THE ROLE OF FAKE NEWS AND VERBAL INSULTS IN BRAZILIAN FAR RIGHT'S ANTI-POLITICAL STRATEGY

O papel das *fake news* e insultos verbais na estratégia antipolítica da extrema direita brasileira | El papel de las noticias falsas e insultos verbales en la estrategia antipolítica de la extrema derecha brasileña

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Abstract: This paper, which is based on the polemical discourse perspective (Amossy, 2017), has two objectives, namely analyzing Fake News as a disinformation strategy used by the Brazilian Far Right, and investigating the resignification of verbal insults as a subaltern resistance tactic. Through Queer Linguistics (Borba, 2015), we suggest the conceptual distinction between "strategies" and "tactics" (Certeau, 2007), as well as "subaltern resignification" as a solution for the "Paradox of Tolerance" (Popper, 1974). Furthermore, we use semantic chains (Morais, 2018) to formalize the "architecture of disinformation" and the "architecture of information." Our analysis is based on a few statements given by Bolsonarists in interviews, in the Federal Senate Committee and five tweets posted on former Federal Deputy Jean Wyllys' official Twitter account. We conclude that linguistic expressions that reiterate situations of symbolic violence are the primary foundation for legitimizing physical and structural violence against LGBT people. Despite this fact, the controversial clash indicates the possibility of a tactical emergence of new political and social subjects who were previously subordinate.

Keywords: Resignification. Verbal Insults. Fake News.

Resumo: Partindo da perspectiva de discurso polêmico (Amossy, 2017), neste artigo temos dois objetivos: primeiro, analisar as *Fake News* como estratégia de desinformação da extrema direita brasileira; segundo, investigar a ressignificação dos insultos verbais como tática de resistência subalterna. Por meio da Linguística *Queer* (Borba, 2015), sugerimos a distinção conceitual entre "estratégias" e "táticas" (Certeau, 2007) e a "ressignificação subalterna" como solução para o "Paradoxo da Tolerância" (Popper, 1974). Além disso, utilizamos as cadeias semânticas (Morais, 2018) para formalizar a "arquitetura da desinformação" e a "arquitetura da informação". Nossa análise baseia-se em algumas declarações de bolsonaristas em entrevistas e na Comissão do Senado Federal e em cinco *tweets* publicados na conta oficial do ex-Deputado

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Federal Jean Wyllys no *Twitter*. Concluímos que as expressões linguísticas que reiteram situações de violência simbólica são o fundamento primário para legitimar a violência física e estrutural contra grupos LGBT. A despeito disso, o conflito polêmico indica a posibilidade de emergência tática de novos sujeitos políticos e sociais, antes subalternizados.

Palavras-chave: Ressignificação. Insultos verbais. *Fake News*.

Resumen: Partiendo de la perspectiva del discurso polémico (Amossy, 2017), en este artículo tenemos dos objetivos: analizar las Fake News como estrategia de desinformación utilizada por la extrema derecha brasileña e investigar la resignificación de los insultos verbales como táctica de resistencia subalterna. A través de la Lingüística *Queer* (Borba, 2015), sugerimos la distinción conceptual entre "estrategias" y "tácticas" (Certeau, 2007) y la "resignificación subalterna" como solución a la "Paradoja de la Tolerancia" (Popper, 1974). Además, utilizamos cadenas semánticas (Morais, 2018) para formalizar la "arquitectura de la desinformación" y la "arquitectura de la información". Nuestro análisis se basa en algunas declaraciones de seguidores de Bolsonaro en entrevistas y en el Comité del Senado Federal, así como en cinco tuits publicados en la cuenta oficial de Twitter del ex diputado federal Jean Wyllys. Concluimos que las expresiones lingüísticas que reiteran situaciones de violencia simbólica son el fundamento primario para legitimar la violencia física y estructural contra las personas LGBT. A pesar de eso, el choque polémico indica la posibilidad de una emergencia táctica de nuevos sujetos políticos y sociales que antes estaban subordinados.

Palabras clave: Resignificación. Insultos verbales. *Fake News*.

1 INTRODUCTION

"There may be no precedents for the phenomenon we have been observing in Brazil," said Laura Chinchilla (2018), Head of the Organization of American States (OAS) Electoral Observation Mission for the 2018 General Elections in Brazil, regarding the political use of fake news. In this work, using a discursive perspective focused on social interaction, we analyze how fake news have worked as a Brazilian Far Right strategy to produce and spread (dis)information in the country's political scene, especially on issues like gender and sexuality. However, as academia has prioritized this type of analysis, we decided to go in the opposite direction and also aim to understand how the attempts of reaction to these verbal insults allow the identification of resistance tactics.

For these purposes, we used five tweets posted by former Federal Deputy Jean Wyllys (PSOL/RJ) on his Twitter account on June 17, 2019, to respond to false accusations of having "sold" his seat in the Chamber of Deputies to the current Federal Deputy David Miranda, also a member of the Socialism and Freedom Party (henceforth PSOL) of Rio de Janeiro.

In the first section, we present the characteristics of "Bolsonarism" and the Brazilian Far Right, using as theoretical references Alonso (2019), Morais (2018; 2019; 2020) and Solano (2019). We also discuss the concept of Fake News according to Braga (2019) and Mariando and Gerardi (2019). In the second section, we bring forth how polemical exchanges can be defined as an argumentative modality, which has been demonstrated by Amossy (2017) and Bem Gonçalves (2019). In the third, we propose the theoretical category of "subaltern resignification," referencing the contributions of Borba (2015) to Queer Linguistics and Morais's (2018) semantic chains. In the fourth and last section, we analyze the corpus and propose the formalization of the concepts of "architecture of disinformation" and "architecture of information."

2 FAKE NEWS AND THE FAR RIGHT

According to Bosco (2017), social media gained prominence in the production and circulation of information in Brazil as of the June 2013 protests. These protests were the main cause for the collapse of "Lulism" — the political support consolidated around former President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva and his "Partido dos Trabalhadores" (Workers' Party) — and allowed the construction of a new public sphere for debates and the consolidation of the Brazilian New Right.

