


CHAPTER 11

Narratives by students of LGBTQ+ community in the space of the Federal University of Piauí: tensions and upheavals

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ABSTRACT

This article presents an analysis of the narratives by students at the Federal University of Piauí/Campus Senador Helvídio Nunes de Barros belonging to the LGBTQ+ community, pointing out the tensions and upheavals suffered by because of their sexual orientation. The research followed the qualitative approach and the interpretative analysis of the students' narratives allowed us to identify the possible tensions and upheavals they feel at university. The UFPI/CSHNB emerges as a plural and diverse space, where the student feels free to be himself and to be in the world. A space of encounters and comfort, of overcoming and absence of judgment of sexual orientation. We did not find in the students' narratives tensions or upheavals in their initial training that had a negative impact. But on the other hand, we found tensions related to self-knowledge and family acceptance, as well as upheavals related to their insertion in the labor market. The text presents subsidies for further discussion and analysis of the context of the formation of individuals belonging to the LGBTQ+ community.

Keywords: Graduate courses, Sexual orientation, Tensions.

1 INTRODUCTION

The topic of sexuality has been addressed in educational spaces in a shy way, this fact is associated with the multiple understandings of the subject making its approach complex as it involves a series of taboos, repressions and the attempt to reduce its dimension to genitality and reproduction.

As it is quite broad and is centered in the life of the human being sexuality encompasses sex, identities, gender roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. It is expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, opinions and attitudes, in values, behaviours and practices, as well as in relationships, although not always all these dimensions that are included in sexuality are experienced (AMARAL, 2007).

In this context, the theme stands out for problematizing hegemonic values that endure for a long time in society. In this view, heterosexuality is assumed as a standard form of relationship, which follows the socially acceptable norms, while homosexuality is seen as a disease or disorder that must be treated to fit the subjects to pre-established social norms. Thinking heterosexuality as the only way to live sexuality manifests forms of repression and violence that are posed as homophobia (LOURO, 2004).

Sexual diversity exists and presents various forms of expressing human sexuality. Like Dinis (2008), we observe the initiative of some social instances in combating homophobic practices through the presentation of gender diversity, sexual desires and sexual relationships in spaces such as soap operas, series, miniseries, films, reports, books, news reports, among other channels. We perceive the University as a space of production and dissemination of knowledge, being an opportune place for discussions of this nature, in order to raise awareness of the academic and local community about respect for the sexual orientation of individuals and the desires linked to identities.

Thus, the present paper proposes to analyze the narratives of students from the LGBTQ+ community who find themselves in the space of UFPI/CSHNB, indicating tensions and challenges faced by their sexual orientation.

2 METHODOLOGY

The research followed a qualitative approach, considering that it can be characterized as the attempt of a detailed understanding of the meanings and situational characteristics presented by the narrators (SOUSA, 2006).

Written narrative was used as a research technique because we understand it as a way to understand the lived experiences and their meanings. Thus, the participants were communicated the attentive and willing writing of facts added to their sexual orientation. The experience here is understood as Larossa (1994), that which touches us, makes sense. For Clandinin and Connelly (2015, p. 48), studying the experience of narrative form makes sense, because, we build a repertoire of memories that construct our identity.

Thus, we take into consideration that:

[...] each one of us is already immersed in narrative structures that pre-exist to him and that organize in a particular way the experience, which imposes a meaning to the experience. Therefore, the history of our lives depends on the set of stories we have heard, in relation to which we have learned to build our own. The narrative is not a place of irruption of subjectivity, but the discursive mode that establishes the position of the subject and the rules of its construction in a plot. (LARROSA, 1994, p. 47).

Thus, the narrative helps subjects to express themselves about their experiences and, in this context, to understand the meanings assigned to each one of them. According to Sousa and Cabral (2015), the narrative is of utmost importance because it allows the remembrance and reconstruction of lives, stories, helps in the preservation of stories both in individual and collective research, having great significance.

Focusing on what was intended, we adopted the narrative of ten students from UFPI/CSHN, belonging to the LGBTQ+ community. Their names were kept anonymous so as not to cause any kind of damage to the participants, who were given fictitious names.

