., 2007, p. 181), which is usually "learned" during childhood, "sometimes as early as school age, sometimes before the individual is aware of any sexual orientation" (M. Sullivan & Wodarski, 2002, p. 4). The televisual images, furthermore, cohered with the adverse ways in which gay/lesbian identifications were presented by several other social institutions. How TV has portrayed homosexuality may be extreme – particularly during the years when participants were going through their childhood and early adolescence – but it is not unique: television "conspires with other media – and with such social structures as the family, school, and church – in discounting homosexuality" (Kielwasser & Wolf, 1992, p. 363). Television, in this way, was part of a broader social order that was producing harmful feelings of insufficiency and unworthiness, a pervasive sense shame. TV, however, brought these ideas directly into participants' living rooms; through this medium, the negative framings of homosexuality went straight into participants' everyday domestic spaces, giving them the possibility to witness the reactions of those most close to them.

Gay/lesbian identifications were then articulated *in spite of* all of this. Participants were exposed, during their childhood and adolescence, to great quantities of stereotypical, negatively biased, and/or plainly homophobic televisual representations, which gave them the chance to see how homosexuality was received by others and negotiated in their everyday contexts. However, contrary to studies – for instance, Raley and Lucas (2006) – that as a result of textual analyses have speculated that young gays/lesbians model their self-concept and behaviour after the stereotyped figures they regularly watch, thus perpetuating these stereotypes, the experiences of the participants of this study show that they have developed their gay/lesbian identifications *by distinguishing themselves from* these images. This is similar to what was found by McInroy and Craig (2017) in their analysis of Canadian LGBTQ individuals' media use, who also concluded that participants'

construction of gay/lesbian identities are done, at least in part, by looking at the stereotyped images that TV offers and saying "I don't want that for my life". In that sense, after an initial period in which images produced a loop of self-questioning and fear about themselves and their life possibilities, participants moved into a position in which they stated – at least to themselves – their difference in regard to what these images were showing. This was a process in which, as will be explained, several other informational and experiential avenues came into play.

"I Am Not Like That": Self-Characterising Through Difference

Several participants recount that, while national television was showing almost exclusively restrictive representations of homosexuality, they were broadening their knowledge about the topic through other ways. Not as a component of their school's curriculum or in conversations with parents, homosexuality was part of more intimate, sometimes even secretive, spaces: exchanges with a few friends, readings books, watching international TV programmes and films, and browsing the Internet while it was becoming more popular in the country[75]. It was there where participants could find representations that were different from what national TV was offering. As Alberto and Luis, respectively, explain: "all the knowledge about homosexuality that I acquired, I got it from friends", "back then I would search in books [...] there I could find other things and tried to look for identities that were different to those that were shown on TV". Through what became available in these spaces, participants were able to attach other meanings to the "categories" gay/lesbian; these meanings substantiated their opposition in regard to the televisual images. They saw and understood there that other options were possible, so their fate was not "sealed" by what the images they rejected were showing.

According to Eribon (2004), the process of "making" oneself gay implies creating oneself in the light of the examples that are already available; that is, adopting, opposing, and/or negotiating the meanings of the labels gay/lesbian while new information and experiences are acquired. About this, Jenness (1992) explains that the process of identifying as lesbian depends on what she calls "detypification": "*the process of redefining*

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[75] According to the Subsecretaría de Comunicaciones (SUBTEL, Chile's telecommunications regulator), by 2000, 17% of Chilean households were connected to the Internet; by 2010, 38%; and by 2018, 88%.

and subsequently reassessing the social category 'lesbian' such that it acquires increasingly concrete and precise meanings, positive connotations, and personal applicability" (p. 66). As was explained, for participants of this study, this process seems to have taken place *beyond* national television. The information that, at least initially, contradicted what the televisual images – and those produced by other social institutions that cohere with TV – were showing was found in other places, such as books or relationships with friends. There is where participants found the knowledge that helped them in reassessing what being gay or lesbian could "mean" and, as a consequence, appease the harmful feelings associated with their emergent non-heterosexual identifications and lead a less conflictive process of self-acceptance. This is coherent with what was found by Herrera (2007) in her study of lesbian identity construction in Santiago, in which is explained that, in resignifying the category lesbian, the information that is given by other people and organisations is crucial. In that sense, the participants of Herrera's (2007) study mention how relevant it was for them the information they could gather from feminist and lesbian organisations, the gay/lesbian "scene" (bars, clubs), gay/lesbian friends, and the Internet (both as a method for gathering information and as a means for meeting other people). It was in this "recognition of a homosexual social world beyond the self" (Herdt, 1989, p. 9) – and also beyond what TV was showing – where also participants of this study found what they needed for articulating their feelings. This process was particularly relevant for women, because of the already mentioned less frequent presence of lesbianism on national TV, which subjected lesbianism to "absolute" *and* "relative" invisibility, in Gomillion and Giuliano's (2011) terms.

Coyle (1992) explains this process as one in which the stereotyped and simplified initial information about homosexuality is counteracted by "positive" images, supportive of a gay identity, that are acquired "through social practice in the larger gay and lesbian culture" (Cohler & Hammack, 2007, p. 49). It is interesting to note how common this experience is, even across age groups. Even the younger participants – who grew up watching an enlarging number of new, more complex, representational patterns – describe national television as a space that, at least initially, had adverse consequences in their processes of self-acceptance; consequences that were then counteracted by their subcultural involvement in gay/lesbian (digital and physical) environments. It seems to be that, even if disliked images had receded, their presence continued – and has continued

– to "taint" how participants understand and talk about national television and its impact over their lives. Likewise, the fact that these images are interpreted as being in accordance with the ways in which other discursive institutions frame homosexuality undoubtedly enhances their perceived negative significance.

Respondents, then, describe a continuously changing relationship with the televisual images of homosexuality. They state that the stereotyped images they watched while growing up contributed to the production of harmful feelings marked by shame, which delayed, complicated, and, in sum, negatively affected their processes of identification as gays or lesbians. Their self-acceptance as non-heterosexuals was then done by differentiating themselves from these images and saying "I am not like that"; by being exposed to other sources of information and experiences, they saw that there were many "ways" of being gay/lesbian and that those that were predominantly present on national TV were not the ones that represented them. In this way, this process of re-assessing and re-signifying the labels gay/lesbian allowed them to lead less conflicted self-identifications. As Coleman-Fountain (2014) explains, one of the consequences of the refining of the meaning of these categories is the establishment of "good" and "bad" ways of being gay/lesbian. About this, it can be interpreted from participants' statements that one of the main components of the "I am not like that" attitude – and thus of the definition of the desirable and undesirable ways of being gay/lesbian – is the gender nonconforming behaviour of many of the figures that circulated in popular culture, TV included.

In this sense, what is meant when saying "I am not like that" is "I am not one *of those*". This attitude, which has been described as "at least implicitly contemptuous" (Alderson, 2014, p. 10), implies a rejection of gender nonconformity and everything it entails. Participants' articulation of a gay/lesbian identification has then been done through establishing a distance in regard to this way of being – as shown in TV – in order to avoid the stigma associated with it. They saw how these characters/people were treated, the lives they led, and they felt that they were different, so this difference was emphasised. This attitude, which implies a "will to dissociate from the group" (Eribon, 2004, p. 73) and show that one is different *from those others* has been comprehended as a consequence of shame, a product of its emotional salience in the process of articulating a non-heterosexual identification within a context in which these feelings are placed in a

secondary social position. Shame, in this manner, is expressed in the rejection of those who make the stigmatised characteristics visible in a brazen and outrageous way; it is a rejection of those who make me feel *ashamed* because they embody the features that mainstream society repudiate the most (Goffman, 1968; Halperin & Traub, 2009; Meccia, 2006). Differentiating oneself from them, in a process of "shame displacement" (Munt, 2019), is thus a central mechanism for fighting against these feelings. As Warner (2000) summarises:

> On top of having ordinary sexual shame, and on top of having shame for being gay, the dignified homosexual also feels ashamed of every queer who flaunts his sex and his faggotry, making the dignified homosexual's stigma all the more justifiable in the eyes of straights (p. 32).

This has to be understood within the "packages of information" interpretative logic that was explained in Chapter 5, according to which gender nonconforming figures were *naturally* and *immediately* associated with a set of demeaning features and bland life possibilities, thus establishing only one rather fixed way of representing gender nonconforming homosexuality. This whole formation is highly rejected and remembered as particularly prejudicial while growing up, as can be interpreted from the next few statements, made by Rodrigo, Elena, and Emilio:

> I think these funny characters made me feel a bit embarrassed. They would push me away from self-acceptance, from self-discovery. They sold a character that I didn't want to be like and that was the only definition of what a gay man should be like.

> That's why a lot of gay people, a lot of lesbian girls never came out, I think it was because of the fear of being labelled like that. In fact, that was my case. I didn't like that on TV they would always show, right, "the lesbian story" and it was about two girls that were nothing like me [...] I like dresses [...] I like looking good and feeling feminine and pretty.

> They would show gay characters that were caricatures, and that was like "damn, I also like men, but I'm not like that" [...] it was like "ok, I know I like men, but I don't feel represented in what I'm seeing" so you don't know how to behave, and you end up repressing yourself.

