

`Troca de Família` Program: Spying families, seeing society¹

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Abstract:

This paper presents a reading of the television show *Troca de Família*, broadcast by Rede Record. The analysis of this reality show urges us to review the characteristics of reality shows, placing them in the broader dynamic of values and social conflicts and in the context of culture. Through the analysis of an episode, we propose to investigate how mothers insert in the new home and the relations that they establish in new families. Illuminated by performance concept and after we have developed an analytical grid based on fixed and central program events, we are faced with the conflicting coexistence between two very different family models. During the relationship, more than the role of the mother, acted cultural models that instructed the performance of the participants and highlighted their differences and contradictions.

Keywords: reality show; cultural models; sociability; difference; Troca de Família.

Introduction: a reading perspective of reality shows

The television show *Troca de Família*, produced by Rede Record from 2006 to 2011, sign up in a genre very present today and familiar in many countries, that is the reality show. Opened by some programs created over the 1990s, this genre had precursors in earlier decades, but it is in the beginning of the XXI century that it extends and consolidates, representing to a large extent, the new face of television.

Like any novelty, this programming line sparked not only a great interest of the public, but also the community of researchers. To talk about *Troca de Família* we must, therefore, minimally place in this field already well trodden by retrieving the central features of the genre and the main aspects highlighted by scholars².

¹ The first version of this paper was presented to the Working Group Comunicação e Sociabilidade in the XXI Meeting of Compós at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora, Juiz de Fora from 12 to 15 June, 2012.

² See ANDACHT (2002, 2003), CAMPANELA (2012), CASTRO (2006), DUARTE (2003), FECHINE (2009), HELLER (2009), ROCHA (2012).

The main theme of the reality is evidenced in the very appointment he received: show/ explore the spectacular dimension (fantastic) contained in the everyday lives of ordinary people. Its content refers to the exposure of these people (the “ordinary man”), representing themselves in coping with everyday situations (eating, sleeping) and/or extreme (go through trials and dangers, live in confinement). The performance of the participants in the role of themselves, as well as the concreteness of lived experiences, constitute the elements of reality of such programs; unforeseen reactions, the way and the difficulties to deal with challenges and tensions give your spectacle. Unlike journalistic broadcasts that seek to make a reading of external reality, the situations are produced here; constitute something like an experimental laboratory. And if there is a production that aims to explore the attractions and stoke the interest in these programs, it is not a story invented or fictitious roles as in traditional fictional production: people are indeed living and reacting to a given context and situation; their tears, their sweat, their fear and joy were caused by situations experienced there³.

Numerous questions have been raised by this type of program, related to its true status, their language and gender, type of attraction that presents the audience, the evoked values and on which they are established, their insertion in a wider membership.

Wonders, among other things, its real dimension, indicating both the presence and interference of the issuer, through its production team (the BBB, for example, would be looking increasingly to the Globo soap operas)⁴ and the character “staged” of the actions of participants, embodying types and roles. No further discussion about what is the “real” reality (It would be a possible spontaneity, the absence of influences, the “external” world to the media?), we emphasize, however, that is exactly there – the staging of roles, the use of accepted models, of available speeches – that society enters the television; becomes raw material reworked by representation.

So not interested in asking how much reality there is in the *Troca de Família*, but as it is related - and what it tells us - about the society in which it operates and which is one of the moments.

The genre definition of reality shows bumps on its hybrid nature. When we think of two basic genres that establish the matrix of different TV formats, information and fiction, we realize that such programs are made by mixing. We watched individuals living, moving,

3 Signs that Andacht (2003a) characterize as circumstantial nature: sweat registers the body’s effort, the cries of fear indicate the presence of strong emotion etc.

