TROUBLING HUMANITY: TOWARDS A QUEER FEMINIST CRITICAL PSYCHOLOGY

João Manuel de Oliveira, Carlos Gonçalves da Costa and Nuno Santos Carneiro
Lisbon University Institute, ISPA, Lisbon, University of Porto, Portugal

Abstract

This text is based on an appraisal of theoretical developments in queer feminisms and seeks to translate such concerns to a field of inquiry that we call queer feminist critical psychology. The text uses the concept of homonormativity as a specific apparatus of heteronormativity to tackle sexual politics and neoliberalism and applied to two interrelated domains: citizenship and the family. Such a perspective entails a critique of these notions in terms of the exclusionary assumptions they are based on and read as an example of the effects of homonormativity. Issues of representability are also discussed within this framework showing how these family and citizenship concepts are only intelligible within the scope of certain assumptions of gender, sexuality and political economy. The article also analyses issues of recognition of humanity that are always already derived from these norms. The construction of alternative forms of knowledge, specifically queer feminist critical psychology, implies taking into account these intersected spheres to produce knowledge that is situated and attentive to these norms, for the purposes of deconstruction.

Keywords: Humanity, Feminist Theory, Critical Psychology, Queer, Heteronormativity.

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> "It matters that as bodies we arrive together in public. As bodies we suffer, we require food and shelter and as bodies we require one another in dependency and desire. So this is a politics of the public body, the requirements of the body, its movements and its voice"
>
> (Butler, 2011)

This paper revisits key areas for queer feminism, such as sexual citizenship. This concept is problematized by showing the effects of neo-liberal political economies in sexual politics, marked by heteronormativity. However heteronormativity is also enforced by the same people it primarily oppresses. In this case, homonormativity is used as concept to analyse that enforcement of heteronormativity within the LGBTQ communities. After using the concept of homonormativity as a conceptual approach to understanding these related problems (citizenship, neoliberalism and sexual politics), we focus on the primacy of the family and domesticity over other questions before establishing some links to the problems raised by such shortcomings in queer communities. This paper makes a contribution for re-thinking a queer feminist critical psychology – a hyphenated form of knowledge (Oliveira, 2010), an intersection of knowledges coming from other disciplines and sources. Such hyphenation is used in this context to tackle complex situations, such as the ones arising from neo-liberalism and contemporary gender norms, modes of subjection and sexual politics.

We will conclude by showing how some groups still seem to fall beyond the scope of this interpellation "We, the people" and how heteronormativity, gender norms and homonormativity, allied with neoliberalism, contribute to this state of affairs.

"We, the people"?

In this paper, critical psychology is seen as a point of intersection between different knowledges coming from other critical and political traditions such as feminism, Marxist and queer critiques. A queer feminist critical psychology is not only interested in a serious epistemological critique to psychological knowledge, but is concerned primarily with the production and dessubjugation of knowledge (Stryker, 2006). Also such endeavours must include acknowledging, engaging and integrating knowledge coming from queer theory and feminist theory and other fields, constituting a corpus of knowledges that intersects these lines of inquiry.

Women and queers do not depend only on identity politics neither are they only subjected to discrimination on the grounds of gender or/and sexuality. As anyone else, they are all also influenced by social and cultural contexts. Politically and economically, the present times are marked by neoliberal governance and a widespread sense of recession, especially in Southern Europe.

This text is being written from a specific context, Portugal, a country facing a loan from the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank and the European Union (since 2011) and all the consequences of the so-called politics of "austerity", that are impoverishing the entire sections of the population, especially the middle and working classes while simultaneously safeguarding the financial system. Furthermore, in tandem with such state politics (with the support of the corporate sector), some social movements, such as the "Indignados" (since 2011, in Spain but also with repercussions in Portugal), the Occupy movement (since 2011) and others that strive to disrupt the "There is no Alternative" discourse underlying such draconian political measures and instruments that end up driving still more unemployment and under investment by the state. And of course, many queers have been affected, as the rest of the population and some queer groups are an integral part of social movements contesting these political decisions.