About this, it is interesting to note that, even if effeminate gay men and masculine lesbians were shown in rather dissimilar frequencies – the former more present than the latter, as was explained in Chapter 2 – both men and women construct similar arguments in regard to this. This further emphasises the fact that the televisual images are read as part of a broader context of homosexual visibility, so they are remembered/talked about

not only *in themselves*, but also, at least implicitly, in their coherence with the ways in which homosexuality circulates/has circulated in the public arena in general.

This particular attitude, which Meccia (2006) calls "explanatory" as it appears to be saying "I am *that*, but I am not *like that*", is certainly not unique to this case; it has been described in several other analyses of the gay/lesbian experience. Similar operations have been found in places as diverse as: American (Alderson, 2014) and British (N. Richardson, 2009) reality TV, processes of identity construction of American and French gay men who live in rural areas (Annes & Redlin, 2012), Puerto Rican gay men living in the USA (Asencio, 2011), and the relationships between Australian gay men's media use and the construction of their identities (McKee, 2000), to name just a few. These "explanatory discourses" have also been described in the Chilean context, although without mentioning the ways in which the televisual images have contributed to their assemblage. Barrientos et al. (2016) and Figueroa and Tasker (2014), for instance, have explained the rejection that the participants of their studies feel in regard to effeminate gay men. Likewise, Astudillo (2015) describes similar feelings in the case of both gays and lesbians, for whom it is crucially important "to avoid the stigma associated with the identities of the *loca* (effeminate homosexual man) and the *camiona* (masculinized homosexual woman)" (p. 1438). As a result, according to this author, the gay/lesbian world – at least in Santiago – is constructed by "holding back visible manifestations of homosexuality" (Astudillo, 2015, p. 1438) as a way of showing that one has "good taste" and "knows how to behave". These findings reveal shame's position as a "key device in practices of self-governance" (Shefer & Munt, 2019, p. 47), as it directs individuals into adopting ways of behaving that are considered socially appropriate. In general, these attitudes have been read, in the case of gay men, through the concept of *effeminophobia* (Annes & Redlin, 2012; N. Richardson, 2009, 2018), further revealing that those gays and lesbians who do not conform to the terms of "appropriate" gender expression "may be marginalized not only within heterosexuality but within homosexuality as well" (Asencio, 2011, p. 337).

By distinguishing themselves from these images and moving from "I don't want that for my life" to a more decided "I'm not like that" participants were capable to lead less conflictive internal processes of self-acceptance, as they constructed – and continue to do – self-characterisations with which they could feel at least comfortable. This, however, does not erase the experience of shame, as the ideas regarding the adverse ways in which

mainstream society conceives homosexuality are constantly part of their interpretations and reflections, thus always shaping their processes of gay/lesbian identification. In that sense, for participants of this study, it was not only important to establish *for themselves* a difference in regard to the images they rejected; equally central was to exteriorise this sense of dissimilarity and make it known by others. In that way, although they saw themselves as different from these figures, they continued to constitute a discomforting presence in their lives, since they understood that these were the images through which they were going to be read when disclosing their non-heterosexual identifications. The fact that these representations were circulating with such popularity was then another source of fear and rejection for participants, as they comprehended that these figures were creating fixed and negative ways of conceiving homosexuality that their friends and families – and also society at large – were taking for certain. As Coleman-Fountain (2014) explains, for young people, stereotypes represent "a challenge of coming out as lesbian or gay to others" (p. 809). Respondents' internal process of distinguishing themselves from these images was then intertwined with the need to be seen, by others, as different from them. As can be interpreted from the following statements, made by Alberto, Leonor, and Rubén:

> I was scared, because I knew there would be a time when I would have to explain to my parents that I was gay and that they would have in their minds the idea that gay equals prostitution or dressing up as a woman, because that's what they showed on TV.

> My mum told me that she expected me to come back with short hair and a leather jacket, you know? So, of course, that was the idea that my parents had about being a lesbian, that it was always like that. I mean, I have a sexual orientation, a way of being, an identity, one that is totally different to the few stories they showed on TV and, of course, I began to reject these images.

> The gossipy old man, the typical hairdresser, you know? So, of course, then it came to a point when you say "damn, yes, he likes men, as I do, but the character that is being shown doesn't represent me at all… like, that is how people will see me if I say I'm gay", and that is what I didn't want.

This consideration is even present – although less verbalised as such – in the accounts of the few participants that stated that the stereotyped images did not affect them at all. They also think that the ways in which TV represents homosexuality has defined how society has conceived it and, consequently, how they are seen as non-heterosexual identified people.

As part of these convictions and the intertwined play between the "internal" and the "external" aspects of identification (R. Jenkins, 2014), participants describe the beneficial ways in which the emergence of new representational patterns made them feel. Specifically, they explain that the new images which – as was explained in Chapter 5 – started appearing in early 2000s gave them a sense of calmness that was backed by an understanding that it was possible to be gay/lesbian and, at the same time, be "accepted" by mainstream society. As Rubén explains: "seeing things like that on TV does help, at least it helped me, it helped me accept and see another type of homosexuality, another type of characters or people". Similarly, Miguel states:

> When I was a teenager, like that was just when people like Jordi Castell or Ítalo Passalacqua began to come out and that was great because it gave us the chance to have role models that were, to some extent, accepted by society.

A central part of this was the fact that their families had a positive reaction in regard to these new characters/people. As Dhoest and Simons (2011) explain in their analysis of Flemish gays and lesbians' media use, media representations can have a strong impact "at the time of coming out, for themselves, for other LGBs, and for their parents" (p. 270). The next statement, made by Alberto in regard to a specific *telenovela* character, shows how connected *his* sense of self-assurance was to *his family*'s understanding of the gay life possibilities:

> Ariel in *Machos* was the first gay representation I saw that wasn't negative. Also, it happened just when my family began to know about my sexual orientation. So, they kind of showed it as something normal so to speak, like a normal life, only with the rejection of his father and one of his brothers. Personally, watching this *telenovela* helped me in that sense, because I was just going through the process of telling my family, so my mom saw the rejection and didn't like it, you know? She also saw that I could have a normal life, be an adult, professional. So, watching this *telenovela* with my family helped me.

These new images were then also part of the ways in which some participants re-signified the gay/lesbian labels and, as a result, were able to appease the feelings of shame associated with their emergent identifications and lead less conflictive processes of self-acceptance. They, however, seem to have had more of a value of confirmation and strengthening than one of transformation. The subcultural involvement keeps being referred to as crucial, while the importance of these new televisual images seems to be associated, firstly, with confirming what they already knew (that gays and lesbians were not – or at least, not all of them – these wretched and/or ridicule figures that TV was

showing) and, secondly and most importantly, with the fact that through these new images the multiple possibilities of the gay/lesbian life were becoming known by others who were not involved with the subcultural environments – particularly relevant for participants, their families. This is specially the case among older respondents; for them, the new representational patterns emerged when their subcultural involvement was already established in a strong way. Something similar could be said about women participants in general. Since the representations of lesbianism that made them feel at least comfortable appeared in national TV at a later date, their connections with the "lesbian world" were notably more relevant for the *detypification* (Jenness, 1992) of the category. They too, however, recognise the importance that the new representational patterns – even if they were mostly of gay men – had in making possible new public conceptions about homosexuality. On the other hand, for younger participants – particularly younger men, although not solely them – the visualisation of these new images did have a significant role in *their own* process of re-signification of what it means to be gay. This has translated into a conviction of how important "good" images are for new generations. As Julia, for instance, states: "why do I find it positive? Because younger generations, I don't know, teenagers, children, can see that this is a real option for their lives". As was explained in Chapter 5 however, for some participants these new representational patterns did not pass the test of time: they are now singled out as spaces where new fixed and simplified narratives emerged. Nevertheless, the role they had in their lives *in the past* is never discounted.

The beneficial influence of affirmative images in the development of less conflictive processes of self-acceptance and, consequently, in enhancing participants' well-being has also been described in studies conducted in other national contexts (e.g., Bond, 2015; Craig et al., 2015; Gillig & Murphy, 2016; Gomillion & Giuliano, 2011; McKee, 2000). At risk of over-simplifying these researches' nuances, it is possible to group their findings in two areas: firstly, they conclude that "positive" representations of gays and lesbians – which, for instance, are called "LGB-inclusive" or are described as those that do not treat the character's gay/lesbian identification as their defining feature – have the potential to buffer participants' negative experiences associated with identifying as gay or lesbian; and secondly, these images are singled out as devices that have the capacity of enhancing the emergence of beneficial feelings, such as hope, strength, comfort, and pride, thus fostering

respondents' well-being and a more positive view of their identities. The experiences recounted by participants of this research seem to point in the direction established by these studies: the emergence of images that were different from the initial stereotypes was beneficial for the development of affirmative feelings in regard to their non-heterosexual identifications. However, as has been explained, the ways in which this study's participants talk about these "new" figures usually displaces the beneficial effects into others – mostly, their families. In other words: these images were good *for them* because they "opened up" *other people*'s eyes. This operation, nevertheless, has been done in ways that have established and further strengthened boundaries of acceptability that, as was explained, could be interpreted as one of shame's most pervasive consequences.