4 According to Yvana Fechine, directed or not, the participants of BBB have very similar roles and very close stages of fictional narrative, and the «Globo itself acknowledges that the program is seen as if it were a novel of real life”. (FECHINE, 2009, p. 159, *our translation*).

acting and reacting; we learn signs that play a clear role indicial / informative. But we also see the evident presence and influence of fictional formats (and symbolic representations) instructing the conformation of reality; by type of program, we clearly see the influence of the soap opera language, talk shows, adventure films. In several studies, the authors point out, on the Brazilian and Latin American reality shows, the strong presence of melodramatic dash, by manichean setting, using antinomic pairs and exemplary types, by the exploration of emotions and above all the loving plots and dramatic plots (ROCHA, 2009).

But today, hybrid genre is no longer a badge, but a general trait of television programs; the mixture information/entertainment increasingly become naturalized on both sides, and fictional programs, of entertainment, excel in search of the hallmarks of real, informative programs, in turn, explore fictional elements, of entertainment (see the discussion on the infotainment⁵). About the reality programs, which we can note is its consolidation as its own genre, adding different internal divisions. So it is with this hybrid constitution, mixed we should think of our program, the *Troca de Família*.

Another aspect that arouses the interest of researchers is the big blockbuster that such programs are reaching around the world: the same format does not always has equal success in all countries, but either adapt well in specific cultures, and, at certain times, even cause real audience phenomena.

Some authors call upon concepts of psychoanalysis, particularly voyeurism (and its pair, exhibitionism) to explain the eager and attentive audience of programs⁶. This explanation focused on individual psychology, does not justify, however, the onset of this phenomenon at this moment (and not in others).

Back in the 1960s, E. Morin (1977), analyzing the attraction raised by Hollywood stars, the “Olympians”, made use of the concepts (also of psychoanalysis) of projection and identification. In previous work (França, 2014), we discussed the current relevance of these concepts - the projection mechanism to explain the appeal of idols ever more passengers and devoid of grandeur, of the identification mechanism to sustain the relationship of interest in ordinary figures that, as a rule, appear to be mocked and target of teasing. Replacing (or supplementing the projection notions and identification, which may no longer apply), we suggest that perhaps we should speak of “transfer” - a triangulation mechanism, where the third appears in place of the second (the instant “you”) is the depository of our desires

5 In Brazil, Itania Gomes (2009) works with the term infotainment, which is treated by the author as a neologism. According to Gomes (2009), the term is built on the junction of two expressions that characterize two areas (previously separate) of cultural production, information and entertainment.

6 Rocha (2009), through the notion of “media voyeurism,” highlights the possibility created by reality shows to keep up with what’s going on in the privacy of other people, other places, and other lifestyles. “So they collected habits, stories and behaviors, different ways of living” (ROCHA, 2009, p. 3, *our translation*).

and frustrations. Admiration and criticism overlap, at a relationship of adhesion and detachment. In this sense, the interest for the common person (someone “like us”) striving for visibility, fame, wealth (as we also aspire) is a safe way to wish by (his/our) success and to scare (your/our) failure. In this transfer, this displacement (is he, not I, along with it, that’s me), we glimpse the intervention of culture, the presence of contemporary visibility values, fame, success - as well as the difficulty and struggle for survival in a competitive and individualistic society.

Through this path, the relationship with the audience and the success of these programs (and any others, by the way) is not explained from its own characteristics, internal, or by factors of human personality, but the socio-cultural context and by the universe of values of the society. We fled from a psychoanalytic explanation, and insert our reading in a socio-cultural framework. The analysis of a communicative product, even though they unfold in specific studies of reception, must be marked by the understanding that this object of study is not an isolated element, but part of an interactional chain, talking, hypothetically, with its potential audience and the society in which it operates.

Thus we come to a different analytical perspective of reality shows, which is what really interests us, and shows us a path through which to promote our reading of *Troca de Família*. It is thought the programs in dialogue with the social values, and somehow as “laboratories” as extracts or “exemplary situations”⁷ of our society. In a reflective relationship, the TV tells us about the society that produces it and for which it provides representations.