These movements call into question the issue of political representation and have identified failures in the democratic and liberal state to translate the will and the needs of the people. "We would not be here if electoral politics were representing the will of the people" (Butler, 2011), as Judith Butler's speech to Occupy Wall Street goes. At a more concrete and immediate level, this claim demands that the state acts in such a way that the rights and interests of their constituencies be voiced by their representatives thus making a claim on the issue of representation and striving for values of equality and social justice. This may be conceived as a project of radical democracy (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) susceptible to transforming and remaking our eroded democracies into deeper and more plural entities.

From our perspective, these movements are demanding radical transformations in representative democracies including: acting in the interests of the people and not only in the interests of a progressively privatized economy, rejecting the neoliberal divinization of the market with its concomitant constant undermining of workers' rights and an overall rethinking of the links between states and people.

This complex set of political and theoretical critiques have been echoed in critical stances towards liberal conceptions of citizenship and against the privatization of rights (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). These conceptions however work within neoliberal thinking and practices, advocating a vision aligned with the dominant self-contained individual ideology (Sampson, 1988). Free will, autonomy, self-determination are thus the values underlying this political figuration. This ideology removes the individual from the set of social relations that have brought him/her to subjecthood. Citizenship from this perspective is based on consumption, focused on the freedom and the right to consume and own property and not on the values of equality and social justice (Faulks, 2000).The opposition created by Marshall (1950) between civil rights (based on property, freedom, right to justice) and social rights (access to public goods, health, education, welfare) is a divide that conceptualized these rights as independent. Access to public goods- i.e. to social rights - is threatened by neo-liberalism that backs privatising such rights and therefore subjecting them to the logic of the market (Nogueira & Silva, 2001). This importance attributed to the market, a sort of divinization of this economical entity, has led to the rising "precariousness" of the citizens' position, to the devaluation of public goods and services and to large scale

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privatizations. Access to social rights has become highly conditioned by neoliberal thinking and henceforth, in cases of poverty or precarious employment situations, people have been shorn of such rights.

Social class or economic differences are however not the only criteria for exclusion in such a scenario. If we consider the prevailing conception of the citizen as broad, abstract and individualistic, it is a conception that seems designed to hide and disguise the effects of social differences between individuals and social groups. The case of women is one of the most commonly discussed within this context (Patteman, 1992) with a critical feminist perspective on differentiated citizenship (Nogueira & Silva, 2001; Young, 1989), but other groups are also affected.

These oppressed groups are affected in a variety of ways including economically and politically. Therefore any account of discrimination of these groups should include these forms of deprivation, besides gender and sexual discrimination. In fact, literature has consistently pointed out to a strong relationship between neoliberalism and sexual politics (Duggan, 2002; Richardson, 2005), which we explore in this paper.

Gender norms, heteronormativity and homonormativity.

Many of social sciences' theoretical models are still based on positivist and essentialist perspectives of gender (Nogueira, 2001). Hence, they make visible certain epistemological difficulties in setting out a consistent model of analysis capable of moving away from the dualism associated to biological sex (Amâncio, 2003; Segal, 1997). Indeed, *mainstream* psychology has been awfully naïf (Oliveira & Amâncio, 2006) when it comes to not considering power as a factor either in social relations or in subjectivity construction, specifically in terms of the wilful ignorance of the power of gender norms in the construction of individuals (Oliveira, 2012). Gender norms translate both into social expectations of appropriate roles and behaviors for gendered subjects and into the reproduction of these norms in institutions and practices (Barker, Ricardo, Nascimento, Olukoya & Santos, 2008).

These norms construct masculinities and femininities as opposed polarities, reifying their differences, linking and inscribing them into concepts like (human) nature, personality, individuality, and others that often refuse to assume a social, cultural or, above all, political involvement. This essentialist gender dimorphism constitutes our current gender order – the patterns of power relations between men and women that shape norms for femininity and masculinity by defining what is gender-appropriate in a range of several different arenas (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009).

In contemporary Western societies, the gender order is hierarchical, consistently granting higher value to masculinity than to femininity (Connell 1987; Schippers, 2007). It is also organized and structured as a place for the definition of (unstable) frontiers and inequalities (Connell, 2002). Gender exists in social processes and bodies are used to legitimize such processes through reproductive differences, what Raewyn Connell (2002) calls the reproductive arena.