In this context, groups associated to anti-politics — the denial of any type of dialogue or negotiation — invested in their digital media presence, taking advantage of the massive number of protests to include their proposals in the broader political debate organized at the time, as well as to promote their loathing of the State and of welfare policies. They aimed to boost the crisis of representativeness the country faced (Bosco, 2017).

Silveira (2015) pointed out that the New Right made better use of the new forms of media to foster rallies against then-President Dilma Rousseff (PT) and against what it considered the "leftist agenda." Through social media, Far-Right groups, many of which were associated with neoliberal think tanks, were able to more efficiently channel the feelings of different conservative groups into a political-ideological unity based on moral ideals, especially regarding sexual orientation, crime, education, and family values (Silveira, 2015).

According to Alonso (2019), this movement originated "Bolsonarism," the political support gathered by Jair Bolsonaro and the political expression of the desire for a community structured in binary terms and represented by axiological moral values which organize the world in "good" versus "evil," "sacred" versus "profane," and "family" versus "indecency." "The Bolsonarist moral community is engaged in a 'culture war' in social media, armed with fierce rhetoric," wrote Alonso (2019, p. 55, our translation), and rose against what they call "leftist behavior" (Alonso, 2019, p. 57). This is supposedly related to the inclusive policies and legal advances for the recognition of non-traditional gender roles and types of family during the PT governments (2002 - 2016). Such policies and advances are despised by Far-Right conservatives.

The expanding representation of previously marginalized groups in the public sphere strengthened their demands, voice, and civil rights. These groups include homosexual, bisexual, transgender and cross-dressing people (the LGBT community). As a form of "reaction," religious and ultraconservative groups began to increasingly publicize their dissatisfaction, produce defamation discourses, lobby for the obstruction of parliamentary projects affecting these issues and against perceived "immoralities," even when they were fabricated or distorted, such as the "gay kit" (Alonso, 2019, p. 57).

Solano (2019, p. 317, our translation) affirms that Jair Bolsonaro's candidacy found its space in the denial of minorities and moralization of the public debate. It pictured its opponents as enemies "not only in politics but also in morals and religion. It is the politics of enmity. The opponent is the evil, the one which threatens my existence and, as such, must be exterminated." The expression "liberal in the economy, conservative in customs," commonly stated by these groups in recent years, synthesizes this new perspective.

According to Morais (2020), these groups materialize and direct their arguments through the imaginary construction of a "them," a "third party" excluded from the group formed by "us" — the combination of "I" and "you" in the political discourse. "Them," in this case, is a virtually infinite group since it can be associated with any critical position that threatens the homogeneity of "us." Such a homogeneity should be based on the assumptions of maximum union and cohesion, excluding any potential contradiction that may weaken the movement for social "salvation" and "purification."

In this context, an unstable dialectics is created from the need to expand the movement while maintaining its narrow ideological constraints. At this point, the role of emotions in the dissemination of intolerant thinking must be highlighted. "Hate" and "fear" are responsible for creating a sense of self and group preservation as if it were for one's own survival — whether physical, symbolical, or structural — therefore reducing as much as possible any feeling of empathy towards the "other" (Morais, 2020).

The polarization between "us" and "them" enables the semantic convergence of the conservative sectors in society and is involved in the resignification of what may be called the "aesthetics of intolerance:" The imaginary organization divides the world between what is common and what is exclusive, recreating the political discourse's "proponent" versus "opponent" through the personified figures of "friend" and "enemy." In Brazil, that is clear when we observe dichotomies such as "worker" versus "bum" in the neoliberal perspective (by definition, a "bum" is a person who "refuses" to work and relies on welfare to survive); "believer" versus "infidel" or "irreligious" in the religious perspective; and "ally" versus "enemy" in the militarist perspective (Morais, 2018).

Mariano and Gerardi (2019, p. 73) affirm that the conservative Protestant activism in the 2018 Elections was based primarily on Fake News. Their study showed that these groups' intention was to restore the traditional moral and social order. "Their anti-gender and anti-pluralist struggles reproduce moral repertoires and political battles of the Christian Right [...] such as the notion of 'gender ideology,' an ideological weapon that became omnipresent in parliamentary elections and disputes" (Mariano; Gerardi, 2019, p. 73, our translation).

Bolsonarism has used polemics in an organized and planned way — as a discursive modality — and Fake News as a communication strategy in the construction of its arguments. Based on moral and religious grounds, it selects people or groups as enemies to be fought — a list constantly updated, even with people outside their usual antagonistic groups (i.e., social movements and "the political Left"). Anyone who disagrees with its views and intolerant practices is liable to be branded an "enemy."

According to Braga (2018, p. 205, our translation), Fake News can be defined as "the spread, by many different means of communication, of information the messenger knows to be false, in order to draw attention, misguide the population, and obtain political or economic advantage." The dissemination of revisionist narratives or disinformation is based mainly on digital media, such as Twitter, a platform created in 2006.

Twitter may be considered a microblog. Users create a personal account and send and read messages — known as tweets — of up to 280 characters. These messages may be "retweeted," that is, shared by other profiles, generating a network of mass content that can quickly reach thousands, even millions of users. These new communication tools have rendered the roles of "author" and "receiver" of information even more permeable, as well as the roles of "guilty" or "innocent" (in the criminal sense) for spreading it.

In this regard, Vosough *et al.* (2018) point out that Fake News go viral six times faster on Twitter and have a volume 70% higher if compared to other types of news. Moreover, the study showed that politics is the topic most affected by Fake News. It is the subject of more than 4.5 million retweets and impacts about 100,000 users. Information, which is true and verified, however, added up to less than one thousand Twitter accounts.