We understand that reality shows bring social marks (let us to see the social values) from two perspectives. First, to represent their own role, aware of the visibility and in some kinds of programs, seeking accession and the vote of the audience, participants make choices within the performance menu of roles available in society, by selecting the models that assume higher acceptance. This choice, therefore, is indicative of something that will have social value, cause acceptance and adherence of society. As a second aspect, and understanding the very format of the program as a social narrative, one of the many narratives that a society produces to talk about itself (as well as the myths in primitive societies), we can analyze their own program proposal while a structure of meaning that uses de current narrative models and echoes issues felt and experienced socially.

Then this is the way and the guidelines that have guided our reading of *Troca de Família*, a study developed on a set of issues that had as its central objective to investigate

⁷ Not in the sense of an example, a model, but to illustrate what goes beyond the program and TV screens.

the representations of mother and family roles in the fourth season of this reality show⁸. In this paper, working with the hypothesis that the mother's role is central to the narrative construction of the program, we set out to investigate, on a specific emission, how mothers fall within the new interactive environment and relate to new families. The case studied was shown in February 2011, and mothers who changed their family were an animal advocate and the wife of a rodeo cowboy. For the study of the program, we outlined an analysis script which allowed us to observe the performance of participants during the program. To this end we analyze their performance, as well as the assumed social roles and values evoked during the exchange. The route started from the central and fixed events of each exchange and allowed the layout of the trajectory of participants in the program and information about each exchange. From Goffman's perspective (1985, 2010), we understand the performance as our development front to our interlocutor; the way we manage our appearance and behavior according to the expectations of the assumed role, but also the other of the relationship. The notion of performance, therefore, thinks the performance of the subject in interaction with its other immediate but also with the other social (cultural models).

Before promoting the analysis, we must, however, present and describe the program, highlighting its main features, its distinctive features, aspects in which they differ from the other reality shows.

Troca de Família: dynamic of the program

Launched in 2006, by Rede Record, *Troca de Família* is the Brazilian version of the North American reality *Trading Spouses* of the FOX channel. The program kept the same templates as the American version: two completely different families live with a surrogate mother (eventually with a father) for one week. During this time, new mothers have to insert in the daily lives of each other and decide how the inclusion the family will spend the twenty five thousand reais prize awarded by the Program to each of them. The first few seasons of the program were displayed on Tuesday at 11p.m. and had an hour long. From the fourth and final⁹ season, the program earns two hours, being first exhibited as a Sunday frame *Tudo é Possível* and from 2011, on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 11p.m.

8 The study results are presented in research report "A representação de papeis no reality show Troca de Família" (SOUZA, 2011), within the project *Práticas comunicativas, valores e instituições*, developed under the Research Group in Image and Sociability (GRIS/UFMG), under the coordination of Vera França and with funding from the CNPq.

9 The Troca de Família was again displayed by Rede Record in September 2015. However, the broadcaster has displayed reruns of the main episodes of four seasons, and in some cases, the participants of the exchange go to the program's studio and talk to the hostess Chris Flores about their lives after-exchange.

Regardless of the time and duration changes, the program remained the same dynamic. Its narrative construction is marked for the days, and some activities performed by the participants are established by the program: preparing a party by the surrogate mother to the new family, writing letter that defines how the inclusion family will spend the prize, meeting between mothers and exchange of letters.

The first day of recording takes place in the house of the families and tries to show the routine of the participants and expectations of exchange. On the second day, mothers meet the new families, and for five days they fall into the familiar routine of new home. At the end of the program, participants talk about the significance of having participated in the reality show, if changes happened, how they realized the experience, how they have seen themselves and how they saw the family that they lived together.

To dribble the short time of the duration of episodes, the editing is very dynamic. We realize that there is a job of the editors so that the transition of events happens without major breaks, which facilitates monitoring of the facts from the public. The program contains various audiovisual resources that give the plot more movement as the exchange plans of the cameras and drama, through the soundtrack, the images repetition, frameworks in detail and exposure of emotional testimonials.