Aiming to capture the students' view of their academic trajectory, with tensions and challenges associated with their sexual orientation, we used the technique of interpretive analysis that helps us understand the data according to intentions and ideas and make inferences about the readings. Initially, a reading was performed to identify the subjects and facts and then a cross-reading of the data that enabled us to identify categories of analysis. And finally, a reading that allowed us to interpret the data in two categories: tensions and shocks.

The study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee (CEP) of UFPI/CSHNB under registration 3.983.006. The Informed Consent Form (ICF) was signed by all participants of this research.

3 RESULTS

With the description of the research participants (Table 1), 80% declared themselves homosexuals and of these 75% were born with male genitalia and 25% with female genitalia, biologically male and female. As for gender, 70% reported being male and 30% female. The participants are distributed in seven undergraduate courses of the UFPI/CSHNB: Nursing, Biological Sciences, Field Education, Literature, Pedagogy, History and Administration and are aged between 19 and 25 years.

For Santos (2017), the presence of LGBT students in Universities is increasingly notorious, however, it is still very difficult to know if students remain in Higher Education, because studies on this theme are incipient. The non-permanence of students in these training spaces may be associated with factors such as prejudice and homophobia.

Table 1- Participants' profile regarding sex, gender, age, sexual orientation and ongoing course.

Participant/ Fictitious name	Sex		Gender	Age	Sexual Orientation	Course
	Man	Woman				
Íris		X	Female	21	Homosexual	Administration
Emílio	X		Male	20	Homosexual	Biological Sciences
Sealtiel	X		Male	22	Homosexual	Nursing
Avril brick	X		Male	25	Homosexual	History
Pedro Henrique	X		Male	19	Homosexual	Field Education
Douglas	X		Male	19	Bisexual	Biological Sciences
Alice	X		Female	20	Bisexual	Letters
Andrade	X		Male	25	Homosexual	Pedagogy
Sun	X		Male	25	Homosexual	Pedagogy
Helena		X	Female	21	Homosexual	Nursing

Source: Prepared by the authors, 2020.

Category of analysis - "Tensions

We sought to identify in the narratives the "self-knowledge" from excerpts that indicate the perception of participants regarding the recognition of their sexual orientation and acceptance before family, society, groups and for themselves. Chart 1 presents the extracts of the representative narratives of the recognition of sexual orientation of the participants.

Chart 1- Extracts of the narratives regarding the identification of the sexual orientation of the research participants.

Sealtiel	<i>[...] I felt a little strange and different from the other boys in class or with whom I played, because I never liked to play with cars or somewhat aggressive games, not to mention that I always preferred to play with girls.</i>
Douglas	<i>Since childhood I was always, let's say, different from the other boys, I always liked to keep to myself, I didn't fit in much with the "boys" games, I didn't have many conversations, I was more sensitive and everything else, however, this was normal for me, because I was a child and I didn't know about things; as the years went by I grew up, entered adolescence and started to be persecuted by the so terrible "society standards", (ah, if you don't play ball with the boys, you are a "faggot"), [...].</i>
Emílio	<i>[...] I was always decided in relation to my sexual orientation, I never had doubts about what really attracted me and I always accepted myself as I am [...].</i>
Iris	<i>Long before I entered the Federal University of Piauí, I already noticed that I felt some love attraction for girls and only a feeling of friendship for boys [...].</i>
Pedro Henrique	<i>At 14 I had my first experience with a girl in elementary school and I didn't feel the desire to want more, I didn't feel the chemistry that my older friends commented that they felt when they first kissed.</i>
Andrade	<i>[...] to suffer prejudice, we have to put in mind when we talk about homophobia, sometimes a simple nickname can be considered a prejudice, and so since I was little I always had the "clichés", but in the school of the neighborhood where I live and studied I never suffered prejudice, I always had many heterosexual friends.</i>
Sol	<i>[...] it manifested itself very early in me in the question of starting it from the period of my puberty, at the beginning of my adolescence phase I already started to question what my sexual orientation was, which in this case is homosexual, and at first I didn't have so many problems in relation to acceptance because I already understood, it was a super natural thing and that I sought help and support within the family, that never denied me this kind of assistance, on the contrary, beforehand they already demonstrated complete concern in firming, let's say, the commitment of being on my side before any eventuality that could happen [...].</i>
Helena	<i>I knew I liked girls since I was a child, I don't remember exactly how old I was. I had already been with men, but I didn't think it was the same. Then, when I was 13, I was with a girl for the first time, and everything was perfect. It was a perfect fit. I assumed I was a lesbian to my mom and siblings as soon as I started my first relationship (when I was 19). I am the younger sister, I have two older brothers. My 26 year old brother was fine with it. My older brother didn't like it much, he is very jealous, but he didn't say anything either.</i>

Source: Prepared by the authors, 2020.