A few studies have even described some beneficial – although reduced – outcomes associated with simplistic or stereotyped depictions of the gay/lesbian life. Bond (2015), Gomillion and Giuliano (2011), and McInroy and Craig (2017), for instance, have explained that even "negative" representations can enhance participants' well-being, as they communicate that other gays and lesbian do indeed exist in society, which is a comforting and validating feeling for those who are starting to recognise and understand their own feelings of same-gender attraction. This is not the case for participants of this study. They only talk about these images as hurtful devices that had a prejudicial impact on their lives. Even if they showed them, in some cases, that homosexuality was indeed a possibility, it was shown as a possibility that had to be avoided, which hardly had the effect of enhancing their well-being.

Likewise, other international studies have focused on the ways in which gay or lesbian characters/people can serve as role models for young non-heterosexual viewers, as they provide *navigation points* for individuals to "steer their own personal routes through life" (Gauntlett, 2002, p. 250). Craig et al. (2015), Gomillion and Giuliano (2011), and Kama (2002), for instance, have explained that role models can produce pride, function as sources of strength and inspiration, provide comfort, and show lifestyles to be emulated, among other beneficial outcomes. This, however, is mostly unobserved in participants of this study's accounts. In general, they do not explain to have had this type of relationship with any televisual figure. As Benito states:

> I don't have any gay referent in mind, like I think I didn't have one, although I said
> positive things about Passalacqua or Astorga, I think I didn't have any gay role model

that would make me say "I want to be like him". In the end it was more trial and error and questioning myself only.

Authors such as Cohen (2001) and Park (2012) explain that there are many ways in which a viewer can establish a relationship with media figures. Viewers can, for instance, identify with characters, thus experiencing the text "from the inside, as if the events were happening to them" (Cohen, 2001, p. 245); they can develop "parasocial relationships", which are "lasting, one-sided intimate connections that television viewers develop with television personalities that are similar to real-life social relationships" (Bond, 2018, p. 457); or they can simply like or dislike the media figure, thus establishing what Park (2012) calls positive and negative spectatorship, respectively. As can be interpreted, for instance, from Benito's statement, the relationship between participants of this study and the televisual figures that represented a more affirmative way of understanding homosexuality seems to not go beyond the level of a positive spectatorship. They *just* liked these characters/people – or, at least, they like them better than the other ones – but they did not identify with them nor saw them as their friends or confidents, as the aforementioned studies depict. It is possible to assume that the fact these images were only received as "good enough" is what defined this type of "less committed" relationship.

In general, these studies have described how important is the existence of non-stereotypical, diverse, and complex representations of homosexuality for gays and lesbians, particularly – although not uniquely – during the years when they are understanding and articulating their feelings of same-gender attraction. Bond (2018), Bond and Miller (2017), Gomillion and Giuliano (2011), Kama (2002, 2003), Reed (2018), and Sanz (2018), among others, have highlighted the fact that the depiction of gays and lesbians in a variety of roles, with diverse features and personalities, can indeed provide crucial information, alter viewers' well-being, and enable them to feel validated in their non-heterosexual identifications. The ways in which participants of this study talk about the new representational patterns are coherent with these findings, although not quite. These images seem to have arrived "too late", when stereotypes had already been opposed and challenged via other ways. In general, furthermore, they did not quite articulate the fully rounded vision of homosexuality that would have satisfied participants. The type of impact they could have had, had they appeared earlier, would be here only a matter of speculation. What has indeed become clear, however, is the fact that the images that did

exist during participants' childhood and adolescence delayed, troubled, and, in sum, negatively affected their processes of gay/lesbian identification, as they – along with several other institutions – contributed to the emergence of a ubiquitous sense of shame that has been expressed, for instance, in the assemblage of strict differentiating lines between "good" and "bad" ways of being gay/lesbian.

However, all these images – those that materialise both the older and the newer depictional patterns – continue to exist. Participants still view them today, although in different ways. These relationships, the ones that exist in the present between the televisual representations of homosexuality and viewers who have already led "successful" processes of gay/lesbian identification, will be analysed next.

Chapter 8   The Quest for Social Respect

Introduction

The developmental models of gay/lesbian identification that were reviewed in Chapter 7 (Barrientos et al., 2016; Coyle, 1992; Figueroa & Tasker, 2014; Harry, 1993; Herrera, 2007; M. Sullivan & Wodarski, 2002) delineate a process whose last step is the individual's acceptance of their feelings of same-gender attraction, which are thus integrated into their identity, or the self-narrative that one is continuously constructing. After that, and depending on the subject's specific life conditions, this self-acceptance makes possible the eventual disclosure of this identification and the everyday negotiations of being "out" or "in" the closet depending on the context. These models, therefore, present a process that is predicated on individuals' capacity to identify with a certain label and recognise themselves as a certain "kind of people". In simple words, the "end" result is: "*I am* a gay man" or "*I am* a lesbian".

Even though some of these models recognise the changing conditions of these identifications and the continuous adjustments that have to be carried out in order to accommodate them in the midst of other identifications and multiple relationships with other people – that is, they recognise this as a *process* (R. Jenkins, 2014) – they are based on the existence of social labels that can be incorporated into one's life and assumed as a more or less stable identification. This does not mean that these belongings cannot change during any individual's lifetime; what it does mean is that there are certain social

positions from where an individual can stand in order to make sense of their lives and their place in society.

As authors such as Roseneil (2000) and Sullivan (2003) explain, these ideas have been problematised by queer activism and queer theory, a body of work that has challenged the fixity of the hetero/homosexual binary, arguing that "sexual identities around this binary are inherently unstable" (Adams et al., 2014, p. 458). By this logic, the unsteady experiences of self only become static through social control; disrupting the categories that describe sexual identifications would then be one of the primary ways of resisting this control and producing effective social change. These propositions are undoubtedly enriching, yet, as Gamson (1995) notes, they tend to downplay the position that the identificatory categories do indeed hold in individuals' day to day lives as basis for pleasure, empowerment, activism, political organisation, and a "means of articulating non-normative and potentially unintelligible experiences to others" (Grant & Nash, 2020, p. 601).

Empirical studies conducted in other national contexts have delved specifically into this issue. Coleman-Fountain (2014), for instance, takes British non-heterosexual young people's resistance to sexual labels as the basis of an analysis that seeks to explain if his participants' relationship with these categories are mostly shaped by sexual fluidity – "a subject position that moves beyond categories" (Coleman-Fountain, 2014, p. 802) – or by a reconsideration of the significance associated with these labels, as young people seem to be constructing identities that foreground their characterisation as "ordinary" people. Using these concepts, he concludes that his participants' experiences align more directly with the second explanation: their resistance is not marked by a rejection of the categories as such, but of the restrictive meanings associated with them; in fact, they are actively using the labels, even if they are also questioning their significance. This leads Coleman-Fountain (2014) to stress the important role that sexual labels have played in the respondents' lives, as they have made it possible for their sexualities to be verbalised, expressed, and known. Other studies, such as Adams et al.'s (2014) analysis of how New Zealander men who have sex with men relate to sexual labels or Jones' (2020) research on young British LGBTQ individuals' processes of identity construction, show a stronger resistance to these categories; one that, however, is not necessarily rooted in sexual fluidity, but in respondents' understanding of being gay as just "one part" – and not the

most important one – of their subjectivities. This way of relating to sexual categories has been framed as a consequence of neoliberal ideologies that move subjects *away* from collective identity constructions, instead turning them into mostly individual, private, and apolitical assemblages (Grant & Nash, 2020). This movement embraces a rhetoric that has been called "post-gay". This is a sensibility that, according to Monaghan (2021), is "not aligned with the post-identity impulses of queer theory" (p. 3); rather, similar to other uses of the 'post-' discourse – for instance, post-feminism – focuses on the individual, highlighting, through the ideals of respectability and normality, "common characteristics of humanity, regardless of sexual orientation" (Monaghan, 2021, p. 3).

The ways in which participants of this study view sexual categories can be understood through these concepts and discussions. They use the labels "gay" or "lesbian" to describe themselves and explain "who" and "what" they are, even if they do not think that this is the most important or significant part of their identities; likewise, they mostly agree on the pressing importance of giving these categories new meanings. Undoubtedly, this is in part due to the characteristics of the process of recruitment, as one of the conditions for participating in the study was to identify as a gay man or a lesbian. During the interviews, however, none of the participants raised issues about this; for them, gay or lesbian is what they are, and they stated it firmly. This does not imply that this identification cannot change in the future or that the ways in which it is negotiated in their everyday lives cannot be altered; what it does indicate, however, is that all of them *in the present* do identify with a category, which allows them to feel part of a community. All of them, furthermore, narrate processes in which this identification was seen as an attainment that was reached after long periods of negotiation and adjustment that were marked by harmful feelings. It is in these periods, as was explained in Chapter 7, when television had an influential role.