Every exchange, editing builds the narrative from certain frameworks. It gives preference to certain events, offering the viewer certain forms of apprehension of the facts, providing certain significant possibilities. When framing, the program frames certain situations of interaction having as base interpretative schemes that guides the edition. Thus crying, fights, moments of emotion gain more prominence than the current situations.

Another important element of this construction is the testimony of participants¹⁰, over the days, used both to legitimize certain events and to give new interpretations to the facts. The testimony also stands out as a moment of interaction of participants with the public, for the opportunity to speak of the exchange allows them to rethink certain attitudes and end up in some cases, altering their performance.

As in all other programs that fall within the reality show genre, the element “real people, representing to themselves a situation of interaction” is the distinctive feature. In all of them, the structure of the most successful versions is relatively simple. The majority functions as a competition or contest, in which participants compete with each other and are eliminated throughout the program, leaving at the end only one winner. *Troca de Família*, however, retains some particularities, starting with the very dynamics of the program, which

10 Both mothers as the other family members are called to testify about the events and express their opinions, feelings and expectations.

doesn't resemble neither a competition nor a contest where participants are eliminated. Here the biggest challenge is not to beat the other competitors, but getting live with differences imposed by new home. Thus, there are no winners and losers, but a set of interactions where surrogate mothers have to learn to deal with the new routine and get into the space of privacy of a completely different family. At the same time, other family members are also called upon to deal with differences and receive the surrogate mother in this very personal space that is home. The award also appears as differential, as the participation in the program, since the rules of the game are complied with and the participant doesn't give up the challenge, ensures its receipt.

Among some identifying elements of reality shows, appointed by Duarte (2003), we have chosen four for a brief characterization and distinction of *Troca de Família*. The first is the game's scenario that, according to the author, the reality shows, insulate participants from the outside world. In this item, the *Troca de Família* innovates, since instead of a scenario set up by production and isolated from the outside world, it suggests that families open the doors of their own homes, to act as the venue par excellence of the living. This opening is the greatest proof of the high degree of exposure to what these families are subjected - After all, the home is one of the greatest expressions of our intimacy. The only isolation imposed by the program is the mothers in relation to their families and vice versa.

Another feature mentioned by Duarte refers to the rules of the game, which will govern the coexistence of participants, disputes and the activities they have to perform. Like other reality shows, the *Troca de Família* has clear rules that conduct the exchange of dynamic. Mothers have to live for a week in the house, cannot speak with their families, they have to produce a party and decide how they will split the prize, and spend your prize as the decision of another mother. However, more than the rules of the game, we consider that the social rules are the main builders of the relationships established among participants, since the mother's performance, the children and husband reflects values, interests and social behavior of the subjects that configure the daily relationships. The challenge there is to be a mother / pseudo-wife in another family; therefore, the roles of mother, wife and family become central.

Duarte also highlights the role of presenter in the program. These act in the game as social and discursive actors, since they play different roles in conduct the plot, establishing another level of manipulation within the game. However, unlike what happens in other reality shows, the presenter¹¹ of *Troca de Família* does not interfere directly in the game, as it does not establish any contact with the participants, only with the public. We would

11 In the fourth season was Amanda Françoso.

venture to say that if there are other social actors interfering during the exchange, are the cameramen or producers who are in direct contact with participants in the house.

Finally, Duarte highlights the role of the viewer as agent of the plot. According to the author, in many reality shows, the audience “truly intervenes in the plot: it follows that, social actors and receivers, they proceed to discursive actors who, although anonymous, contribute in this kind of discursive construction, both as actors as enunciators.” (DUARTE, 2003. p. 6). Several reality shows are noted for this: *Idols*, *A fazenda* and *Big Brother Brazil* are some of them. However, this element is not found in *Troca de Família*, since the viewer can not interfere directly in the program. Even with the low interactivity, we cannot disregard the public as an important factor, since the participants, even not depending on the vote to accept the award, take into account during their performance, the opinions of viewers who watch them, since they have in mind the idea of an ideal public who are watching the program and that has certain expectations for their performance.