In 2019, the Centre for International Governance Innovation, in Canada, published a study indicating that 86% of the people interviewed had once believed something that was Fake News, while 62% had received disinformation on Twitter. The research interviewed 25,229 internet users from 25 countries, which demonstrates that this communicative strategy is a worldwide phenomenon — generally used for political gain — and also shows the power of social media in the creation of a new public sphere for debate, in which interactions are more dynamic than the regular ones between the public and traditional institutions (Estadão, 2019).

According to Dunker (2017, p. 38), the idea of a *cognitive post-truth* should be discussed as a new way to organize human knowledge. Truth would not consist of the mere inclusion or exclusion of facts considered true, it would rather involve a higher level of complexity due to the organizational rationalization of messages to exploit specific emotions in a given political community.

Post-truth, therefore, avails itself of the new digital communication tools, which allow relative fluctuation of the authority over what is said, shifting it from science and journalism to the legitimization of common sense. With simplistic reasonings and expressions, such knowledge is based on the idea of a "universal reason" which would dismiss opposing views and analyses from different angles. Moreover, to gather support, Fake News are not directed at a general audience, they target groups that have specific strong beliefs, for instance LGBTphobia, in order to (re)organize the subjects' worldview. Reason and emotion are, therefore, interchangeable (Dunker, 2017).

Pennycook *et al.* (2019) confirmed the correlation between sharing Fake News and herd mentality. In their research, a set of headlines was presented to around 2,500 volunteers from the United States. Some headlines were extracted from reputable sources, while some were produced by the research team. Volunteers were asked to pick which headlines they would like to share on their social media profiles. Most participants used headline content as the criterion, regardless of its veracity, which suggests close relation between participants' opinions and their choices. Headline source or veracity were secondary issues in their choice process.

Correlation was especially strong for political headlines, both for right-wing and left-wing individuals. 37.4% of participants displayed the tendency to share headlines that matched their worldview. Reputable and verified headlines that disagreed with participants' views were shared by 24% of the volunteers (Pennycook *et al.*, 2019).

The research aimed to demonstrate that people are more aware of sharing Fake News than it is usually considered, in the sense that those are easily detectable. However, the feeling of "being right" normally prevails over the one of "telling the truth." It remains true, however, that many users do not ponder any of those aspects, sharing Fake News online with little awareness or reflection about it (Pennycook *et al.*, 2019).

We conclude that Fake News are part of a discursive architecture materialized by the carefully planned production and distribution of narratives. They consolidate a "public battle" in the fields of reason and emotion via religious and moral arguments, as a way to promote the audience's identification with the narratives created to destroy the opponent. However, the "public enemy" may react to Fake News by establishing an argumentative polarization and dichotomization, which is typical of polemical discourse (Amossy, 2017). Resistance tactics are consequently created, as proposed by Certeau (2007). To deconstruct the argumentative logic of extremist groups, they counter falsity with true information and resignify verbal insults with emotions associated to empathy in order to resume the constructive political debate.

3 POLEMICAL DISCOURSE AS AN ARGUMENTATIVE STRATEGY

Debating is essential to present diverging opinions and to identify and analyze each side's strengths and weaknesses. The existence of qualified opinions is crucial in the choosing process. In this tradition, polemical discourse is perceived as negative since it favors fierce dissent, confrontation, polarization and the "disturbance of social harmony," leading to the "often brutal shock of contradictory opinions which emphasize the differences on a certain topic" (Amossy, 2017, p. 230, our translation).

The polemicist resorts to a set of discursive and rhetorical procedures to propose the clash of ideas. "Negation, systematic opposition games, axiological demarcation (evaluation in terms of good/evil), reformulation, the directed handling of reported speech, irony, hyperbole, etc. All of them are good combat weapons," explains Amossy (2017, p. 231, our translation).

The researcher also explains that three elements are always present in a debate: a *Proponent*, an *Opponent* and a *Third Party*. The last represents the audience to be convinced by one of the parties in the debate, if there is no consensus. Nevertheless, three additional structures are required in polemics. The first is the existence of two antithetical and mutually exclusive positions (Amossy, 2017, p. 232), thus preventing any consensus; the second is dichotomization, the socio-discursive effect that results from the polarization between two antagonistic groups. The hostility generated makes one group constantly seek to discredit the other (Amossy, 2017, p. 232). Polarization, strictly speaking, always presents an "Us" against a "Them." The third is the identity implications, that is, the possibility that the third party allies itself to an identity group or reinforces its theses in its relation with the Proponent and the Opponent.

Adhering to one of the theses affects the way how subjects perceive themselves and are perceived by others, as well as their active participation in this identity community. According to Amossy (2017), the objective of polemical discourse is the dispute for the third party's allegiance, *i.e.*, it occurs when "we find ourselves in a logic of social division, identity defense and fight for the triumph of our group's values and options" (Amossy, 2017, p. 233, our translation). Polemics is, therefore, a dialogical discourse which casts itself as an anti-discourse. Its main characteristics are dichotomy, polarization, and the aim to discredit the other — either their ideas or the person themselves (*ad hominem* fallacy). However, it still follows interaction rules by allowing dissenting voices.

In our opinion, the problem would not necessarily be the way how extremist groups hold conservative moral values against others but the use of Fake News as argumentative, communicative and political strategies which dismiss or render unfeasible any constructive rationalization of politics. Thus, the "defense of violence" surpasses the "defense of polemics" and precludes the construction of a consensus — however contradictory — able to channel collective desires through institutional paths. Amossy (2017) does not seem to consider the use of such unfair strategies in polemical discourse.

Morais (2020) explains that the political polemic opposes the anti-political polemic, in which case the political players and groups affected by Fake News are left with the option to react to them by means of a counterargumentation capable of epistemically and ethically deconstructing opinions based on false information. Such opinions should not be confused with arguments in the strict sense of the word, given the lack of validity of their premises and the consequent failure to guarantee the appropriate logical path towards the conclusions. Directing the third party's attention from the personal dispute to more abstract levels of the debate about the collective interest is essential to build common proposals.