That role, however, is not the same now that they clearly – for them and for many others – identify as a gay man or a lesbian; now that they do not *feel ashamed* of who/what they are. In this way, participants make some different emphases when they discuss how they relate to the televisual representation of homosexuality *now*. In this chapter, it will be explained that, according to participants, TV's simplified representations of homosexuality are not affecting how *they see themselves* anymore. They know what a "normal" gay/lesbian life looks like; what they keep needing, however, is for *others* to know

it too. Different to what took place during their childhood and adolescence, when this desire was more directly placed on *their families'* understanding of the gay/lesbian life possibilities, now they frame it in a broader way, focusing on the need to make this knowledge available to *everyone*. This is because they think that this would help altering mainstream society's perceptions of homosexuality, which would in turn contribute to non-heterosexual people achieving social recognition and respect as worthy members of the Chilean society. In this sense, it will be argued that shame can still be identified as one of the main components of the emotional repertoire through which participants interact with the televisual representation of homosexuality. This, as a consequence of shame's shaping of individuals' need for external validation and respect through an alignment of subjectivities with what has already been judged "good" or "appropriate", including the televisual representations that embody those values.

Worthy Members of Society

Even though changes in a positive direction are recognised and applauded, participants continue to be generally disappointed at the ways in which Chilean television represents homosexuality. As has been explained, images continue to be evaluated as "not good enough", with only a few exceptions. However, different to what took place during their childhood and adolescence, respondents claim that these limited and/or simplified images are not affecting how they see and understand themselves *now*. As Elisa states: "I don't think that it [my sexual identification] is fully 'closed', but I don't think that TV is having an influence on me now". Participants know who they "are" and the possibilities their lives hold – both because they have seen them in others, but also because they themselves have gone through some of those possibilities. In that sense, there is no fear about a wretched future scarce in opportunities and devoid of happiness anymore; they know what they are "capable of", but they want *others* to know it too. It is here, then, where their current relationship with the televisual representation of homosexuality resides. They demand for the medium to "keep up to date" and incorporate the stories that they see around them – stories of broad possibilities, success, and "normal" lives. This would contribute to change society's perceptions of the gay/lesbian life – thus moving forward

in the achievement of something they think these lives have been deprived of: respect. As Raley and Lucas (2006) explain:

> When TV fails to show characters of a particular social group or portrays them in a negative and/or stereotypical fashion then that social group is being denied recognition or respect. Because mass media is a primary source of information, without recognition and respect on TV and other forms of mass media, social groups are more likely to be devalued by society (p. 21).

What participants are expressing is the need to be socially validated. As has been explained, they all grew up in a social environment where the sexual categories they identify with were continuously put into question and disregarded by several institutions including television, which fed into and reinforced a ubiquitous sense of shame that is lived, according to Connor (2001), as an inner certainty of unworthiness. Even though they all talk about their current lives as one that is marked by openness, freedom, and uncloseted-ness – that is, they do not seem to be *ashamed* of who they are – shame is, as Seidman (2004) explains, a difficult thing to get rid of, something that "is not easily erased from subjectivity" (N. Richardson, 2020, p. 10). And one of the ways in which it can shape one's relationship with the world is through the need for external validation and respect: one needs others to know that one *also* can be "successful", "normal", "ordinary", all those things that are qualified as "good" and "worthy". In that way, having grown up feeling invalidated and ashamed, and having gone through a lot of negotiation to overcome those harmful feelings and reach a point where it is possible to feel at least comfortable with the identity one has crafted for oneself, entails a need for others to also have access to the realisations that made that transit possible. This, so they have as much information as possible to see you as you see yourself; and television seems to be one the main spaces where that plays out. Televisual images are then referred to as devices through which external validation can be negotiated and social respect achieved. In this sense, the ways in which participants interact with national television seem to be continuously shaped by the already mentioned sensations of (un)worthiness. It is therefore possible to state that shameful feelings are still part of the emotional repertoire that shapes participants' relationship with local TV's representation of homosexuality, albeit now in a way in which external validation and the need for social respect and recognition as worthy members of society take centre stage.

All this, as was explained in Chapter 7, starts in the private sphere, at home, which is one of the main spaces where Chilean gays and lesbians experience discrimination and victimisation (Barrientos & Bozon, 2014). Furthermore, according to Barrientos et al. (2014), even if events of discrimination within the family are not the most common ones in the country, they are the ones that have the strongest impact on the victim's life, as they violently disrupt the meaning of family as a space of protection and support. The need for social respect and recognition, however, extends well beyond the intimate space of the household, particularly now, in participants' current lives, when broader social recognition is highlighted.

As has been explained, participants point at television as one of the main social institutions that are responsible for creating fixed ideas about homosexuality; ideas that have shaped society's understanding of what a gay/lesbian life looks like, thus having real consequences "for the way in which homosexuals are perceived by, and therefore treated in society at large" (Porfido, 2009, p. 168). Participants are then establishing connections between the presence of stereotyped representations and acts of homophobia that can be experienced in their everyday lives. As Leonor explains: "the problem with these stereotypes is that you keep them aside, you don't include them, you know? You're the clown. So, if that doesn't change, it will be very hard to eradicate the existing homophobia". Similar to what is described by Evans (2007), participants of this study have had to deal, during their whole lives, with the worrisome possibility of others taking the televisual stereotypical images at face value, assuming "they represent the entire gay and lesbian community" (p. 13), and thus shaping the ways in which they are treated as self-identifying gays or lesbians. As Lorenzo expresses:

> That's where TV needs to pay attention because there's a lot of people that can be manipulated by it. There's a lot of people who only consume television and for them what is shown on television is the truth. So, if someone grew up watching Chilean television and they're shown a gay character that behaved in a certain way, for them, all gays will behave in the same way.

For some of the participants, the existence of these "negative" depictions has moved them into a proactive attitude of "stereotype debunking". It is not only that they have established a sense of difference between themselves and these images, which was useful for explaining *to themselves* "who" and "how" they are; these representations have also convinced them of the need to engage in ordinary activities that can counter what they see

as these images' pernicious effects, and therefore contribute to moving into a position where gays and lesbians are "taken seriously and integrated into the larger [...] society" (Asencio, 2011, p. 349). As can be interpreted from Benito's statement:

> If they are diminishing us, and ridiculing us on TV, that really annoys me, it frustrates me. But then I take it as a personal challenge in my real life as well. Like, "hey, I'll talk to you about someone I met yesterday, I'll talk to you about the partner I had years ago, about my friends, I'll talk to you about anything, it's your business if you don't want to listen, but open up your mind now". When I see something negative on television, it challenges me to go further.

It is therefore not surprising that participants are pleased to see new images that align in a better way with the "normal" lives they say they and those around them have, even if they think that these images are still far from perfect. According to them, more complex and serious – and therefore less stereotyped and shameful – images have the capacity to make gay/lesbian lives comprehensible in a "correct way" to everyone: to their families, which continues to be important, but also to all those that may not have the first-hand experience of knowing a gay man or a lesbian woman. In their view, these new representations – that, according to Emilio, depict gays and lesbians as "part of society" – have contributed to the process of changing people's perceptions of homosexuality, which have been progressively moving in the "right direction". In turn, and thanks to the changes these images have brought about, they feel validated as worthy members of society. As Miguel explains:

> It can be an important factor for producing either integration or a feeling of isolation from society. Media have an impact on determined groups and if you are a minority group and they show you from a marginal perspective, you will feel bad because you won't feel represented. If they showed positive role models or more diversity of characters, I think you would feel part of a society where your story is also being told.

A central part of this, which illustrates the type of validation that is being sought, is the emphasis that some participants put on the need to have images that represent gays and lesbians from a perspective that highlights their professional successes and their intellectual abilities. In Inés's words: "I would love it if all professions were visible on TV because that causes [...] more interest in being visible, open". So, according to respondents, social validation comes from the reproduction – albeit now in gay/lesbian bodies – of those positions that have already been deemed "respectable". It would be through these types of images how society at large would comprehend homosexuality from a "positive"

lens, which would then contribute to achieve the much-needed social respect. It is possible to argue that these statements make visible the intimate relationship between "shame, social conformity, and the organisation of a self" (Munt, 2008, p. 5), as they are showing how one of the main consequences of deep-rooted feelings of shame – a personal orientation towards what is "accepted" (Shefer & Munt, 2019) – plays out; shame, in this sense, is avoided by aligning oneself to what others judge as "good" and "appropriate".

What participants want, then, is representations that, simply put, do not make them feel ashamed. Shame is, of course, a harmful feeling whose avoidance is paramount in order to have a comfortable life. The public visibility of "respectable" images seems to be a good way to circumvent the conscious emergence of this feeling; a good way to avoid blushing, so to speak. As can be interpreted from Rita's statement:

> If it is a very stereotyped character, I kind of reject them, I just think it's too much. But if it is a character that is not stereotyped at all, I like it, I feel kind of proud that they are there.

These feelings – being "proud" or "happy" because a certain type of representation is visible – can be seen as a consequence of the fact that, through these images, others can see what they already see and know to be true: "normal" and complex gay/lesbian lives. With these images, their own feelings of appropriateness can be validated, as they can potentially be shared by others, which is fundamental for being taken seriously and achieving full respect as members of the Chilean society. It is through gaining others' respect how shame is slowly appeased, turned into a "sedimented feeling". The problem, however, is the fact that respect is defined by what society already considers to be reputable and not by delineating new boundaries of validation. In Ahmed's (2010) words: "the recognition of queers can be narrated as the hope or promise of becoming acceptable, where in *being* acceptable you must *become* acceptable to a world that has already decided what *is* acceptable" (p. 106).