The cowboy and the activist

For purposes of this article, we choose a particular episode - a change made in February 2011¹², which occurred between Silva and Garcia Tavares families. Among the various issues stimulated by our analytical grid, we defined as driving force of this reflection questions for how to insert and to the relations established by mothers in families exchanged. What role did they assume? How was their performance? How they say themselves and the other - the new family?

To answer such questions, it is necessary initially to present the profile of mothers, the characteristics of their families, the sequence of situations experienced by them.

The Silva family lives in Tupã, a small city in São Paulo, and is presented as a typical country family. Rinaldo da Silva, 36 years old is rodeo cowboy and the family provider. Married to Adriana Balmorisco da Silva, 31 years old, he is known in the world of rodeos as Formiguinha. The couple has two children: Rachel, 14 years old, and Rafael, 12 years old. Adriana is a simple woman, a present mother who takes care of the children, the husband and the house, and defines herself as a “supermom”; her children and her husband speak of her as the family foundation. The “Silva” has a good standard of living, the result of the awards Formiguinha won in competitions. Family life is marked by the rural daily life, and they divide their time between their home in the city and their country house.

12 This exchange, who composed the fourth season of the show, displayed on 16 and 18 February 2011.

In São Paulo, capital, lives Garcia Tavares family. The father, Marcelo Tavares, 39, is customs broker. The mother, Fernanda Lopes Garcia, 32 years old, is an activist and director of an NGO for the protection of animals. The couple has a 10 years old daughter, Maria Fernanda. Also live in the home a friend of Fernanda, who works with her in the NGO, with a child of 13 years old. The house also serves as a shelter for dogs and cats, with the presence of six cats and eight dogs. The activist is vegetarian and is defined as a bit tolerant woman from the mistakes of the people, but very tolerant with animals. The middle-class family has an old house. Fernanda says that left a good apartment with security, swimming pool and sauna to rent a “bad” house, which had space for animals.

The exchange was generally well conflict, particularly with regard to the relationship between Fernanda and Formiga. The divergence of opinion started on the way to the cowboy’s house, about the “suffering” of the ox in rodeos. This issue was recurring in various conversations and fights from the father with the new mother. In another family in São Paulo, Adriana was amazed at the airport with the movement of the city. Upon reaching the house of Garcia Tavares, she was frightened by the amount of animals and proved to be bothered by the presence of cats in the furniture and in various rooms of the house. Adriana complained of the smell of animals and noise, but it did not generate any conflict, although the new mother appeared at crying times and eager to return to her home.

In Tupã, the main subject was the rodeo, with arguments on both sides about the maltreatment and on the care and training of the oxen. Another hot topic was vegetarianism, Formiguinha trying to convince Fernanda to eat meat, while she was pointing out the absurdity of “eating a friend”.

During the exchange, Fernanda went to three rodeos, even against her will. On the first, she showed unsatisfied at the party and came to twisting publicly for an ox, “Bull, bull,” shouted, and Formiguinha replied, “you will be lynched!”. In the other two, even not agreeing with the party, she went using costumes¹³ and in one of them, where there was a mirim rodeo and Rafael (son of Formiguinha) rode, the new mother was shown grieving and hoped for the victory of the “son”.

Adriana could be inserted very well in daily family life of Garcia Tavares, took over the household chores and the care of Maria Fernanda, which she considered “a girl that needs a mother”. Already in Tupã, Fernanda not devoted as much care of home and family nutrition, what bothered Formiga. Fernanda’s relationship with the children was good, although she does not show the same care of Adriana with children.