Institutions should act as "impartial" guarantors of the rules to allow the choice of collective proposals that are epistemically consistent, ethically valid, and politically constructive. Deliberative ritualization prevents that, in a given community, opinions — non-debated subjective expressions that tend to confirm what one only already believes — take precedence over arguments and debates. Moreover, institutions and social groups should control the quality of the information mobilized for the debate and promote the continuous inclusion of underrepresented voices in the public sphere.

At this point, it must be avoided that the "defense of emotions" encourages "irrationality." If this happens, these voices should be denounced and continuously delegitimized by the systematic contrast with their structural inconsistencies, which are, as read in Dunker (2017), not only factually incorrect, but cognitively organized in a way that suppresses dissenting voices. Persuasive efficiency cannot, per se, prevail over the ethical-moral and epistemic aspects of the common collective organization and prevent the group affected by Fake News be considered legitimate in its use of these mechanisms to deconstruct and discredit the other.

Bem Gonçalves (2019) develops an interesting proposition in this sense, when evaluating the polemics over the questions about gender and sexual orientation occurred in a TV show called "Programa Estação Plural," which featured a debate with singer Ney Matogrosso, aired in May 2016. In the occasion, the antagonisms observed in the communication between the host, the guest and the audience were relevant.

According to Bem Gonçalves (2019), when referring to the contributions of Butler (2015) and Borba (2015) to Queer Theory and Queer Linguistics, respectively, heteronormative morals impose semantic associations with negative connotations to non-heterosexual subjects. However, these subjects may not identify with compulsory heteronormative representations and may consciously or unconsciously seek to resignify these rules and values. Feelings of "shame," "incompleteness," being "undesirable," "inferior" and "evil" would be replaced with feelings of "pride," "fulfilment," being "desirable," "equal" and "good."

According to the researcher, by challenging the rules of heteronormativity (Butler, 2015) and not identifying with this imaginary field, the individual or group would break the symbolic cycle of violence and resignify their own moral values and emotions. By replacing "shame" (La Taille, 2002) with "pride," they are able to build different morals collectively. Bem Gonçalves (2019, p. 51) proposes, therefore, that the protagonist position of non-heterosexual subjects of assuming a discursive performance opposed to compulsory heterosexuality consists of "a militant action that contests heteronormative morals and allows, to some extent, the resignification of the negative meanings" based on other values reiterated in our culture.

The author concludes that ethically engaged epistemological approaches, such as Queer Theory and Queer Linguistics, help understand polemics as a privileged mode of politicization and persuasion to promote respect for LGBT-related topics, as well as to comprehend the resistance tactics of subaltern groups in their symbolic (re)uses for the creation of their daily lives (Certeau, 2007).

4 SUBALTERN RESIGNIFICATION AS INCLUSIVE INTOLERANCE

The individuals involved in polemical discourses disseminated through Fake News can either reinforce or subvert cultural gender and sexuality norms based on heteronormativity, using discourses to express their position on a topic. According to Butler (2010), a performative act is subject to interpellation when the interlocutor is asked to identify with or repudiate the call for interpellation. If culture is organized around compulsory heterosexuality, the subjects involved in it may reiterate and/or resignify what is produced by existing discourses and ideals in matters of gender and sexuality.

When Borba (2015) proposes the "queerification" of Linguistics, he considers this theoretical movement, named Queer Linguistics (henceforth, QL), has projected the voices of previously disregarded subjects, such as drag queens, transgender people, gays, and lesbians, who started being noted and studied beyond their biology. By aligning the ethical and epistemic aspects of human knowledge, such a field of research uses the idea of performativity to help denaturalize the symbolic structures that exclude these subjects.

QL advances in the deconstruction of what is considered natural by analyzing the social organization of shared knowledge. As an ethical stance, it questions cultural values that institute excluding forms of being in the world, especially the issues of gender and sexual orientation. According to Borba (2015), "queerifying" linguistic studies means de-essentializing the relation between language and social identity. Following this perspective, QL approaches one of the symbolic strongholds most resistant to deconstruction: the relation between sexuality, sexual orientation, and gender identity. The emergence of new subjects as protagonists, producing discourses about sexuality and identities, demands not only the world's moral-ethical reorganization but also the reconfiguration of academic knowledge, which affects the epistemic area.

The fact that QL encompasses these two fields is fundamental to highlight that the most formal aspect of knowledge — the description and explanation of social and linguistic phenomena through theoretical tools and academic methodology — must be hand in hand with the appreciation and the assurance of dignity of the diverse ways of

inhabiting the world (*ethos*) of the most different social groups, especially the subaltern ones. Ultimately, ethics and epistemology are inseparable.

In our research, we considered both Fake News and resistance tactics as polemical discourses, given that they are part of a broader social debate that opposes different views on gender and sexuality to promote the resignification of collective mentalities on these topics. However, while the first is associated with anti-politics and violence using the systematic view of power and discourse, the second works as an attempt to return to the political arena and debate through the organization of counterpower and counter-discourse (re)actions [1].

With this assumption in mind, we suggest the category of *subaltern resignification* for the theoretical debate. It consists of the axiological positivization of the ethical-moral negativity and its epistemic validation by a subaltern group, to promote human dignity. There are two interdependent polemical movements: the first is an attempt at an ethical-moral order and questions the negativity of the meanings attributed to the terms. The second has a scientific quality: it is the academic positivization of theories based on a minority perspective, such as feminist and queer theories — categories according to which studies and research may be developed. There is a polemical interdependence between the two acts, which try and resignify negativity in the moral and scientific fields.