When someone is constituted as a man or a woman that person is positioned in a location within the gender order with specific rules, politics, beliefs, ideas and definitions of what it means to be a man or a woman in a certain society, at a certain time in its history, and in its cultural context. As Connell (2002) explains regarding gender, we are not talking about sexual differences between fixed categories, but about the articulation of relations, frontiers, practices, identities and images that are created in social processes and that come to exist in particular historic contexts that are always subject to change. That being said, it is also necessary to take into account the institutionalization of inequalities, the role of social constructions and the interaction of gender dynamics with other positions such as 'race', class or religion (Holter, 1997). As a multi-dimensional structure, gender simultaneously incorporates identities, power and sexualities and is not confined to any of these in particular (Connell, 2002). These are linked to norms and categories that are socially hierarchical and fuel the production of otherness. Since Simone de Beauvoir (1949), the process of otherness of women has been vastly documented. However, as Lynne Segal (1997) claims, despite the immense quantity of work that has since been done, we still find ourselves mostly bound up in this essentialist gender discourse that constructs gender dimorphism framed in a naturalist standpoint.

Whenever one is doing gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987) according to these norms, one is also doing inequality (Fenstermaker, West & Zimmerman, 2002), fabricating identities that are presumed to reflect biology and nature (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009) and reproducing a hierarchical gender order. In contrast, as explained by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), from the moment we acknowledge the multidimensionality of gender relations, as well as the crisis existing within them, it becomes impossible to look at the subject as a unitary system, as mainstream psychology still does.

While it remains true that masculinity and femininity are neither permanent nor rigid assets or attributes of male or female bodies, it is also true that there is a vast array of modalities of doing masculinities and femininities, all within their respective social and historical contexts, that constrain this fluidity. Nevertheless, while some of these modalities are more central and linked to power or authority, this is because others are subordinated, dominated and delegitimized vis-à-vis the hegemonic modalities (see, for example, Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

The political economy of the gender order of contemporary societies is heterosexual. This means that gender norms reflect the close relationship between the gender order and the heterosexual hegemony (Butler, 1993). Institutional, legal and cultural norms reify and establish the normativity of heterosexuality, which is not only assumed but is expected and actively rewarded (Chambers, 2007). Heterosexuality is regarded as a political institution that not only disempowers women (Rich, 1980) but also every other body and identity not complying with its norms. Working as a system of beliefs and principles that stigmatize and deny any non-heterosexual form of behaviour, identity and relationship, heterosexism is coupled with an uneven logic of privatization (Herek, 1993) that publicly legitimizes heterosexuality whilst non-heterosexualities are often concealed and regarded as private. The institutionalization of heterosexuality allows for expectations, rooted in social institutions and guarantying some people have more status, power and privilege than others, making

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men the dominant figure (Ingraham, 1994, 2006) and privileging thus not only heterosexuality but also hegemonic masculinity (Schilt& Westbrook, 2009).

Jonathan Katz (2007) explains how institutionalized heterosexuality is a historical combination of sexes and pleasures that created a universalistic heterosexual ethic affecting everyone. Heterosexuality works as "normalcy" and as the dominant power structure that is privileged, normalized and ultimately, forgotten. Drawing on Judith Butler (2001), we argue that heteronormativity constitutes a politics of truth (Foucault, 1978) that is embedded in relations of power and pre-defines what will and will not count as truth, concealing certain forms of violence enacted on certain bodies, obscuring our understanding on how different forms of violence sustain one another (Holmes, 2009) and order the world in regulatory ways (Butler, 2001). To put it in other terms, there are certain forms of violence that are normalized as something other than violence and thus erased or hidden away from view (e.g., Holmes, 2009; Jiwani, 2006).

Obviously, there is no exclusive way of being heterosexual just as there is no exclusive way of being non-heterosexual. As Wayne Brekhus (2003) illustrates, there are multiple ways of presenting and organizing a marked identity - with considerable conflict existing within identity categories concerning how each is performed. This is also equally well exemplified by homonormativity.

Homonormativity works in tandem with heteronormativity, with the latter constituting a kind of epistemological project (Herman, 2003) of the former. Homonormativity not only continues the legacy of heterosexist and normative assumptions, ideals and institutions, but actually also upholds and sustains them, normatively adjusting non-heterosexuals to neo-liberal political economies, making them acceptable from that point of view, especially by taming their claims through depoliticization and privatization (Duggan, 2003).