13 Plaid shirt, boot and hat.

While Fernanda knew the rural daily life, Adriana entered the hectic everyday life of the family from São Paulo. She was taken to a cultural tour, visiting a fair of adoption and the MASP (Art Museum of Sao Paulo) - which she did not like. Adriana did not like the subway and the movement of the city. Although not demonstrate for the family her dissatisfaction, Adriana revealed in her testimonies her discontent with the new home and her criticism of the dirty and disorganized house.

On the fifth day, while the backlands festival, organized by Adriana, conquered the Garcia Tavares, Fernanda only intensified the conflicts between her and Formiga. Throughout the exchange, nor Formiguinha or Fernanda’s seemed willing to change their minds, or at least take into consideration the arguments of the other. The goal of each person was to persuade the “adversary” from their point of view; their arguments were permeated by representations and stereotypes of rodeos and cowboys, as well as activists and NGOs in defense of animals.

At the end of trading, the mothers meet for the delivery of letters. Although they have talked little, both said they would not become friends. The arrival back home was exciting, each one highlighting the value of her own family. The letters don’t pleased the families, especially the Garcia Tavares, since Adriana defined Fernanda as an absent mother, who put the animals first. The activist felt offended and replied gruffly, talking about the lack of education of the Silva family.

The pursuit of disagreement

To better situate the established relational framework, it is interesting first highlight some features of the program itself. Like all reality show, he chooses real mothers, real families, and the occurrence of an exchange and effective coexistence between them. There is clearly a script, rules and scores, creating moments and situations of interest, suspense, and apprehension: the first meeting, the party, reading the letter. Contribute to this the speech of the presenter, the soundtrack (country music, city noises and rural areas), image selection (Adriana crying, flashes of the “madness” of the metropolis, rodeo strong images). But the defining aspect of the program proposal is the choice of families of antagonistic profiles¹⁴. In this case, we had an animal advocate in the family of a rodeo cowboy, and a devoted mother in a family where their mother played a less conventional role.

14 In other programs, he found himself the choice of a mother who twists for Palmeiras and a mother who twists for the Corinthians; a jealous woman and Gretchen; one garbage picker and a rich woman, etc.

This then is a first element to be highlighted: the emphasis on difference. It is not just the unknown of living, as being a mother in another family, but living together in a contrasting cultural framework. The proposal fits well within the contemporary times, marked not only by the intense intercultural dynamics, but also the permanent incitement to claim an individual identity (“Be Yourself”), the pursuit of authenticity and satisfaction, to the defense of personal choices. Present itself as a supermom or as little tolerant of people (since “they are aware, unlike animals”) wins equal legitimacy; the town and country are defended without any hierarchy (at least by the participants).

In this context, the *Troca de Família* could have as purpose the investigation of how is the management of differences or the clash between them. The choice of program is for the second option: either by selection of families, either by the emphasis of the editing and the interventions and comments of the presenter, its focus does not fall in understanding, but in the conflict. As well as other emissions that exploit quarrels, disputes, beating (of talk shows to the shack scenes of soap operas), here too, the interesting seems to be the destructive clash, as announced by Amanda Françoso, presenting scenes of Fernanda and Formiguinha “the future doesn’t promise to be promising”; “It will be the scene of much discussion”; “Promises more disagreement”.

We make no novelty to register this perspective - However we have to realize its reach. The society values the positive in the affirmation of difference itself (and truth), and even as accepts the dispute and fight to defend the place of their own, personal opinions, in a movement that reaches dangerously intolerance.

What can trigger the equation intolerance - conflict - violence, which is to be seen also in other type of media production, the police reports. The reality show approaches of climate and scenery portrayed daily in the media around the urban and family violence, gender crimes, the drug war, and other dark flashes of everyday life. The “real” of the TV has great intimacy with violence as a mark of the relationships and sociability.