Moreover, using the reflections made by Morais (2018; 2019; 2020), we suggest differentiating *intolerant resignification* — "excluding intolerance" — from *inclusive resignification* — "inclusive intolerance." The former aims to exclude social groups through discourses based on hegemonical uses of power, such as heteronormativity and its "gender ideology" concept. The latter does not accept intolerance to alterity, resorting to resistance tactics to escape the oppression/violence promoted by asymmetric power relations. With this proposal, we aim to contribute to what Popper (1974, pp. 289-90) described as the "paradox of tolerance," which states that if unlimited tolerance is extended to those who are intolerant, and the tolerant society is not prepared to defend itself from intolerance attacks, the result will be the destruction of those who are tolerant and of tolerance itself.

Intolerance of intolerance, in our perspective, is not a "defense of intolerance." It does not mean encouraging aggression against the socially valued identity, causing some sort of "reverse violence." Just the opposite, we understand that, as observed in the example analyzed in the study, while both the dissemination and the deconstruction of Fake News can be presented as polemical discourse, the latter presents the desirable ethical and epistemic aspects, given that it is based on informativity, on scientific knowledge and on human dignity, deconstructing the symmetry between these positions.

Inclusive intolerance must be interpreted as the refusal to accept the other's exclusion, lack of dignity and consequent physical, symbolic and systemic destruction. It is a continuous attempt to expand and legitimize subaltern voices. At this point, "inclusive intolerance" agrees with the "defense of polemics" (Amossy, 2017) and is oriented toward maintaining and/or improving the rules of our interactions and by the ethics of an increasingly plural, diverse, and dignified society.

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[1] Bem Gonçalves (2019, p. 130), suggests "polemical discourses as argumentative strategies whose main function is to question moral values naturalized in a culture which remove from non-heterosexual subjects the right to happiness, dignity, equality, and a full life, basic values in a democracy."

We would also like to define the concepts of tactics and strategy used throughout the text to differentiate the oppressive attitude in the use of Fake News within the "architecture of disinformation" from the resistance alternatives available to subaltern subjects. According to Certeau (2007), strategies indicate the regular practices associated with the foundation of a field of knowledge, which are typical of institutions and capable of imposing themselves on subjects through discipline, hierarchy and spatiality. Any society produces norms to guarantee some level of stability to its social dynamics, controls what is said and links different types of knowledge to powers. The concepts come from Foucauldian philosophy, which suggests an epistemic category able to consider what subjects do to try to escape the institutions to which they are bound — be them political, legal, scientific or other. At this point, tactics is suggested as a theoretical concept.

While discursivity engenders a new material organization in society, it is never able to control the entirety of individuals' activities. Individuals are always capable of creating their daily lives, mobilizing the symbolic resources available, in a kind of semantic bricolage, in order to (re)create possibilities and alternative imaginary uses. In this constant tension, content is not reduced to its form. There are ways how the subject may institute new forms of thinking as time goes by. Certeau (2007) affirms there is always the possibility of maneuvering oneself "on enemy grounds."

Fake News have worked as a strategy to oppress the subaltern, as it uses economic power to build a large-scale intolerance machine. It produces and spreads hate speech with unprecedented speed and efficiency.

On the opposite direction, subaltern groups have relied on classic communication structures — prioritizing the political debate, improving the quality of the information available and resignifying discursive objects — and on reusing social networks and alternative media to destroy the strategy from the inside, as proposed by Certeau (2007). While trying to defend from the defamatory Fake News against him, former Federal Deputy Jean Wyllys (PSOL-RJ) ended up producing a certain *modus operandi* to fight such strategies. Analyzing his actions and systematizing his use of the tools and knowledge he had to counter defamation can be useful to build an anti-Fake News tactic — a new system to combat Far Right hate speech.

5 RESISTANCE TACTICS IN THE JEAN WYLLYS CASE

A survey about Fake News carried out by Veja magazine in 2018 indicated that, out of the 10 most frequent targets of disinformation, Jean Wyllys was the only one for whom 100% of this kind of information was negative. Jair Bolsonaro, on the contrary, was the most favored by Fake News, with 67% of the information being positive, 22% negative and 11% neutral. One of the measures Wyllys had to adopt was to ban from his pages on social networks over 400,000 profiles created to smear him and to monthly delete around 1,500 comments containing homophobic slurs and death or violence threats (O Povo, 2018).

On June 17, 2019, Jean Willys used Twitter to rebut accusations spread by a fake Twitter account known as "Pavão Misterioso" ("Mysterious Peacock"). The account had been denounced the day before as being managed by City Council member Carlos Bolsonaro (Republicanos - RJ), Jair Bolsonaro's son, who had allegedly orchestrated a bot action to take the hashtag #showdopavao ("peacockshow") to Twitter's Trending Topics. The posts contained false accusations against Wyllys, journalist Glenn Greenwald and his husband, current Federal Deputy David Miranda (PSOL-RJ) (Redação Fórum, 2019).

The false accusations claimed that Jean Wyllys had "sold" his seat in the Chamber of Deputies to David Miranda, a fellow party member[2], for U$$ 700,000 plus a monthly "allowance" of US$ 10,000, paid in bitcoins by an unnamed Russian billionaire. There was no proof or even indirect evidence of the accusations and no charges were ever pressed. As a reaction to the defamation against him, Jean Wyllys posted the following tweets:

Figure 1: Jean Wyllys' reaction to the Fake News.

Source: https://twitter.com/jeanwyllys_real, our translation.

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[2] Brazil uses an open-list proportional system with no by-elections. If a deputy leaves the House before the end of his term, the most voted deputy from the same party on the waiting list takes his place.

Tweet 1: "Nothing can threaten and irritate a dumb, stuck-in-the-closet homophobic faggot more than fags like @ggrenwald[3] and I, who are proud to be gay, stand up for this pride and for the LGBT community and who are intelligent, successful and free."

Tweet 2: "Homophobia is horrible in any of its expressions. Homophobic heterosexual men are terrible, but none of them can be as evil and abominable as a closeted homosexual — because he's prevented from experiencing his desire proudly and is jealous of the pleasure of out homosexuals!"