Homonormativity also works by furthering the narratives on gender consistency according to heterosexual norms and performativities, reinforcing normative assumptions about sexualities, desires and a binary gender system (see Duggan, 2003; Richardson, 2004; Oliveira, Costa & Nogueira, 2013). Upholding, reiterating and concealing heterosexist and heteronormative discourses by non-heterosexuals is another way of constituting a heterosexual economy that constantly regulates, controls and fortifies its own boundaries (Butler, 1993). Hence, it is in this way that the production of queer bodies is positioned in contemporary forms of nationalism, as argued by Jasbir Puar (2006, 2007).

This has clear implications when one thinks through the ways in which homonormativity may be linked to issues of citizenship, migration, colonialisms, ethnicity, racism, among others, insofar that a "us versus them" rhetoric always emerges. To sum up, homonormativity can be conceived of as a system of norms adapted to non-heterosexuals and an integral part of heteronormativity, since it "does not challenge heterosexist institutions and values, but rather upholds, sustains, and seeks inclusion within them" (Duggan, 2003, p. 50). In the next section, we further explore the effects of homonormativity on the fields of citizenship and family.

Sexual Citizenship and the resignification of the political.

Citizenship is an increasingly contested concept. As Darren Langdridge (2006) explains, a considerable body of work that explores the meaning and utility of citizenship is emerging – and much of it influenced by the feminist critiques of classical Marshallian discourses (e.g., Walby, 1994; Young, 1989) that conceptualize citizenship as being closely related with the state and welfare rights - opening the way for critiques based on gender, sexualities, functional diversity, 'race' and ethnicity to name but a few (e.g., Bell & Binnie, 2000, 2004; Phelan, 2001; Plummer, 2003; Richardson, 1998, 2000, 2004; Santos, 2012).

Although the theories of sexual citizenship are complex and sometimes at odds, it makes sense not to confine the sexual citizen concept to the formal regulations of citizenship but to the formal regulations of sexualities (Robson & Kessler, 2007). Moreover, the informal, but nonetheless pervasive, regulatory discourses that may constitute themselves as regimes of truth (Foucault, 1978) should also be subject to scrutiny.

David Evans (1993) first used the concept of sexual citizenship as a way of drawing attention on rights in the scope of multiple sexual identities and practices linked to the state and the market, already recognizing the inherently sexual nature of citizenship and strongly making the case for the existence of models of citizenship based on heterosexual and patriarchal principles (Langdridge, 2006). For Michael Brown (2006), the citizen is always already a sexual(ized) being, either through actions, wills, desires, structures or the interpellation of cultural forces. Therefore, in these heteronormative contexts, it is made clear that certain dimensions of sexualities should be highly compromised, regulated and regimented. Since gender is still constituted within a binary framework, to make it consistent and homological with biological sex, the regulator/regulated dimensions of sexuality will link citizenship to notions of social worth and status (Robson & Kessler, 2007). Thus, as Sally Hines (2009) explains, a gender-binary model of citizenship has been established in ways that discriminate against variously gendered and diverse people in terms of public matters, such as employment or welfare – even when these public matters are constituted as private issues (e.g., self identification with gender of choice or partnership recognition). Current narratives conceptualizing citizenship from a human rights perspective seem to have been privileging certain social, cultural (and political) categories/identities over others (Hines, 2009). Such perspectives create a universalistic idea of citizenship, making the latter just applicable to people who conform to gender norms.

Furthermore, while it is true that otherness is produced by a universalizing conceptualization of sexual citizenship that hardly recognizes itself as heterosexualized, it also remains true that the homonormative grasp, operating through the same heterosexual economy (Butler, 2004) produces otherness by dividing those in the margins into degrees of worthiness (Duggan, 2003). To use a well known metaphor (Rubin, 1984), with the growing acceptance of some specific forms of homosexuality, the charmed circle of sexual value system came to include specific subjects, namely the gay or lesbian married couple. This is an indicator of the privilege of those who either want or have the ability to

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conform to normative stances and ways of being, as long as they stay within the limits of the "tolerable" (Richardson, 1998). Meanwhile, every other queer way of life (Halberstam, 1998, 2005) continues to be positioned as illegible as far as the sexual citizenship concept goes, and a subjugated object of normative violence.