For the research participants, the perception of being different from the other classmates marks the beginning of the process of self-knowledge from the recognition of their sexual orientation. Taking as an example the position of Sealtiel "*[...] I felt a little strange and different from the other boys in the classroom or with whom I played [...]*". The perception by the taste of jokes, conversations, attitudes socially demarcated as masculine or feminine amid the daily routine brought out the desire for self-knowledge in the midst of personal conflicts concerning the tastes and comparisons with the other.

In the narratives, we noticed a discomfort regarding the way of being and being in the world about the positions assumed, thus, an avalanche of conflicting thoughts concerning the social position assumed in childhood and adolescence intended the participants for inner immersion in search of their identity. The

extract of Sealtiel's narrative helps us to understand this statement: "[...] *never liked to play with cars or somewhat aggressive games, not to mention that I always preferred to play with girls [...]*". The tension associated with group characteristics was also felt by some of the participants, in this way, the exclusion from the group is related to the development of practices that do not match with those accepted by the group. We can quote the fragment of the narrative of Douglas "[...] *ah, if you don't play ball with the boys, you are a "viadinho"*".

The socially accepted activities attributed to the participants are linked to their biological sex, and are considered female behaviour: playing with dolls, taking care of the home, cooking, sewing, among other activities; and male behaviour: playing ball, working outside the home, running, jumping, climbing trees, fighting, among many other activities. Society has always sought to impose belonging to a social group, defining very well the role of men and women in relation to masculinity and femininity (LOURO, 2001).

One of the ways of searching for the sexual orientation to be assumed appears associated with experiences of affective contact with the other, a factor that generates tension by insecurity in relation to the desire for the opposite sex, for the same sex, for both sexes or for none of the sexes. In this way, having a personal affective experience becomes the way to identify the acceptance or rejection by the loving contact with one of the sexes. This was the strategy used by Pedro Henrique: "[...] *I had my first experience with a girl in elementary school and I didn't feel the desire to want more [...]*".

For Louro (2001), contact with the other is a way of responding to one's desires and having pleasure, exercising one's sexuality, which may occur in many ways. What is unacceptable is the homophobia that reaches the LGBT group by not understanding that people have the right to relate freely, a factor that does not bring damage to personal singularities.

Self-acceptance in the narratives is associated with living with the family and in social spaces. In this way, we present in Chart 2 some extracts of the narratives that present tensions caused by the fear of family and social rejection of the participants' sexual orientation.

Chart 2 - Extracts of the narratives regarding the relationship between sexual orientation and tensions in the family context according to the research participants.

Sealtiel	<i>And the worst of it is that I felt guilty for it, for several reasons, among them, the fact that society puts homosexuality as something wrong and that is not standard, and also for family issues.</i>
Douglas	<i>I came to accept myself even at the age of 17, due to the fact that I was afraid of my family, due to my own fear of not wanting to be that, due to not understanding what it was to be LGBT and due to the very prejudice employed by my family members.</i>
Avril Brick	<i>[...] but I didn't relate to anyone due to the fact that I was living with my parents and they were very conservative (to the extreme), besides the town being very small and the rumors circulated fast, so that they reached their ears.</i>
Pedro Henrique	<i>The day came! We had lunch, I prepared my parents and my sister to say everything, and we said that we were gay and that we were dating. My father got up from the table and left without saying anything, my mother was in shock, but she didn't show much against it, and my sister said that she already knew.</i>