Tweet 3: "By the way, I want to make it clear that I am only referring to the closeted homosexuality of the president's homophobic, dumb and evil son because it has been the engine [of the] horrors perpetrated by him against me and other honorable people on the web."

Tweet 4: "If this faggot locked in a closet experienced his homosexuality with shame, but did not harm anyone's reputation over it, I would never refer to his sexual orientation experienced with guilt and fear. I would leave it there in his closet, destroying itself [sic] inside."

Tweet 5: "The president's son had all the chances and means to fight his father's homophobia and be a faggot like I am — proud of myself, smart, an activist, honorable, willing to fight for social justice — but he chose to be this shameful factory of homophobic fake news."

The signifiers considered essential to organize this discursive position were taken from the excerpts above. We focused on adjectives, according to Morais's (2018) methodological proposal regarding semantic chains, which derives from Hall's (2003) theoretical contributions. The pair of signifiers "bicha no armário" ("closeted faggot") and "bicha assumida" ("out faggot") were regarded as key to analyze this conflict around sexual orientation, given their clear opposition to each other, as well as the qualifiers implicitly or explicitly associated with each concept.

Closeted faggot: dumb → closeted → homophobic → shame → horror → evil and abominable → dishonorable → guilty → fearful;

Out faggot: intelligent → free → non-homophobic → proud → beautiful → good and wonderful → honorable → not guilty → brave.

In the first semantic chain, it is possible to infer that the adjectives associated to "closeted faggot" seem to be linked to authoritarian aspects of the family institution. In a power and hierarchical relationship, the family would keep this faggot "closeted" and prohibited from fully experiencing their sexuality, originating feelings of "shame," "fear," and "dishonor."

The use of words such as "dumb," "evil," and "abominable" rejects and denounces the consequences of the oppression of non-heterosexuals, whether it is exerted by a family authority or a military one, since both institutions are heavily associated with morals and order. Being a "closeted faggot" expresses a context of violence that many gay men experience in their families due to their sexual orientation. As an institution, the family cell is responsible for the primary connection between private and public life and may be signified metonymically as the "smallest cell in the social order" (Bem Gonçalves, 2019).

Not questioning the father's authority tends to imply, therefore, not questioning society. Similarly, oppression by the former tends to imply oppression by the latter, reiterating the moral values and norms that impose heterosexuality as the sole expression

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[3] Glenn Greenwald's Twitter account.

of "honor" and "pride." Taking compulsory heterosexuality as the standard, "out faggots," as opposed to "closeted faggots," are treated as "abnormal," given their alleged "monstrosity" and the "defective uses" of their bodies.

In the second semantic chain, the signifier "out faggot" is semantically associated with non-heterosexual men who experience their gender and sexuality expressions publicly. They seem to point to the attempt to resignify a verbal insult widespread in Brazilian culture. "Bicha" ("faggot") is a metaphorical expression commonly used as derogatory when directed to men who display feminine characteristics in their bodies. Being a "bicha assumida" ("out faggot") — that is, affirming sexual traits associated with femininity — originates even more stigmatization towards sexuality.

Thus, the second semantic chain seems to be a performative attempt to resignify a verbal insult using polemical discourse to refute moral values oppressive to non-heterosexual men. The insult acquires new meaning through the connection with the characteristics of "pride" and "honor," generally associated with masculinity and heterosexuality. The adjectives "free," "good," "honorable," "courage," "intelligence," and "pride" propose an individual protagonism that shows a way of seeing ruptures that is different from social or group protagonism.

According to Almeida (2019), the political struggle may be observed through a liberal point of view, which focuses on the individual; through an institutional point of view, focusing on institutions; and through a structural point of view, which focuses on the change of society as a whole. The last is the one capable of bringing about more profound changes in conditions of oppression and exclusion. Daring to be an "out faggot," which implicitly holds an attitude of individual conscientization, is associated primarily with the first one.

However, considering Butler's (2015) perspective on performance, we understand that the ways individuals (re)act are intrinsically linked to the broader reorganization of the different types of social knowledge and collective material organization. We see the process of subaltern resignification as crucial for the creation of an extensive social support network that allows the transformation, whether gradual or not, of the social structures of exclusion.

There seems to be a call-out for "out faggots" to fight for their choices and way of life symbolically and to set up an identity movement that recognizes itself as part of a category of subjects who will no longer live clandestinely, in "shame" and "fear," nor bear the negative moral values attributed to them. The use of the verbs "to threat," "to irritate," and "to confront" materialize an argumentative point of view that seeks to persuade the audience to fight for protagonism, contest heteronormativity and establish dichotomy and polarization towards its opponent by discrediting it.

In the case under analysis, the argumentative point of view seems to be the strategy of using polemical discourse to fight the Fake News disseminated by Bolsonarism. However, this political group also uses polemical discourse to spread disinformation. Its pattern is common-sense stigmatizing assumptions about "being LGBT." It aims to promote Third Party adherence via negative feelings and LGBTphobia, to shut down any rational discourse or fact-based public discussion. Through disinformation the basic assumption of non-contradiction between premises and conclusion is broken. This sort of uncritical persuasion allows deliberations without contrasting theses or the maintenance of the rules of interaction.

On June 18, 2019, after Jean Wyllys' reaction on Twitter, Sérgio Moro — Minister of Justice and Public Security at the time — gave an interview to "Programa do Ratinho" ("Ratinho's Show") in which he commented the accusations made against him by the investigative journalism website "The Intercept Brazil." Such accusations were based on the leak of multiple Telegram messages in which the then Federal Judge appeared coordinating the conduction of the corruption cases under his responsibility with Federal Prosecutors. On the occasion, the interviewer remarked: "I was reading, I don't know if it's Fake News, that it's linked to a Russian millionaire who gave money to a well-known journalist. This journalist is a deputy's boyfriend and bought Jean Wyllys' mandate" (Stycer, 2019, our translation).