As Hines (2009) argues, regarding the models of citizenship that frame a human rights perspective and are related to diversity through notions of universality:

> In attempting to articulate and protect the rights of diversity, human rights and the translation process of citizenship speak in universal tongues, and this can render invisible the actual experiences of diversity. Paradoxically, then, the universal becomes tapered. Or, in other words, universalism is not universal at all. (p. 96)

As a regulatory practice of sex, gender and desire, heteronormativity installs the conditions not only for the possibilities (and impossibilities) of gender intelligibility (Chambers, 2007) but also for (sexual) citizenship intelligibility, positing citizenship as an exclusionary notion. This is particularly accurate within current large-scale (Western) political contexts that constitute a modality of sexual citizenship that is thus privatized, de-radicalised, de-eroticized, confined, policed and limited (Bell & Binnie, 2000). Therefore the very concept of citizenship is marked by exclusion based on gender and sexual norms.

Ken Plummer (2003) argued for the conceptualization of "intimate citizenship", admitting that more than sexual citizenship this concept should account for a broader sphere of concerns when analyzing the relationship between the personal and the public. Additionally, Langdridge (2006), elaborating on the sexual citizenship of sadomasochism, alerts to the dangers of clustering together (the claims of) very different people and practices.

Following Dyiah Larasati (2010), the processes of othering are always already occluded. The choices to occupy social spaces are indefinable and often vague and obscure for those treated as others. This explains why citizenship has, indeed, always been a persistently contested concept, and correspondingly why such contestation must carry on. It must be problematized, troubled, discussed and defied by all the profusion of spaces, (dis)identifications and practices in order to be permeable both to the boundaries in personal bodies and the body politics (Haraway, 1991; Oliveira, 2010) and to the emergence of new sexual subjectivities and new sexual stories (Weeks,1998). As Segal (2008) states:

> passionate political identifications become more prevalent when cultural ruptures encourage confrontation with old constraints, especially the opening up of new public spaces. It is then that successful resistance sometimes accompanies parallel acknowledgement of the injustice and suffering of others. (p. 392)

Taking into account the different modes of sexual citizenship, a mark of interdependency, of acknowledging injury, injustice and suffering seems a good way of rethinking citizenry.

Privatization and domesticization: the hagiography of the "family".

After this incursion on sexual citizenship, the remit of the private and of domesticities needs to be further questioned. Compulsory heterosexuality and heteronormativity also require an ideal of relational arrangement – what we would call the compulsory formation of normative families or to use another term, a form of sacralisation of the family within heteronormativity, that sanctify the family as a role model similar to what some religions do with lives' of saints as examples to be followed – hence the use of the term hagiography. This imposed hagiographic and sacrosanct trilogy of sex, gender and desire represented both by the heterosexual matrix and by the figuration of the "family", push our lives towards heteronormative visions of love, care, kinship and intimacy. Thus, one's life is socially expected to flourish only under the highest corollary of the family, the normative family, and one where just "non-promiscuous", "monogamous" and "stable" partners can find a proper home. Again, Gayle Rubin (1984) resonates, describing the charmed circle: "it should be coupled, relational, within the same generation and occur at home. It should not include pornography, fetish objects, sex toys of any sort, or roles other than male and female" (pp.13-14). Living for a long time not simply in a heterosexual economy, but also in a political and cultural economy of affections (Ahmed, 2004), humans are strategically subjugated to a hierarchic validation of emotions – if, as we said before, some individuals gain more privileges than others, some affective arrangements (those created and sustained under a monolithic vision of family) also return greater benefits.

Obviously, this does not mean that heterosexual modalities of formal or informal partnership should not exist: instead, what is being stated is the urgent necessity to debunk the myth of the (hetero-normalized and homo-normalized) nuclear family (Lehr, 1999). Queering the state (Duggan, 1994; Kaplan, 1997; Warner, 1993) and queering the family are crucial. This includes constant vigilance of policies promoting family privileges (attending the inequalities raised by such policies) and, in response to these policies, amplify the social and formal recognition of people who do not conform to familiar standards of life, love or intimacy (Clarke, Ellis, Peel & Riggs, 2010).