Avril Tijolo	<i>So they had a vision of me as a son who was going to get married, generate several descendants and continue our family. My parents are illiterate and lived practically all their lives in the countryside, so needless to say they understood almost nothing about homosexuality. The fact that I confessed to be attracted to people of the same sex as me, at that moment, was as if for them I would no longer be able to generate descendants, and this was totally opposite to their idealizations towards me.</i>
Andrade	<i>[...] when I left the evangelical church I got a boyfriend, I ended up assuming myself to my mother. My mother cried so much and I asked her if she was ashamed of me, and if she was like that, you know, disgusted. And my mother said no, that she already knew, but that she would know how much I would suffer in this life and she couldn't do anything, because when someone acted with prejudice against me she wouldn't be there to defend me most of the time, so she knew the situation that I was going through and would go through, and the cross that I would carry for the rest of my life, she was always afraid of someone doing something with me, and then my grandmother kind of got intrigued with me, she kind of kicked me out of the house, I had to go to Picos to spend a couple of weeks.</i>
Sol	<i>[...] I sought help and support within the family, which never denied me this kind of assistance, on the contrary, beforehand they already showed complete concern in firming, let's say, the commitment to be on my side in the face of any eventuality that could happen, and about this in my life I never suffered any kind of homophobic attack, physical and also no kind of embarrassing situation involving my sexual orientation.</i>
Helena	<i>My mother didn't think it was right, but it didn't stop me from continuing the relationship. We didn't talk about it until my girlfriend broke up with me for the first time. On this day, I could hear from my mother that my relationship was wrong, and that I should be dating a boy. Today I am still with the same girl, I sleep at her place but she doesn't come to my place.</i>

Source: Prepared by the authors, 2020.

Family rejection is something feared by the research participants, a factor associated with respect for parents and the values that were socially constructed in the group. The internal conflicts regarding the absence of sexual correspondence and characteristics of masculinity and femininity are generated by the breaking of socially accepted standards and by the desires attributed to peers within the family. Disappointing parents becomes a burden in the lives of participants by the absence of self-acceptance in the family presence and in some cases in social spaces, such as small towns of origin of the participants, the same was detected by Nascimento *et al* (2020) in their study.

The feared reaction of parents upon knowing the sexual orientation of their children makes them postpone the acceptance of themselves in front of the family and sometimes never get to declare themselves socially as to their sexual orientation, making them invisible before society and the longing for recognition as subjects builders of their historical process.

The tensions caused by the absence of self-acceptance can cause depression, suicide, low self-esteem, social reclusion, among others, since the family is still the social group to which the subjects belong, and it is the foundation for their formation and generates a sense of belonging and protection. Therefore, family acceptance brings comfort and tranquility to LGBT people through the veiled prejudice that still persists in society. Thus, support is essential, as Sealtiel says *"Today I have friends, family and people in general that I can relate to very well and that really accept me, it seems cliché to say this, but having support during this process is of the utmost importance for any gay person."*

According to Souza and Silva (2018), the condemnation of homosexuality has historical precedents and the family often excludes non-heterosexual members. It is known that the recognition and acceptance of the family are essential for homosexuals to build their identity and be able to face the world and situations

of discrimination and prejudice. It is necessary that the family is close to the homosexual, avoiding the history of violence that has accompanied this relationship, because the most important thing for homosexuals facing the exclusionary society is to have a solid base to stand on.

When the homosexual cannot assume his condition to his family, he ends up experiencing situations of conflict, anguish, fear, negative feelings, causing a psychological malaise that is highly detrimental to his health in general, which can lead to depression (POESCHL; VENÂNCIO; COSTA, 2012).

The University is composed of a diversity of subjects, a plural place full of people with varied conceptions of life and ways of being in the world. It is a space of production of culture and dissemination of ideologies. Chart 3 presents the extracts of the narratives that point to the University as a favourable space for self-acceptance.

Chart 3 - Extracts of the narratives regarding self-acceptance in the university space.