On June 19, 2019, two days after Jean Wyllys' tweets, President Jair Bolsonaro gave a press conference reaffirming the disinformation spread: "I don't see anything abnormal [on the exchange of messages between Moro and the prosecutors]. That couple, one of them is suspect of selling his mandate, and the other, the girl [ironic reference to Jean Wyllys], no longer lives in Brazil" (UOL, 2019, our translation).

On the same date, Senator Flávio Bolsonaro (Republicanos - RJ) mentioned the same disinformation in a meeting of the Senate Committee on Constitution, Justice, and Citizenship. Committee members considered summoning Minister Sérgio Moro to respond to The Intercept's accusations. During the debates, Senator Bolsonaro stated that "Greenwald and his partner, who's a Federal Deputy, David Miranda, allegedly bought former Federal Deputy Jean Wyllys' mandate for a sum of US$ 700,000 plus a monthly allowance of US$ 10,000" (Sabóia, 2019, our translation).

The production and dissemination of Fake News seems to follow a carefully planned script as an argumentative strategy. Such a strategy is composed of the following three procedures:

i) Using polemical discourse as an argumentative strategy;

ii) Using homophobic moral concepts and common-sense expressions about sexuality to support polemical discourse;

iii) Using Fake News as a disinformation strategy and diverting attention from serious, fact-based accusations.

These three points are summarized in the flowchart below. The flowchart formalizes our "architecture of disinformation," characterized by the production and systematic dissemination of Fake News at crucial moments.

As observed, the presence of mutually exclusive antagonist positions renders any attempt to build consensus or mediation unfeasible. Bolsonarism seems to rely on polemics as a guerrilla strategy, using a professionally calculated structure that avails itself of diffuse points of attack against its adversaries not only in the political spectrum, but also in the communicational one, as it builds a narrative which tends to legitimate their ideological arguments.

In view of this, the dichotomization becomes stronger. The adjectives used in the enunciations seem to sustain polemics, as well as they define an axiological division between "Us" and "Them," developing clear hostility. To reinforce this dichotomization, characterizations such as "girl" are used to refer to Jean Wyllys, an *ad hominem* argument, which, according to Amossy (2017), focuses on discrediting the opponent instead of rebutting their arguments.
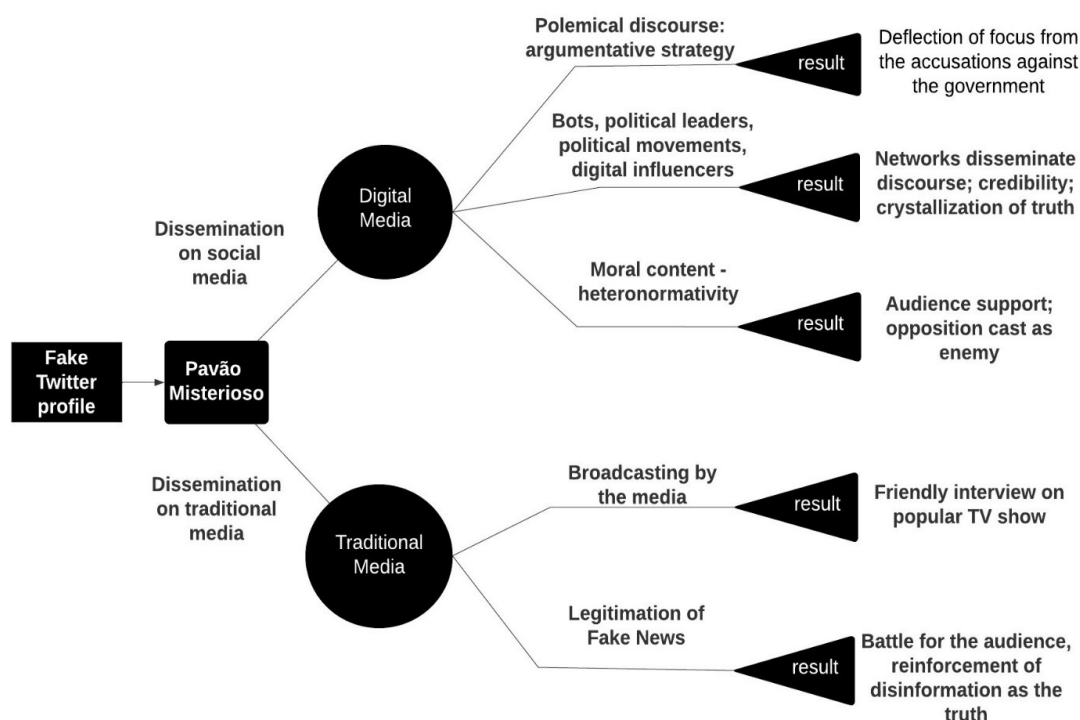
Figure 2: Architecture of Disinformation
Source: The authors.

There is also mention to aspects of private life, such as the information that David Miranda and Glenn Greenwald are "boyfriends" and "partners." That seems to be a strategy to reinforce the moralization of the political agenda, to strengthen polarization in the 2018 election, when Bolsonarism clashed irreconcilably with the Left. The picture painted was that Bolsonarism defended traditional family values, while the Left was associated with human and LGBT rights and was painted as "an oppressive minority" by Bolsonarists.

Heterosexuality was hence confirmed as the moral standard, with no recognition of their relationship as a marriage once this institution is considered sacred and impossible for homosexual couples. Homosexuality was stigmatized and characterized as a threat to public order. The biopolitical intents of heteronormativity present in Brazilian society were reinforced, in order to silence the emerging voices of subaltern non-heterosexual subjects.

The Fake News analyzed aim to set up this identity battle that seeks to gain the audience's support. The strategy of disseminating this discourse not only on social media, but also on traditional media, seems to be an orchestrated action. It is no coincidence that this kind of disinformation is mentioned on a popular TV show, owned by a traditional media company, as something that might be true. Proving that the show does so deliberately is not the objective of this study, nor do we have the means to do it. As Discourse Analysts, we are only interested in the fact that this kind of segment is capable of increasing the credibility of Fake News in the eyes of society.