As Valerie Lehr (1999) points out,

> it is the time for those of us outside of communities with a history of alternative family life to stop using the language of family politically, thus challenging these ideas: (1) there is an essential connection between people because of sexual identity; (2) families are essentially places of emotional closeness, rather than socially defined institutions in which power operates; and (3) that familial connections are preferable to other kinds of close, nurturing commitments. (pp. 75-76)

Right from the outset of deconstructing family privileges, careful attention to language (especially, to the homogenised language of the psychological approaches to family) is required. Even when we use terminologies such as "family of choice" or "alternative families" to address non-heteronormative or non-homonormative affective arrangements, we

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are still located within familial referents, and still preserving the untouchable and uncritical place that family (and its essentializing effects on relatedness) occupies in broader disciplinary and scientific discourses (Roseneil, 2006).

In addition, such terminologies help to naturalize a language of sameness, reinforcing both implicit and explicit linguistic presumptions of connectedness strictly (or, at least, predominantly) based on sexual identities. When talking of "same-sex", "same-gender" or "same-desire" encounters and/ or relationships, we are dangerously erasing the multiple and enriching realities of connectedness, the multiple ways through which different subjectivities may meet each other. A queer psychology must understand that "much of the knowledge that we have gained about same-sex relationships through research is based on normative heterosexual assumptions and values that view relationships as necessary, consisting of two people and permanent" (Ringer, 2001, cit. in Clarke et al., 2010, p. 185).

Early regulating forms of knowledge insisting on extensive programs for children that refuse to accept that "heterosexuality is not born but made [...] [and against] strict parental guidance to deliver us all to our common destinies of marriage, child rearing and hetero-reproduction" (Halberstam, 2011, p. 27) are to be critically deconstructed. There is a vast and historical disciplinary program oriented by its willingness to make humanity intelligible through a very strict vision of family and relatedness.

Considering what we said before, antagonism towards the disciplinary establishment of psychology is urgent in order to respect human plurality. However, this antagonism needs accompanying by a deep reformulation of current lesbian and gay movement agendas, given the fact that familialism takes up a core position in such agendas (e.g., Ahmed, 2010; Duggan, 2003; Halberstam, 2011). Familialism is frequently disseminated by lesbian and gay political groups through discursive and symbolic apparatuses that dangerously enclose human relatedness in strict forms of formal recognition. This is the case with same-sex marriage enhancement and exaltation as a supreme modality of love and intimacy, which can easily lead to the subjugation of subjectivities (and consequently to the subjugation of intimate arrangements) that do not conform to such a modality. Moreover, and according to the heterosexist logic of relationships' privatization that we mentioned above, same-sex marriage idealization dangerously supports dismissing the necessary collective and social commitment with other forms of interdependency as important as marriage (Duggan, 2012). And, in doing so, such idealization contributes to the hierarchical and unjust distributions of happiness (Ahmed, 2010), sense of humanity and recognition of what we are and/or what we can desire to be as "humans".

Marriage is supported by collective and internalized notions of property, domination and the appropriation of bodies, as some feminist classic texts assume (Guillaumin, 1992). Strict and uniform visions of fidelity and monogamy are also linked to the idea of marriage, disparaging other possible logics (Butler, 2004). Supported by these notions, liberal discourses have found in same-sex marriage a platform to achieve and to guarantee economic benefits, while at the same time privatizing even more the domain of family, regulating even more non-heterosexual relationships. Hence, when collective efforts do not actively oppose neoliberal policies, same-sex marriage will be just another homonormative way of promoting assimilationist. As Jack Halberstam (2011) puts it, since the family:

becomes a sole source of support in the shift away from public and toward private networks of economic relief [...], gay and lesbian activists should not be pushing for marriage but arguing along with other progressives for the recognition of household diversity." (p. 72)

Obviously, same-sex marriage can represent a relevant contribution to the pluralisation of the legal and social functioning of contemporary societies. However, where such recognition is not accompanied by systematic discourses and practices around plurality, we are in danger of erasing other forms of relatedness. If we are not able to respect and to celebrate a greater plurality of contexts and issues, sexual and intimate citizenship can be reduced to an arena of social consensus about family and thereby reducing the scope of political projects aimed at enriching the possibilities of relatedness.