With this, I am not saying that participants' lives are completely saturated by shame. Far from it, as has been explained that all of them live their sexualities in an open way, which means that all of them, at one point of their lives, stood against that shame in order to develop a public gay/lesbian identification with everything it entails in a still homophobic society as the Chilean one. What I am arguing, however, is that the need for external validation, social recognition, and respect that can be interpreted from

participants' statements about what a "good representation" consists of is a feeling that is rooted in shame, as it has the effect of orienting people towards what is "acceptable" and "appropriate".

There are, as has been explained throughout this text, glimpses of disruptive attitudes that point at reimagining what validation, respect, and acceptance look like – or, in fact, towards questioning these concepts' priority or pertinence altogether. This is, as will be revealed in my final remarks, a pressing issue that marks how gay/lesbian subjectivities are being currently negotiated in the Chilean society. Television is indeed one of the institutional areas where this plays out, albeit not the only one.

Conclusion

This thesis sought to explore the relationships between Chilean TV representations of gays and lesbians and participants' lived experiences, trying to comprehend how they interpret these images and interact with them in order to create meanings that inform the ways in which they articulate their identification as gays or lesbians. In general, I have argued that, all through participants' lives, the ways in which national television has made homosexuality visible have indeed played a highly significant role in their processes of sexual identification. This is a role that has been mostly detrimental, as respondents believe that televisual representations have contributed to further marginalise gay and lesbian lives, thus complicating their processes of self-recognition and self-acceptance and negatively affecting how they think others see them as self-identifying gays or lesbians. I have, furthermore, provided a contextual reading of this situation, understanding television as one of many other discursive institutions and texts through which homosexuality has been placed in an unfavourable position within Chilean society, thus shaping how participants understand their positioning within it. I have, therefore, not revealed "media effects", but offered a reading of television as a particularly characterised institution that is a significant part of how the "web of culture" in which we participate is shaped.

In the initial two chapters, I set out the bases of the social and televisual context in which the participants and I are located. In that sense, I first offered an interpretation of gay/lesbian recent cultural history in Chile that aimed to explain how homosexuality has

been publicly framed in the country over the last decades. Through an analysis of a number of "emblematic" national episodes and discussions, I showed how homosexuality has moved from a position of total social marginalisation to one of conditional acceptance. In this regard, I argued that Chilean gays and lesbians live in an environment where the periodic achievement of legal rights is accompanied with a permanent possibility of homophobic violence, particularly in the public sphere. I explained this apparent contradiction as a result of several historical movements, among them the homonormative strategies that have been foregrounded by successive governments and the bigger LGBTQ organisations of the country, as these strategies have contributed to the establishment and strengthening of limits of acceptability in which only some identities have emerged as worthy of respect and recognition.

After this, I mapped the ways in which this movement from absolute marginalisation to conditional acceptance has played out in television. About this, I argued that the visibility of gays and lesbians on Chilean TV has been mainly articulated through *watchable* images that do not challenge hegemonic sexual norms, as they follow "common sense" parameters that materialise values and ideas that are expected to be commonly understood and accepted. Through an analysis of over 100 figures that have appeared on Chilean TV since 1990, I explained that, in general, the televisual presence of homosexuality is marked by the following characteristics: gay men appear more than lesbians; white and affluent gays and lesbians appear more than unprivileged or darker-skinned ones; gender expression is, mostly, a differentiating value that delineates the figure's features and narrative possibilities; the context of homophobia is ignored or only slightly addressed, generally overlooking broader social issues; characters are rarely shown as part of broader LGBTQ communities; and class and gender expression are tightly connected, with working-class gays and lesbians behaving in gender nonconforming ways more usually than upper-class ones. I then mapped these general characteristics into five "types" – *funny locas, serious machos, family women, camionas,* and *clear lesbians/confused lesbians* – that reveal the ways in which Chilean television has routinely paired certain features with specific narrative possibilities, consolidating simplified representations from which several aspects of the gay/lesbian experience are elided.

After these bases were laid out, the next chapters set out my interpretations regarding the ways in which participants have related, throughout their lives, to television as a medium and, particularly, to the televisual representation of homosexuality. As a general approach, I argued that thinking about what televisual images "do" or the possibilities they open and/or close within mainstream society is an enduring and central part of how participants watch and evaluate them. Participants, in this sense, tend to watch images of gays and lesbians adopting a "straight viewpoint" that makes it possible for them to anticipate how these images will be received and the potential consequences they will have. This approach is shaped by a conviction that conceives television as a powerful social influencer that *determines* how broad sectors of the population understand homosexuality and, consequently, see them as individuals who identify as gay or lesbian. Even though participants recognise the existence of several other institutions and texts through which knowledge about homosexuality is produced, they talk about television as the one that is particularly responsible for the broad dissemination and reproduction of these discourses. TV, for them, is then not necessarily *producing* these sets of ideas, but strengthening them and increasing their social salience, which is radically important as they think people take at face value what they see on TV. When they talk about themselves, however, less pointed words are used, saying that television has *influenced* but not *determined* how they understand homosexuality, as their knowledge has been shaped by several other informational and experiential opportunities. In this sense, participants state that they have mostly drawn from "real life" experiences the information that has allowed them to complicate or challenge the televisual images. These are, as they say, the experiences that mainstream society do not have, turning television into the main or only way through which straight viewers can get a sense of a what gay/lesbian life looks like.

In general, the shape of the connection between televisual representations and both personal and social influence depends on how participants evaluate these images. In that sense, even though they acknowledge the progressive appearance of images that have made them feel more comfortable, a sense of frustration and distrust remains. While they remember the images that existed during the 1990s as totally violent and detrimental, the newer ones are singled out as still "not good enough", because they ignore aspects of the lesbian/gay experience that participants think are important. Representations are then mainly considered to be limited in their possibilities and lacking real complexity. They

might be showing the life experiences of *some* gays and lesbians, but there are many other options that are not appearing at all.

These representations, however, are not only discussed as limited, but are also revealed as polarised. In that sense, I argued that participants tend to organise national TV representations of gays and lesbians in two groups that are conceived as opposed extremes. The ways in which they talk about these images reveal their understanding as "packages of information" where certain features are naturally and immediately associated with others, leaving alternative intersections out of the conditions of possibility. In this way, for instance, a gay man can be effeminate *or* professional, while a lesbian woman is either masculine *or* successful. In participants' discourse, this differentiation is taken for granted; it has been naturalised. I offered a contextual explanation of this interpretative scheme that understands it as a consequence of the mainstream discourses about homosexuality that exist within Chilean society. These are the discourses that participants have "lived with" during their whole lives, which have then been incorporated into how they make sense of themselves and the world around them. I, therefore, argued that participants interpret these televisual images using the social scripts that materialise the ways in which certain types of homosexuality have been made conceivable within Chilean society. It is then not possible to say that television, by itself, has shaped how participants imagine certain ways of being gay/lesbian, as these are part of discourses that originate from manifold institutional and textual sites. It has, nevertheless, contributed to the strengthening of the strict conditions through which gay and lesbian lives can be envisioned. Accordingly, when participants talk about the importance of having other "options" represented, they never directly assess the need to disrupt these rigid associations. They frame these arguments in more open ways, stating that in order to be considered "realist", television does not only have to present images that are in accordance with "the world out there" – which they think is mainly done, even if they are images that represent *others'* lives – but also has to show a broader spectrum of narrative possibilities, incorporating stories they think are now being mostly ignored.

For them, what television is particularly lacking and what, therefore, should guide future televisual representations of homosexuality, are "normal" gays and lesbians. They characterise these figures as the ones whose sexuality is just "another part" of their identity, and not the most important one. Representations should then not ruminate on

this, neither use it as a strategy for producing differentiated narrative possibilities that are restricted by the figure's sexual identification. Instead, representations should focus on experiences that anyone, regardless of their sexual identification, can go through. "Normal" gays and lesbians, according to participants, are then those who are "like everyone else". However, I showed that the examples they use to substantiate their arguments are mainly based on heteronormative practices and experiences of "good" (sexual) citizenship: to be "normal", in this sense, is to be non-deviant, with lives marked by committed relationships, families to take care of, a house to manage, and an important job. Also, as sexual identification is not what should define "normal" figures, this part of their identity should not be "visible" at first sight: "normal" gays and lesbians, then, also have to act in gender conforming ways. I, therefore, argued that participants use "normal" to highlight the need to have figures whose lives are shaped by the same norms that define a "respectable" heterosexual existence – "good" gays and lesbians are then inherently similar to "good" heterosexuals. Participants state that this "normality" is what constitutes *their own* life, and also the life of the majority of gays and lesbians they know. Its representation would then contribute to have a "realist" – and therefore appropriate and just – televisual existence, which furthermore would be helpful for achieving full social respect.