As an argumentation strategy, polemics organizes the discursive dispute between a Proponent and an Opponent, who seek the audience's support through "battles for belonging" since the identity agendas are primarily showcased. By clinging to the moral aspects of sexuality to counter the thesis of its opponents, Bolsonarism calls on its supporters to participate in a scene of interpellation and to enter a "fight arena" in which the adversary, differently from what happens in the political dispute, becomes an enemy and must therefore be eliminated.

Jean Wyllys accepted this challenge when he created a polemical interaction zone with his reaction on Twitter on June 17, only a day after the accusations about the owner of the "Pavão Misterioso" profile were made. This attitude seems to have been the necessary trigger for the mobilization of the Bolsonarist architecture of disinformation. Wyllys' tactic of reaction is presented below:
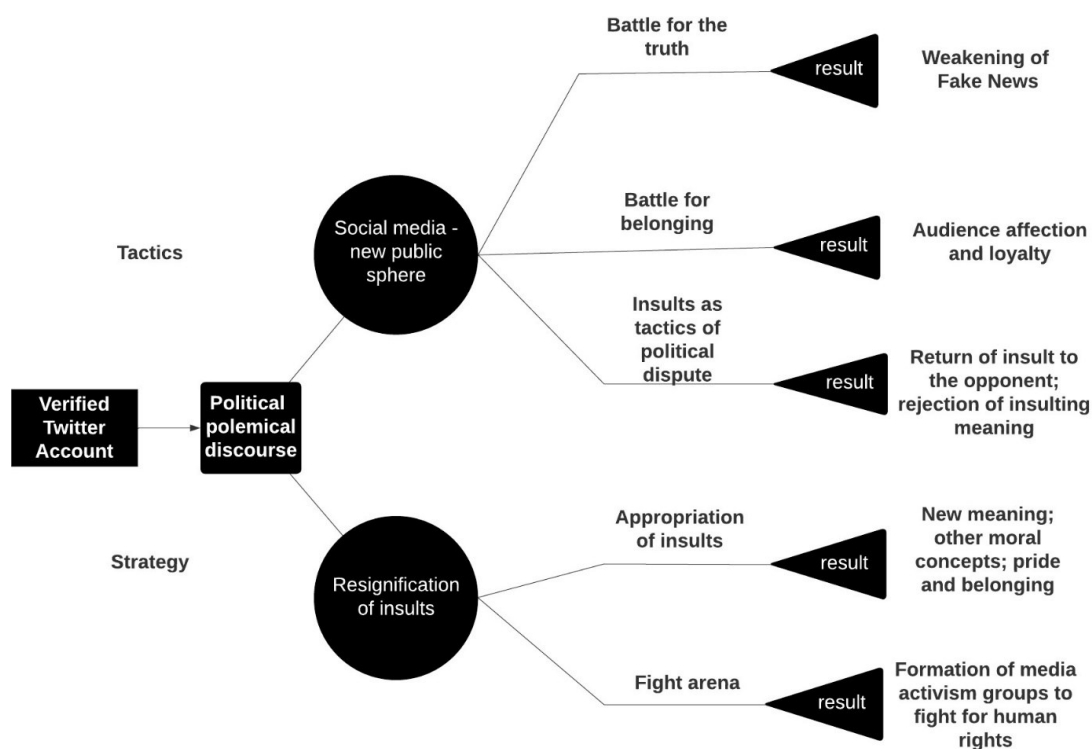

Figure 3: Architecture of Information
Source: The authors

Through the architecture of information, we can observe that the debate scene allows the resignification of concepts traditionally associated with the conservative field, such as "honor," "freedom," "success," and "pride," taking as a parameter the terminology "social justice," linked to progressive discourses and Human Rights. Citing the value of human equality, the Deputy sought to anchor the discussion in something less subjective and to persuade an audience beyond his own, initially referring to empathy with his very opponent.

At first, he intended to resignify "hate speech" by proposing a "solidarity speech," focused on emotions such as "love" and "hope" in the fight against homophobia, although frustration and the reaction to aggression became slowly associated with discrediting the other. By suggesting an increase in identity complexity, with the consequent legitimization and authorization of new voices, the use of *ad hominem* arguments casts anchor in the symbolic aspect of human dignity, which is prior to group differences.

On the one hand, Jean Wyllys projected himself into the position of his own opponent, as a way to express some solidarity with his alleged oppressive situation. For the Deputy, the presumed repression of sexual orientation noted in the councilman's messages would be the main reason for the manifestation of hatred and violence towards those who do not repress their sexuality. On the other hand, Wyllys' positive recognition of his own sexual orientation produces a subjectivity associated with "pride," "liberation," and "full existence," typical of an Enlightenment society.

Linguistic expressions that reiterate situations of symbolic violence are the primary fundament to legitimize physical and structural violence against LGBT people. Despite perpetuating these expressions, this polemical clash also indicates the possibility of a tactical outbreak of new political and social subjects, previously subaltern. That gives rise to new discursive opportunities for these subjects to claim and fight for their lives and affections, especially with the emergence of digital media.

6 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this text, we sought to investigate the use of polemical discourse as a strategy and a tactic, and the possibilities of fighting Fake News through argumentative approaches. In the first part, we characterized the (re)emergence of the New Right or Far Right in Brazil, which has Bolsonarism as its current political expression. In the second, we presented the characteristics and structures of polemical discourse. In the third, we based ourselves on the concepts of Queer Linguistics and semantic chains (Morais, 2018) to propose the new concepts of subaltern resignification and inclusive intolerance. In the fourth, we analyzed the selected corpus and proposed an architecture of disinformation and an architecture of information. The first was outlined through a discursive structure of power, while the last derived from the resistance tactics used by Jean Wyllys to resignify the verbal insults directed at him.

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