Douglas	<i>[...] I entered the biological sciences course, this part I personally did not feel difficulty in living together, because I always knew that at the university there was a huge diversity of beliefs, ethnicities, races, politics and, especially, countless diversities of sexual options; the people I met are extremely wonderful and do not care if you are gay, bi, lesbian, among others, they are people who look at your "character".</i>
Emílio	<i>[...] during my time of study at the University, until today, I have never suffered any kind of prejudice, violence and aggression, everyone treats me with respect, my friends, colleagues of the course, and the other students of the institution.</i>
Íris	<i>Some time not so far away, I realized the need to take this fear that bothered me, preventing me from being happy the way I am, so I decided to enter UFPI-CSHNB, in the course that I love, to learn to have responsibilities, attitudes not of a scared girl with fear of being happy, but of a strong woman and that today looks back and feels proud of who she is becoming, even with some obstacles to be faced yet.</i>
Pedro Henrique	<i>[...] I am also proud to say that here is my place in the world and I have never suffered any kind of prejudice in this environment, on the contrary, I am always accepted and have good coexistence with everyone I meet and make new friends daily, whatever the sexual gender.</i>
Avril Tijolo	<i>[...] I have always been very respected by teachers in general, by outsourced employees of the field and also by the students. I even got to "catch" myself with some quickly in some more hidden places within the university itself.</i>
Alice	<i>In my course in particular it never occurred to me to question or suffer any prejudice, however, when I had relationships with girls, when passing by the corridors, many people (mostly men) were left with sexist and fetishist questions, such as who was the man of the relationship and how the relationship occurred.</i>
Andrade	<i>When I started college I was already standing out, and as I already worked in the City Hall, so I was able to master many areas, and so, in a way, I haven't suffered prejudice at the University, neither with my professors nor with my classmates. So, not to say that I didn't suffer, thTijere was a conflict once when a girl called me "faggot bread and egg", and she was bisexual, I didn't understand. But then I understood that she didn't like me regardless of my sexuality or not, so it was the only episode that happened inside college that I felt a little</i>

	<i>prejudice, but at university I was gaining respect and I conquered my space, I entered the CA as director of finance, and so at university I am building my career, I did not graduate, but from the director of finance I went to the presidency of my CA, class leader, I joined the DCE as president, director and planning, I was part of the collegiate of my course, the campus council and, so, even today I am president of my CA and president of the imperial athletics of my course, so I was conquering my space among teachers.</i>
Sol	<i>[...] in the university environment I could be opening up to other gender issues that were new to me, I came into contact during the time I joined the student movement [...].</i>
Helena	<i>At the university I did not encounter any prejudice, on the contrary, I was always welcomed and respected by everyone.</i>

Source: Prepared by the authors, 2020.

The extracts present the university as a desired space for its flexibility and acceptance of what is plural and diverse. A place of coexistence of a diversity of subjects with different sexual orientations, ethnicities, genders, etc. This factor generates respect from its members to any form of being and being in the world. Thus, sexual orientation in this space does not define how intelligent, dedicated, good character the subjects are, but makes them unique.

In this context, being at university is a path that enables self-acceptance and acceptance of the other, a true fact when we use the extract from Pedro Henrique's narrative: "*[...] I am proud to say that this is also my place in the world [...]*", recognizing this space as diverse.

In the narratives we noticed the recognition of the participants regarding the treatment of students by teachers, technicians and outsourced staff of the institution, demonstrating that respect for cultural diversity present in the institution is not only among the students. It is necessary to emphasize that it is up to the University to offer training courses to its staff to properly serve its clientele, as well as to work towards equality and equity of rights in the university space and in other social spaces. Recognizing all subjects with their singularities is the first step towards reducing any form of prejudice or discrimination.

Universities should be spaces of acceptance of the LGBTQ+ public; therefore, it is necessary to build educational policies that avoid their exclusion in Higher Education, guaranteeing not only that they enter these spaces, but that they remain in them. Thus, it is important that this space also be a space of sexual orientation, aiming at student success, seeking to eliminate any situation of prejudice or discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community. The University needs to be a space of respect for the diversity of values, of rethinking taboos and prejudices and overcoming discriminatory behaviors (SANTOS, 2017).

Category of analysis – “Shocks”

Self-knowledge and self-acceptance often cause "shocks" in the LGBTQ+ community that suffocate and generate problems to be overcome. Thus, we present in Chart 4 some extracts from the narratives that point to homophobia, prejudice and insertion in the job market as obstacles caused by sexual orientation.

Chart 4 - Extracts of the narratives about the shocks caused to the research participants.