I further argued that participants' use of "normality" should be read as a product of the national context of continuing marginalisation of gay and lesbian lives. In this sense, showing that one can be and indeed is located within the bounds of acceptability can be understood as a resource for fighting against discrimination. It is, however, a resource that also implies the establishment and solidification of new boundaries. I, therefore, did not read participants' deployment of these ideas as a "choice" but as a consequence of homosexuality's precarious social positioning within Chilean society. In this sense, I considered normalisation to be a strategy that responds to a specific context, as it emerges as an appropriate tool for achieving something participants consider radically important: moving forward in the recognition of the respectability of gay and lesbian lives.

This approach makes particular sense when participants' past experiences of television consumption are taken into consideration. In general, they remember that, while they were growing up, national television was showing homosexuality in violent and derogatory ways. These images contributed to the strengthening of damaging feelings that

fed into and reinforced a ubiquitous sense of shame that was originating from multiple locations, thus having a negative impact over their processes of sexual identification. I, therefore, argued that participants could only articulate their identification as gays or lesbians by disassociating themselves from these images and establishing a clear difference in regard to them. In that sense, after an initial period in which the stereotyped images produced a strong sense of fear about who they "were" and the possibilities their lives could hold, participants moved into a position in which they distinguished themselves from the models that national TV was showing. This was a process in which several other informational and experiential opportunities came into play; it was through other products of popular culture –mostly international – and relationships with friends, for instance, that participants were able to give new meanings to the categories gay/lesbian, which then allowed them to lead less-conflicted processes of identification.

As stated, I have not argued that national TV single-handedly caused troubled processes of identification. The ways in which national television was framing gay and lesbian lives were part of "discursive formations" assembled across different locations, creating a generally hostile environment regarding homosexuality. I, therefore, considered TV as part of a broader social order producing harmful feelings of unworthiness and insufficiency, an enduring sense of shame. What TV did, nevertheless, was to bring these formations into participants' daily lives, where they could see how these images were received by those around them, thus shaping how these individuals understood homosexuality and how they would read them as self-identifying gays or lesbians. For participants, therefore, it was not only important to create *for themselves* a sense of difference in regard to the televisual images; equally central was to establish this distinction before *others*' eyes.

I identified that a central element guiding participants' acts of self-distinction is the gender nonconformity of the majority of the figures that appeared during these years, which were mostly representations of gay men, as lesbians were seldom present on TV during the 1990s. However, both gay and lesbian participants' processes of identification were done by establishing a distance in regard to the lives these gender nonconforming figures represented, as inherently imbued with a set of "undesirable" features, according to the aforementioned "packages of information" logic. Setting a clear difference in regard to these characters and the lives they lead was then a necessary way of avoiding the

broader social stigma associated with it. Guided by Warner (2000), I read this as a consequence of the discourse of shame structuring non-heterosexual lives, which is here conveyed in the rejection of those who make the stigmatised identification visible in a more "outrageous" way, thus merely throwing shame "on those who stand farther down the ladder of respectability" (p. 60).

Consequently, participants reported that when new and more complex figures started appearing – gay and lesbian figures that, furthermore, acted in gender conforming ways – they felt a sense of calmness associated with seeing on TV the possibility of having a gay/lesbian identification and being socially "accepted". These images appeared when most of them had already reshaped the meanings they gave to the gay/lesbian categories, so I explained that the calmness they felt was mostly linked to the fact that, through these new images, these "acceptable" possibilities were made available to others, particularly their family. I, therefore, further argued that participants' self-assurance is intrinsically connected to their family's understanding of the many possibilities their lives as gays/lesbians could hold.

Even though new and more complex ways of representing homosexuality have certainly appeared over the last couple of years, all the aforementioned patterns of representation continue to have an enduring televisual presence. These are the images that, as already explained, participants consider to be limited in their possibilities and lacking real complexity. They, however, state that these representations are not affecting how they *see themselves* anymore. They already know that gays and lesbians can and do have "normal" lives. Nevertheless, they think that it is still important for this information to be available to others. I explained that when talking about the present, however, participants no longer locate this need on their families, but in broader sectors of the population. Here, then, they focus on the importance of making this knowledge available to *everyone*, as this would contribute to the achievement of gays and lesbians' social recognition and respect as worthy members of the Chilean society. Consequently, I argued that shame continues to be one of the components of the emotional repertoire through which participants interact with the televisual representation of gays and lesbians. This is because one of the main ways in which shame can shape an individual's relationship with the world is through the need for external validation and respect, which is sought by

aligning one's subjectivity with what has already been qualified as "appropriate" or "worthy".

Even though this is an approach I interpreted from the majority of participants' discourses, some of them also show movements in the opposite direction. This happens in fleeting moments when they state that some of the manners in which gay/lesbian lives can depart from the socially established heterosexual norms (for example, issues regarding the night life, transvestism, or romantic/sexual configurations beyond the monogamous coupledom, among others) should also have televisual presence. However, these are comments that, although clearly present, do not articulate the majority of participants' discourses, which I argued are mainly structured by a "normalising" attitude.

Through these discussions, this thesis is providing insights into how gay/lesbian identifications are developed in Chile, as its results are showing that appeals to "normality" and its associated experiential features (for instance, traditional family, work, consumption, and domesticity) and emotional implications (such as shame avoidance and the need for validation) are a central part of the ways in which participants' sense of (sexual)self is articulated. I see this, as has been stated, as a product of the national context of homosexual marginalisation, which has consolidated *being* "normal" as the most readily available option for avoiding discrimination and hopefully leading a liveable life. This is, of course, an approach that can change and maybe lead to the strengthening of positions that resist heteronormative logics and subvert the idea of acceptance being gained only when the terms of "normality" are met. Television, as has been here explained, has been closely integrated into these socially marked identity-making practices; it can, therefore, also be integrated into the potential emergence and/or strengthening of new possibilities.

With all this, it is then clear that the televisual representation of homosexuality has certainly played a highly significant role in how participants articulate their sexual identifications and see themselves as part of Chilean society. Even if it is not feasible to clearly detach television from other discursive institutions that construct knowledge about homosexuality, it is indeed possible to speculate that had television shown more promising, diverse, complex, and illuminating representations, participants' experiences of self-recognition and self-acceptance could have been different, maybe a little easier and less pointedly marked by social expectations. If national television could have,

somehow, broken the social tendency of homosexual marginalisation, it could have had a positive and constructive impact on participants' lives. Likewise, having more diverse and complex representations now would certainly enhance their sense of self-validation and thus contribute to their well-being.

I therefore believe that this thesis' results give enough information to substantiate the need for a more diversified representational environment; one that includes images that present the many possibilities that gay/lesbian lives hold. In this sense, it can be argued that what is then needed are figures who are complex, who mix "normality" and "disruption" in organic ways, as many of us do in our daily experiences, while trying to construct lives with which we feel comfortable. This thesis' results show, in other words, that visibility *by itself* is simply not enough and that the ways in which this visibility is achieved are central. I, therefore, add my voice to what was expressed by Chilean activists and academics in a Consejo Nacional de Televisión (2015) report: TV should incorporate complex representations that depart from simplified stereotypes, focusing both on individual and socio-political issues, and, above all, resisting the pure foregrounding of homonormative terms for making gay/lesbian lives intelligible. I consider that this would not just be beneficial for individuals who identify as gays or lesbians, but also for society more broadly, as it would contribute to eroding the sexual norms that structure our lives, dictating which (sexual) identities are even conceivable, creating prohibitions, and setting rigid boundaries of acceptability. For this, of course, many other interventions are needed, but it is possible to state that a complex and wide-ranging media presence of a variety of gay and lesbian lives would certainly "work to destabilize heteronormativity rather than to naturalize gay identities" (Duggan, 2006b, p. 181). Ludwig (2011) explains that intervening everyday activities and practices – "schoolbooks, academic curricula, advertisements, street names, 'private' conversations in the workplace and the architectures of bathrooms" (p. 59) – is a central part of how heteronormative worldviews are disrupted. I see this thesis, then, as a statement to that possibility, pointing at creating ways in which heteronormativity can indeed be eroded through practices of media production and, indeed, also consumption.

Notwithstanding these potential implications, this thesis presents some important limitations. A bigger and more diverse sample of participants, for instance, would have allowed me to delve deeper into some of the identified patterns, making also possible to

identify with more clarity some characteristics associated with age, gender, class, or any intersection between these identifications. A bigger presence of older participants, for instance, would have been particularly illuminating, as it would have allowed me to discuss temporal changes in a clearer manner. It would have been also interesting to explore how other sociodemographic characteristics are integrated into the relationship between televisual representations and sexual identifications; having participants from other cities apart from Santiago or from rural sectors of the country, for instance, would have added a new layer of depth into the analysis. These limitations, however, are also invitations into further lines of enquiry. Future research could then explore these characteristics and many others.

Beside these, several other possibilities for future research emerge as a consequence of the analysis that has been presented here. One of these possibilities, for instance, would be to explore Chilean gay and lesbian viewers' relationship with other televisual images, not necessarily those representing gay and lesbian lives. Several international studies have reflected on queer viewers' capacity to read "against the grain", creating affirmative meanings out of heterosexually-coded images. Expanding this line of research into the country and understanding how this possibility is imbued with local characteristics, is then a highly promising opportunity that has not yet been explored.