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After this revisitation of queer studies and feminist theory, we begin our approach to the question formulated in the first section "We, the people?". This question still remains unaddressed within this text. Can these groups be part of that collective - humans - or are gender norms and hegemonic sexuality preventing their inclusion?

Over the past decades, queer theory has helped to set a different sort of agenda for the social sciences and the humanities and research on sexualities, proving able to investigate and denounce how identities are discursively produced and unstable but also that the social and gender orders lay in heteronormative grounds (Gramson & Moon, 2004). Hegemonic heterosexuality (Butler, 1993) constitutes coherence between gender, sex and desire and legitimizes and approves heterosexuality through the disavowal of homosexuality. The latter remains prohibited, but necessary within the bounds of culture for the former to continue stable. Other hegemonic norms from 'race' and ethnicity, social class, ableism or (post) colonialism have also been in queer theory's sight, constituting an immense body of work based on the critique of the normative. This critique, in a Foucauldian sense, is precisely the dessubjugation of the subject within the politics of truth (Butler, 2004).

Akin to the efforts of critical psychology trying to dessubjugate knowledge (as Susan Stryker, 2006 proposes for transgender studies), queer feminism can provide an epistemological basis for a critique and deconstruction of gender and sexuality in contemporary societies. Radical in its scope, queer feminism (Marinucci, 2010) remains suspicious of identities, treating them as political fictions that are nonetheless lived and perceived as "real", like all social constructions. Its inputs to psychology imply widening the scope of this field's complexity, allowing for a psychosocial outlook that does not abdicate studying the complex ways individuals and social orders are deeply interconnected. As we aimed to show in this article, even the most structural elements of a society, such as its economy, political economy and ideology, have deep effects on the individuals and groups. Therefore, another psychology should and must be possible to understand the interconnectedness between these interrelated spheres. One that promotes distributive resources and fostering equality aimed at achieving better ways of living, through more equalitarian modalities of recognition.

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In addition, critical psychology shares a common interest with queer feminism in issues of inequality, power and the production of subjects. These common interests can be combined in an alliance with very clear political and scientific objectives, that is, to produce knowledge able to foster social change and social justice, embedded with a critique of capitalism and the neoliberal state of affairs. Therefore, in our introductory section, we were interested in demonstrating how the broader economic context and its contestation generate various effects on the whole population, including women and queers. A critical psychology strongly anchored in context can shed the light necessary to illuminating the effects social and political context have on individuals, groups and political claims.

Having presented the concepts of heteronormativity and subsequently of homonormativity, we showed how these interrelated norms impact on both the private and the public spheres, specifically on citizenship and on the family. Both concepts have been critically addressed from a queer feminist perspective. We also sought to show how citizenship and the family simultaneously evoke both the public and the private. A perspective of sexual citizenship implies the private and the public in a variety of ways, while the family seems to represent the uttermost in private while its promotion is an intensively public affair and even for lesbian and gay groups, especially the ones that in a conservative way seem to have reduced all their claims to family rights. To conclude, we have to attain the objective promised in the title of this article: how do these critical projects trouble the notion of the human? To this end, Butler's work once again needs invoking.

The powers/knowledges that are discursively produced (either in political, institutional, cultural, social or in other terms) regulate the meaning of being human in exclusionary terms (Butler, 2004). In other words, some subjects continue to be constantly positioned outside the realm of humanity. Transgender, intersex, transsexual, queer and any other non gender conforming persons are repeatedly on the verge of being considered less than human. In this paper we were dealing with other issues, but we do consider trans and intersex issues as central for any endeavours to produce a critical psychology of gender.

This recognition of what counts as human might be exemplified by social struggles around the world. Two examples might be women, who recently came to be part of humanity, thanks to a tremendous effort by feminists all over the globe, and the lesbian and gay partners properly coupled through the effort of the LGBT movement.

Queer feminisms, in their incessant meditation on the questioning of categories (such as women) and on systems of exploitation, has been decisive in expanding the scope of the once very restricted definition of humanity. By denouncing such injustice, it has decisively contributed towards opening up the scope of what counts as human.