Now advancing the analysis of the performance of the participants, especially the mothers, we realize that they seek to exercise in the new family, the same role they played in their family of origin, continuing to defend his own point of view, to appreciate or criticize the new environment according to that to which they were accustomed, instead of trying an offset or a negotiation. The result is estrangement, conflict - and rejection. The insertion of Adriana in Garcia Tavares family is apparently calmer, but only apparently; she barely supports what she characterizes as dirt and clutter of the house, does not appreciate anything they show her about life in the big city, cries, she says that can’t stand to finish the days. And in her letter criticizes the other mother’s performance, that she was not yet known.

Fernanda, in the Silva family, did not take on the mother’s functions, and took the opportunity to strongly mark their place of combat and militancy. An interesting aspect could be observed; the defender of animals and her family were not exactly vegetarian. In his initial statement, she points an effort they were making to remove the daily menu meat (“We are going slowly, we stop eating meat on Monday and at the end of the year, is already an ox less”). In the new family, and as an argument to highlight their positions, she assumed with greater conviction than his previous life translated, criticism of meat consumption. So, the place of the program’s speech encouraged her intransigence - and not vice versa.

An interesting aspect (in this issue analyzed but also observed in others) is that the mother’s relationship with the new children is relatively good; incidentally, is where we see greater harmony. Adriana approached Maria Fernanda, cared for her, and took pity, judging her (from her perspective) a needy child. Fernanda, although not care for the house and food as the one she replaced, got along well with children, and even twisted and worried with Rafael when the boy attended a rodeo mirin. This point indicates the smallest discrepancy in the social role of mother; there are differences in the performance of tasks, but not in emotional relationship. As for the role of the mother in organizing the home, the program showed a conflict of models (and a gender issue), because the performance of Fernanda clearly strained the framing given to the woman, to take up the food, cleaning the house etc.

On the other hand, and if initially our analysis hypothesis of the program was about the centrality of motherhood, we realized that it was secondary in the construction of the plot and in the woof of relationships. It was not as a mother, in the relationship with the children, that the insertion in families met his neuralgic point. Conflicts occurred from the social place and cultural approach advocated by mothers and families. Adriana did not come out for the clash; was well accepted by the family, not starred conflicts. However, was quite explicit in her judgment: “I do not like this place”. Fernanda, stimulated by Formiguinha, took a more bellicose position; as evidenced at the time of the party, she could not mingle with people and values as differing from her own. And her final comment¹⁵ was prejudiced and profound disrespect for the family and children who shared your trading week.

Concluding our reflection, within the limits of this text, we point out the place and importance of reality shows as symptoms of our society, screen where values, interests, cultural perspectives hatch and get along to do. The representations are present in our daily lives; more than an inventor of representations, as many argue, we understand that the media propagates and reinforces representations and trends found in their social context. And the reading of *Troca de Família* confirms this understanding; as much as the program

15 “Cradle, mother and education, who had had. Who was born without a mother and slept in orange crate gives this shit”, said Fernanda.

intervenes in the construction of reality that it shows, and even manipulate some passages and events, it dialogues and show us behaviors, speech and actions that we recognize socially. Participants seek at the big picture of your action and performance model. So when we look at the role of the mother and the emphasis given to the care and education of children, we see that the program does not reveal new representations, but it uses and enhances the existing expectations. The same applies to family representation, reformed by the program as a basic unit of coexistence, place of warmth, security, love.

We also realize that the program works with visibility area - personal, in that the families, by accepting to participate in the program, in addition to the award, were stimulated by a desire for visibility. But above all, are the visibility and the defense of a way of life, of a cultural pattern. The clash of Fernanda and Formiguinha, more than a conflict of two people, constituted as the clash of cultural perspectives. The way to deal with the difference is also shown as a symptom of what exists today in society. So the program is not an external place to society that it is imposed; it is one of the places where it is to be seen and is constructed. More than a criticism of television, the program encourages a critical reading of the time we are living.

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