Emílio	<i>[...], my mother was always safe and protective with me, but after I told her the truth about me, she became even more protective, due to the reality of the country where we live, the cases of homophobia and everything else.</i>
Sieltiel	<i>Throughout this process I went through several complicated issues, which includes prejudice and discrimination at school, in the playground and also at university, already as an adult, I confess that there have been times when I had anxiety attacks and also nocturnal panic attacks, precisely because I had to face all these issues at a very young age and, at first, without any support.</i>
Douglas	<i>[...], because I never talked things about my feelings, my depressions and my sexuality with anyone.</i>
Pedro Henrique	<i>[...] it is not easy to live in a standardized society and we have to break taboos every day.</i>
Avril Tijolo	<i>I went through a strong depressive crisis after the first half of 2018 and practically during the first 10 months of 2019 [...], among other factors, because I am part of a group considered "minority" and that already has a history of having difficulties to get a job in this very competitive and macho labor market with strong presence of homophobia.</i>
Andrade	<i>[... Within the university there is prejudice, but in a way I have not suffered and do not suffer, thank God, but I know of several cases of people who have suffered prejudice within the university, but, particularly, today I do not know what it is in relation to prejudice, neither in college, in the workplace, nor at home and not in my family, not in my neighborhood, in fact, today everyone respects me, they know I'm gay, but telling you, I managed to build my character benevolent, you know, people respect me [...].</i>
Sol	<i>[...] exposed in risky and even often aggressive situations that threaten the physical integrity of individuals from the LGBT community, but it never happened to me. Unfortunately, we still live in a patriarchal, paternalistic society, much due to the issue of bourgeois influence and an ideal of elitism and conservatism that reinforces these stereotypes and this inequality, but it has never been strongly linked to my life story, because since very early I sought information that would lead me to have an awareness and a defense engagement, an energetic posture that I could face these adversities [...].</i>
Helena	<i>During high school I suffered prejudice, but I didn't let it get me down. My family treats me well, and that's what matters.</i>

Source: Prepared by the authors, 2020.

Homophobia is a violent practice that in the narratives appears associated with prejudice and fear that shakes both the research participants and their families, a fact evidenced in Emilio's narrative: "*[...] she became even more protective, due to the reality of the country where we live, the cases of Homophobia and everything else [...]*". Thus, living in a heteronormative society, where social standards must constantly be broken becomes a challenge for a minority, the LGBTQ+ group, as Avril Tijolo states.

It is worth mentioning that the norms and taboos imposed by hegemonic society also hinder the insertion of LGBTQ+ individuals in the job market, a fact presented in Andrade's narrative, by the non-acceptance of singularities and the lack of recognition of the right to be and be in the world with different conceptions of body, sexuality, beauty standards and behaviors. From the narratives it was possible to identify that participants suffered emotional, psychological and economic shocks for not fitting into the cultural standards said to be "normal" and acceptable.

According to Poeschl, Venâncio and Costa (2012), the revelation of homosexuality is often accompanied by practices of violence by family, friends and strangers, which leads the LGBTQ+ group to fear revealing their sexual orientation because society often excludes and discriminates them. Homophobia has been revealing itself in many ways; it manifests itself in society in general, in workplaces, schools and universities.

The LGBTQ+ group is the victim of several types of violence, verbal aggression, physical aggression, and many times these aggressions trigger consequences associated to psychological illnesses and physical wear and tear, besides, they also generate silence and social exclusion.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Currently, many discussions have taken place about homophobia, prejudice and violence against the LGBTQ+ community. However, patterns of behavior and being that are socially accepted still prevail in our society to the detriment of others. Even in educational spaces, tensions related to sexual orientation are frequent, with heterosexuality being seen in a positive way and homosexuality in a negative way.

Self-acceptance goes through broad and complex processes that involve family and social relationships and shocks that generate anxiety, depression and fears that haunt the subjects for a long time. In the students' narratives, we found tensions related to self-knowledge and family acceptance, as well as shocks related to the insertion in the labor market. Family support is perceived as a source of permissiveness capable of ensuring a balanced environment so that the individual can assume sexual orientation and have a calmer life.

Reports from the participants indicate that the University (UFPI/CSHNB) is a space of free movement and expression of who one is. A place to vent, to feel included and safe to live out one's sexuality. In this way, we did not find in the reports tensions or shocks related to the experiences in this formative space, but rather perspectives of improvement in life and social acceptance in the midst of a plural and diverse group.

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