The terms of intelligibility of humanity are composed of norms and practices that have become presuppositional, and without which we cannot even conceive of the human (Butler, 2004). In other words, we become intelligible as human through being gendered. The gender order is framed by a hegemonic heterosexuality (Butler, 1993) that creates a discursive coherence between sex, gender and desire. This matrix is a model of gender intelligibility (Butler, 1999) and representability that constitutes a certain concept of humanhood (Butler, 2004; 2009). Gender operates in this system of norms that represents the point of

departure for the constitution and intelligibility of gender performances. These performances will either prove consonant or resistant to the heteronormative matrix of desire (Segal, 2008) of the gender order, although with different outcomes when representability is at stake.

Furthermore, if becoming human implies these normative operations, then an analysis of this intelligibility has to be made as a matter of justice, of making these lives liveable (Butler, 2004, 2009). Compliance with heteronormativity (and homonormativity) may also hinder the conceptualization of diversity when humanity is often grounded in gender conformity, maleness, heterosexuality, whiteness and in the enactment of (male heterosexual) masculinities over other subject positions. Hence, these conceptualizations of humanity should be read as politics and regimes of truth that define the intelligibility of what counts as human, person and citizen (Butler, 2004) through a heteronormative and exclusionary comprehension.

These rules and modes through which the normative operates fabricate a notion of what is worth being representable or recognized as human, constituting a determined concept of humanity (Butler, 2004). Therefore, this human is falsely universal, it is a partial representation (Haraway, 1992) and thus must be challenged and critiqued, as Hines (2009) discusses. After all this is a conception of "We, the people" that does not intend to represent all of us. Thus, another space of critique is opened up, a sort of hybrid space of queer feminist trouble.

Troubling humanity by amplifying, challenging, confronting and/or resisting the regulatory discourses read as regimes of truth, is a position chosen within the realm of queer studies. Moreover, as Butler (1993) shows, the appropriation of the term queer itself constitutes a re-signification of an insult that historically inaugurated a political project that refuses the foundationalism and the notion of identity itself and does not anticipate the future political use of the term. Nonetheless, by refusing identitarian naturalness and rigidity, the term queer often calls for the deconstruction of the subject restrained by normative and binary ideas on gender, sex and sexualities that while rewarding some, pushes others to the remit of deviance that is a product of political power.

Therefore, this critical psychology and queer feminism hybrid is a promise of monster, in Haraway's (2003) eloquent metaphor. One that has to challenge the concept of humanity embedded in gender norms, homo and heteronormativity (besides other entangled systems of norms and values) as a political goal and to denounce its disguise of universality as a matter of political struggle for social justice and equality. The same applies to citizenship and the family, two domains already highly contested by their power to create charmed circles and outer limits, where those outside do not have access to the same levels of recognition of humanity. Queer feminist critical psychology might prove to be one approach to enacting a critique based on these assumptions and help construct epistemological projects sustaining these struggles, amplifying social rights and in summary, to help redefine the boundaries of humanity.

Troubling humanity

J. M. de Oliveira,
C. G. da Costa
and
N. S. Carneiro

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Acknowledgements

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Correspondence

João Manuel de Oliveira
Email address: joao.oliveira@iscte.pt

Carlos Gonçalves da Costa
Email address: cgoncalvescosta@gmail.com

Nuno Santos Carneiro
Email address: nunoscarneiro@gmail.com

Troubling humanity

J. M. de Oliveira,
C. G. da Costa
and
N. S. Carneiro

Gender and Sexuality

Authors information

João Manuel de Oliveira

PhD. Researcher at CIS-IUL, Lisbon University Institute. Post-Doctoral Fellow. Research fields: gender studies, queer and feminist theories

Carlos Gonçalves da Costa

MA in Social Psychology (ISPA, Lisbon). Researcher fields: gender, sexualities and normativities

Nuno Santos Carneiro

PhD. Researcher at CPUP, University of Porto. Post-Doctoral Fellow. Research fields: critical psychology, human diversity, gender studies, sexualities, queer studies. Fellowship from FCT (SFRH/ BPD / 68661/ 2010)