Likewise, future research could analyse the possible role that TV's depiction of homosexuality has on reinforcing or altering straight people's attitudes toward gays and lesbians. As has been explained throughout this thesis, participants firmly believe in television's role as a highly significant social influencer that can alter mainstream society's understanding of homosexuality. Future empirical research could then explore if this is actually the case. Once again, this has been a productive line of enquiry in other national contexts, so expanding it into Chile could prove highly fruitful.

These are, however, only some examples. As I explained in the Introduction, the intersection between sexuality and media is one that, in general, has not been widely explored in the Chilean context. Many other studies could then analyse the ways in which media and other communication technologies are integrated into gays and lesbians' social and identity-making practices. As Gross (1994) once said when talking about studies of gays and lesbians' media consumption in the USA: this area of enquiry here too "should provide more than enough terra incognita to tempt adventurous explorers" (p. 154).

While writing these conclusions, the current president of Chile, Sebastián Piñera, announced that his government is going to mandate Congress to discuss a marriage equality law as a matter of urgency. This surprising announcement – he is, after all, part of a right-wing political coalition that has historically resisted progressive changes and, also, he had said repeatedly that he was not a supporter of marriage equality – was met with passionate responses. On the one hand, right-wing political parties and the Catholic Church have already stated their strong opposition, arguing that because of its "inherent characteristics" associated with procreation, marriage can only be between a man and a woman; and, on the other hand, the bigger LGBTQ organisations, along with wide sectors of the LGTBQ communities, have celebrated the announcement, arguing that "it is about time". Many other organisations and LGBTQ people, as I have been able to gather from social media and conversations with friends, have mobilised a critical stance that not only questions why marriage equality should be a priority in a country where LGBTQ individuals experience a variety of forms of violence every day, but also interprets this movement as a clear example of pinkwashing, arguing that LGBTQ rights (particularly one that has a high level of support among the Chilean population, such as marriage equality) are being strategically deployed by the government as a way to "cover" other issues, "deviate" attention, and present themselves as "respectful" of human rights. All this, as a consequence of the announcement being made in the middle of the COVID-19 global pandemic, which in the country has already left thousands of deaths and highly serious economic problems mostly affecting the more unprivileged sectors of the population, with many then pointing at the government's incapacity to design an appropriate response that would have softened these effects. The country, likewise, is still shaken by the consequences of the wave of social unrest that took place during 2019 and 2020. The repeated and systematic cases of police violence that left, for instance, more than 200 individuals with eye injuries – some of them, completely or partly blind – have not been met with justice, with the government giving total support to the police. As a consequence, international organisations such as Amnesty International (2020) have expressed concern over the government's response to the protests, citing "excessive use of force" and "deliberately inflicted pain and suffering on protesters" (p. 5) by the Chilean's police. It is, in sum, a government whose record in regard to human rights has been highly challenged, therefore its motivations remain questionable.

All these discussions show how highly contested are issues regarding LGBTQ rights and identifications in the country at present time, with clear-cut or simplified positions impossible to identify. I hope this thesis adds to these discussions, providing insights into media's position in the everyday life of gays and lesbians and how can it potentially contribute to the establishment of fairer social relations in which everyone feels respected and opportunities are justly distributed.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Codes Used in the Qualitative Content Analysis of TV Programmes

Characters in Fictional Programmes

- Title of the programme
- Genre of the programme
- Year in which the first episode of the programme was broadcast
- Name of the character
- Sexual identification: gay / lesbian
- Level of diegetic relevance: main / supporting / incidental
- Profession
- Race: white / mixed
- Class: upper / middle / working
- Gender expression: conforming / nonconforming
- Approximate age
- Tone: humorous / serious
- Presence of "gay culture": yes / no
- Character "out of the closet": yes / no
- Partner: yes / no
- Kiss: yes / no
- Sexual encounter(s): yes / no
- Main narrative goal
- Presence in last episode
- Summary of the character's narrative arc

People in Non-fictional Programmes

- Name
- Year or approximate year in which they started appearing on TV
- Sexual identification: gay / lesbian
- Genre of programmes in which they participate

- Role in programmes in which they participate

- Race: white / mixed

- Class: upper / middle / working

- Gender expression: conforming / nonconforming

- Approximate age

- Tone: humorous / serious

- Experience of the closet: brief account of how/when the person publicly announced their homosexuality

- Known partner: yes / no

- Kiss: yes / no

- Regularly talks about their private life (partner/romantic life): yes / no

- Regularly talks about their private life (sexual identification/closet/homophobia): yes / no

- Figure's publicly known events associated to their sexual identification

Characters in Non-fictional Programmes

- Name of the character

- Year or approximate year in which they started appearing on TV

- Sexual identification: gay / lesbian

- Genre of programmes in which they participate

- Role in programmes in which they participate

- Profession

- Race: white / mixed

- Class: upper / middle / working

- Gender expression: conforming / nonconforming

- Approximate age

- Tone: humorous / serious

Appendix 2: List of Characters Used in Interviews and Focus Group

SELF-ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNARE

Participant:							Age:	
							Occupation:	
							Commune:	

Please check the people/characters that you know.

Amadeo (*Trampas y caretas*, 1992)		Rubén (*Si yo fuera rico*, 2018)	
Pierre (*Marrón glacé*, 1993)		Mercedes (*Perdona nuestros pecados*, 2018)	
Rucio (*Amores de mercado*, 2001)		Bárbara (*Perdona nuestros pecados*, 2018)	
Ariel (*Machos*, 2003)		Jordi Castell	
Humberto (*Puertas adentro*, 2003)		José Miguel Villouta	
Efraín (*Puertas adentro*, 2003)		Giovanni Falchetti	
Emilia (*Ídolos*, 2004)		Gonzalo Cáceres	
Sebastián (*Cómplices*, 2006)		Andrés Caniulef	
Javier (*Cómplices*, 2006)		José Antonio Neme	
Raco (*Cárcel de mujeres*, 2007/2008)		Ignacio Gutiérrez	
Lucrecia (*El señor de la querencia*, 2008)		Juan Manuel Astorga	
Herminia (*El señor de la querencia*, 2008)		Ítalo Passalacqua	
Martín (*Los exitosos Pells*, 2009)		Scarleth Cárdenas	
Tomás (*Los exitosos Pells*, 2009)		Stephanie Fox, La Botota	
Javier (*¿Dónde está Elisa?*, 2009)		Claudio Doenitz	
Ignacio (*¿Dónde está Elisa?*, 2009)		Nelson Pacheco, Nelson Mauri	
Samuel (*Los Ángeles de Estela*, 2009)		Alexander Núñez, Arenito	
Domingo (*Primera dama*, 2010)		Erick Monsalve, Lelo	
Zafiro (*Mujeres de lujo*, 2010)		María Jimena Pereyra	
Macarena (*Infiltradas*, 2011)		Viviana Flores	
Nina (*Infiltradas*, 2011)		Isabel Fernández, Isa	
Juan (*La doña*, 2011)		Di Mondo	
Nicolás (*La doña*, 2011)		Nicolás Yunge	
Ignacio (*Separados*, 2012)		Hernán Arcil	
Jacqueline (*Reserva de familia*, 2012)		Andrei Hadler	
Ariel (*El reemplazante*, 2012)		Leo Méndez Jr	
Daniela (*No abras la puerta*, 2014)		Cochiguaz	
Carla (*No abras la puerta*, 2014)		Tony Esbelt	
Enrie-André (*Pituca sin lucas*, 2014)		Yerko Puchento	
Isidora (*Las 2 Carolinas*, 2014)		Rolando Jiménez	
Renata (*Las 2 Carolinas*, 2014)		Karen Atala	
Daniel (*Zamudio*, 2015)		Pablo Simonetti	
Elsa (*Preciosas*, 2016)		Luis Larrain	

Appendix 3: Interview Guideline

SEMI-ESTRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDELINE

First part. This section aims to understand the participant's general use of television.

Topics of discussion:
- Patterns of use. Ask, for instance: how many hours of TV do you watch daily? When is this consumption done?
- Changes that this pattern has had during the participant's life. Ask, for instance: how was your TV consume during your childhood? And your adolescence? Ask about other life stages, according to the participant's age.
- Social relationships and TV use. Ask, for instance, do you watch TV by your own? If not, who do you usually watch TV with? Do you like talking or making comments while watching TV? Do you use social media to comment programmes while they are being aired and/or after/before?
- Selection of programmes. Ask, for instance, how do you choose which programmes to watch? Once you start watching a show, what makes you stop watching?
- Programmes evaluation. Ask, for instance, what do you value the most in a fictional TV show? And in a documentary/news?
- Programmes evaluation. Ask about their favourite characters or the ones they remember the most (not necessarily gays or lesbians), the features they have to have. Ask for examples.

Second part. This section focuses on the interviewee's memories of the programmes/characters and how they evaluate these representations.

Topics of discussion:
- General evaluation. Ask to describe the general ways in which TV represents gays and lesbians. Ask, for instance: when you see images of gays and lesbians on TV, what do they look like? If it does not come naturally, ask about differences between fiction and non-fiction. Ask for examples of the patterns they identify, the ones they like and the ones they don't like.

- General evaluation. Ask to evaluate the ways in which television represents the material/social conditions of being gay/lesbian in Chile.
- General evaluation. Ask for examples of what they think are good/bad or positive/negative (depending on the words they use) representations.
- Change. Ask if they have identified changes over time.
- Effects. Ask about the ways in which they think these patterns of representation affects the ways in which homosexuality is perceived in the Chilean society.
- Future possibilities. Ask about what do they like to see more of in the media in terms of portrayals of gays and lesbians. Ask about the characteristics that a representation/character/scene/report has to have in order to be "accurate", "real", "positive" (use different words to suit their different interpretations).

Third part. This section focuses on the interviewee's personal experiences of watching these representations.

Topics of discussion:
- Affects. Ask about the ways in which the patterns they just identified makes them feel. If it does not come naturally, ask about 'positive'/'negative' feelings.
- Personal history. Ask about where did they look for information about their sexuality while they were going through their process of self-realisation of their non-heterosexual identifications. If it does not come naturally, ask about the extent to which television had an influence in this process. Ask about examples of programmes/characters/scenes that were influential during this process.
- Impact. Ask about the extent to which television, during their lives, has had an impact over the ways in which they relate to their own non-heterosexual identifications.

Fourth part. As the last part of the interview, ask the participant to:

- Choose 3 characters, people, scenes, episodes, programmes or news reports about gays and lesbians that they consider more memorable/shocking/affecting/representing.
- Before finishing the interview, is there anything else you want to tell me?

Appendix 4: Focus Group Guideline

FOCUS GROUP GUIDELINE

First part. This section aims to understand some features of the participants' general evaluation of TV shows.

Topics of discussion:
- Selection of programmes. Ask, for instance, how do you choose which programmes to watch? Once you start watching a show, what makes you stop watching?
- Programmes evaluation. Ask, for instance, what do you value the most in a fictional TV show? And in a documentary/news?
- Programmes evaluation. Ask about their favourite characters or the ones they remember the most (not necessarily gays or lesbians), the features they have to have. Ask for examples.

Second part. This section focuses on the participants' memories of the programmes/characters.

Topics of discussion:
- General evaluation. Ask to describe the general ways in which TV represents gays and lesbians. Ask, for instance: when you see images of gays and lesbians on TV, what do they look like? If it does not come naturally, ask about differences between fiction and non-fiction. Ask for examples of the patterns they identify, the ones they like and the ones they don't like.
- General evaluation. Ask to evaluate the ways in which television represents the material/social conditions of being gay/lesbian in Chile.
- General evaluation. Ask for examples of what they think are good/bad or positive/negative (depending on the words they use) representations.
- Change. Ask if they have identified changes over time.
- Effects. Ask about the ways in which they think these patterns of representation affects the ways in which homosexuality is perceived in the Chilean society.
- Future possibilities. Ask about what do they like to see more of in the media in terms of portrayals of gays and lesbians. Ask about the characteristics that a

representation/character/scene/report has to have in order to be "accurate", "real", "positive" (use different words to suit their different interpretations).

Third part. This section aims to produce conversation about five specific TV representations. The participants will be shown five clips:

1. *Machos* (*telenovela*). Ariel telling Valentina, her mother, that he is gay, Canal 13, 2003: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Ooc7KSW_lk (38:31-41:30 / 43:10-45:22)
2. *Tocando las estrellas* (reality show). Anita Alvarado "outs" Giovanni Falchetti, TVN, 2003: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTkf1BZYiIA (full video)
3. *Los exitosos Pells* (*telenovela*). Martin comes back to his house, TVN, 2009 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZ8XgJGUUmw (1:35-6:15)
4. *24 Horas* (news). News report about the 2011 Pride in Santiago, TVN, 2011: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XdebSgNrhHo (full video)
5. *Perdona nuestros pecados* (*telenovela*). Mechita and Bárbara kiss for the first time, Mega, 2017: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aqvkF9j6AH0 (full video)

After showing each video, ask about:
- What do they think about the specific representation/character/scene/situation.
- How do they feel about the specific representation/character/scene/situation. Which affects are mobilised.
- What changes, if any, they would make to these representations to make them more "accurate", "real", "positive" (use different words to suit their different interpretations).

Fourth part. As the last part of the focus group, ask the participants:
- Before finishing the focus group, is there anything else you want to tell me?

Appendix 5: Codes Used in the Thematic Analysis

Code	Definition
Absences	Issues regarding homosexuality that are not present on TV
Adulthood-present	Feelings/identity formation processes that are being currently experienced or are recent
Age	Age in the representation of homosexuality
Anger	Feelings of anger associated to TV's representation of homosexuality
Anguish	Feelings of anguish (or distress) associated to TV's representation of homosexuality
Belittled homosexuality	Representations of homosexuality through its condemnation (no specific characteristics)
Change agent	Activities that are carried out to counteract the effects that television images of homosexuality have on the population
Changes	Changes in the ways in which TV represents homosexuality
Childhood-adolescence	Feelings/identity formation processes that were experienced during childhood/adolescence
Childhood-adolescence and television	Use of TV during his/her childhood/adolescence
Close relationships	Associations between TV representations of homosexuality and the participant's relationship with his/her family/friends
Closet	Closet as a narrative through which homosexuality has been televised
Comic homosexuality	Humorous representations of homosexuality
Curiosity	Feelings of curiosity associated to TV's representation of homosexuality
Dark homosexuality	Representation of homosexuality through forbidden / clandestine stories
Diegetic relevance	Assessment of characters according their level of relevance within the story
Discomfort	Feelings of discomfort associated to TV's representation of homosexuality
Distrust	Feelings of distrust associated to TV's representation of homosexuality
Diversity	Coexistence of different types of homosexuality on television
Effects	Effects that TV representations of homosexuality have on the general population
Effects on LG	Effects that TV representations of homosexuality have on gays and lesbians
Effeminate men	Representations of gender non-conforming gay men
Entertainment	Television as a means for entertainment
Everyday life	Images that represent the daily life of homosexuals, in a more complete/complex fashion
Fear	Feelings of fear associated to TV's representation of homosexuality
Feminine women	Representation of lesbians through femininity
Guilt	Feelings of guilt associated to TV's representation of homosexuality

Helplessness	Feelings of helplessness associated to TV's representation of homosexuality
Heterosexual similarity	Representation of homosexuality through its similarities with heterosexuality
Hidden homosexuality	Representations of homosexuality only through suggestions and not direct mentions
Homosexuality as a conflict	Representation of homosexuality as the bearer of conflicts for gays/lesbians themselves
Homosexuality as a problem	Representation of homosexuality as the bearer of problems for others
Humour	Representations of homosexuality as producers of humoristic responses (for the participants)
Identity formation	TV's role on the construction of self-identity
Ideological rejection	Rejection of TV programmes/content that are considered as opposed to the participant's believes
Images search	Having a particular interest in watching programs with gay characters/people
Images selection	Processes through which TV networks select images/stories to be broadcast
Indifference	No feelings are produced when watching gay/lesbian-themed TV
Information	Television as a means for education/information
Information search	Ways in which information about homosexuality was sought during childhood / adolescence
Lesbian invisibility	Scarce presence of lesbians on TV. Lesbian characters/people not being included in TV narratives/stories
Liking	Positive feelings (satisfaction, liking) associated to TV's representation of homosexuality
Masculine men	Role of masculinity in the representation of gay men
Masculine women	Representations of gender non-conforming lesbians
Normalisation	Normalisation of homosexuality through characters/people that are normal/every-day/natural
Production	Writers/directors/producers' responsibility in the construction of TV images of homosexuality
Promiscuity	Representation of homosexuality through promiscuous characters
Rejection	Feelings of rejection associated to TV's representation of homosexuality
Representation	Popular gays/lesbians' responsibility in representing the whole community
Romanticism	Representation of homosexuality through romantic stories
Serious men	Representation of gay men through seriousness
Serious women	Representation of lesbians through seriousness
Sexualised women	Representation of lesbians through their sexualisation
Sexuality	Representation of gay/lesbian sexuality
Shame	Feelings of shame associated to TV's representation of homosexuality
Simplified homosexuality	Non-complex representations of homosexuality
Social class	The role of social class in TV's representation of homosexuality

Social media use	Use of social media while watching TV
Stereotypes	Stereotyped representation of homosexuality (in general, not specific stereotypes)
Success	Representation of homosexuality through professionally/economically successful characters
Tolerance	TV as a tolerant space regarding homosexuality
Tragic homosexuality	Representation of homosexuality through tragic stories
Trust	Trust as a value for evaluating television
TV and cultural change	Relationship between TV and cultural changes regarding homosexuality
TV and reality	Relationship between TV representations of homosexuality and their/others' daily experience
TV use	Characteristics of the use of TV, specifically about quantity of hours and days of the week
TV quality	General comments about Chilean TV's quality
Unimportant homosexuality	Representation of characters / people whose presence is not defined by their homosexuality
Violent women	Representation of lesbians as violent women
Visibility	Positive feelings associated to homosexuality's presence (in general) on TV
Ways of watching TV	Characteristics of the us of TV, specifically about company and attention
Women as mother	Representation of lesbians through motherhood