


## INSTAGRAM CELEBRITY AND POVERTY: adherence and opposition to high visibility models in the tense search for the right to be seen

CELEBRIDADE E POBREZA NO INSTAGRAM: adesão e oposição aos modelos de alta visibilidade na tensa busca pelo direito de ser visto

CELEBRIDAD Y POBREZA DE INSTAGRAM: adhesión y oposición a modelos de alta visibilidad en la tensa búsqueda del derecho a ser visto

### Fabiana Moraes da Silva

PhD in Sociology (UFPE). Researcher and lecturer at the Social Communication Course of the Federal University of Pernambuco, Campus Agreste (UFPE/CAA). [fabimoraes@gmail.com](mailto:fabimoraes@gmail.com).

 0000-0001-8035-0163

Mailing address: Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Campus do Agreste da UFPE. AC Caruaru, Nossa Senhora das Dores, 55002970 - Caruaru, PE – Brasil.

Received: 04.03.2020.  
Accepted: 05.27.2020.  
Published: 07.01.2020.

### ABSTRACT:

This article analyses the profiles of four people from popular classes in Northeast Brazil: Carlinhos Maia, Branca Diva, Cauã Kardashian and MC Loma. With thousands or even millions of followers on Instagram, all of them display a narrative — fuelled by their fans — in which elements usually associated with the super famous (mansions, pools, travels) are valued at the same time that signs of humbleness are emphasized. In this unstable place, one perceives a specific tension in the process of being recognized among those who experience fame for the first time. Pacts regarding skin bleaching and erasure of poverty go hand in hand with the exposure of the latter as a value in itself - it is poverty, after all, that will sustain the myth of overcoming.

**KEYWORDS:** Celebrity; Poverty; Social networks; Racism; Recognition.

### Introduction

#### On a poverty that shows and hides

Of the possible ways for searching for recognition, media visibility (THOMPSON, 2008) is one of the most sought after in the context of a country historically vilified like Brazil. Here, as in any place where democratic institutions sound unsteady and poverty insists on jeopardizing the possibilities of citizenship for a large part of the population, being seen can confer a sense of full existence. At the end of 2017, extreme poverty reached 14.83 million people, or 7.2% of the nation, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). It is necessary to say that only 10% of the Brazilian population accumulates almost half of the income of the whole country (BENEDICTO; MARLI, 2018). In this deeply unequal context, being seen is related to the desire of showing oneself off, but not only. Showing up on platforms of high visibility goes beyond mere self-exposure among people who experience poverty, something that goes beyond

the elitist gaze that identifies in this only egoic exercises, especially in the social media environment. This perspective neglects something vital in the more comprehensive recognition of these presences: for those who lead a life surrounded by the constraints of low income, being seen is also a way of socially enrolling, being part of, belonging, being raised to the category of citizen. To be, in short, someone who matters, someone who, through technology, feels as being part of an idea of the social (COULDRY, 2010).

Despite (or because?) the recent fall in the population's life quality and rising inflation - just a few years after a total of 35.7 million Brazilians reached the middle class and 20.5 million left the country. poverty, according to the IBGE -, Brazil is also one of the countries most affected by internet and social networks: we occupy the third position among those who spend more time online (behind Thailand and Philippines), connected an average of 9 hours per day. We are in second place in the use of Instagram, with 57 million users, only behind the United States (110 million users in Brazil, according to data provide by the company itself). This apparent contradiction says a lot about what this research wants to address.

The interest in observing the right to be seen claimed among low-income people began when I conducted, between 2007 and 2011, a survey (MORAES, 2011) on the habit of reading celebrity magazines among women who frequent beauty salons in the periphery of Recife. Several of the interviewees were proud and flattered when they were approached to talk, when their voices were recorded, when they were photographed. The fact that the magazine surveyed was Caras (at that time, the second best-selling magazine in the country) also gave them a sense of rarity. During this period, when registering with a camera a lady who was participating in a picnic on the beach, I heard from her, after thanking and starting to walk away: "Thank you for photographing me." It was the full experience of what Taylor once indicated: recognition (understood, from the outset, as a gaze that presupposes the search for horizontality) cannot be seen as a favor, as a courtesy, but as a human need (TAYLOR, 1994).

In these situations, it was clear how people who are not usually targeted by external and media interest feel contemplated when their existences are not perceived as violent, traditional, sad or exotic. On the contrary, they cherish when their daily lives are also inserted, becoming images and records, into the spectrum of what deserves to be seen positively (although, as we will see, this positivity is sometimes constructed as self-denial). In our understanding, this is also how we should look at millions of performances by people from popular classes on the networks: there, Benjamin's shrewd phrase materializes more than ever: "Every person, today, can claim the right to be filmed" (1985,

p.183). Or to be looked at, admired, to better think part of the appearances available on social networks today.

It is with this perception that this article brings the analyses of the profiles on Instagram of Carlinhos Maia, Cauã Kardashian and Branca Diva, all from Penedo, inlands of Alagoas, Northeast of Brazil. And also the profile, on the same social network, of the artist MC Loma, from the outskirts of Recife. These profiles are read from the understanding of mediated visibility not only as a factor of social hierarchy - who has or has not, and to what extent, a visibility capital (MORAES, 2011) -, but as an instrument of self-recognition, of attempts to crack established narratives on the most vulnerable groups. When analyzing them, I perceive strategies that denote the tension and the challenges of being and remain visible among people who experience or have experienced poverty: to remain "authentic" and at the same time "correct" enough to be under the eyes of millions; to preserve oneself different from other celebrities while circulating among them; to speak to a wide audience in a politically polarized country while negotiating personal issues (such as blackness, family, beauty).

In the theoretical construction of the text, I bring the study carried out by Bargas and Maia (2017) on vulnerable communities, social networks and their search for recognition; the distinction between celebrification and celebritization made by Driessens (2014); the sociological impact of celebrities in Ortiz (2016); the tense relation between poverty and celebrity magazines analysed by Moraes (2011); the questions related to the status of the celebrities brought by Kurzman (2007) and Millner Junior (2010), both readers and critics of the status as thought by Weber (2004); the idea of a self-public theorized by Sibilía (2008). I analyse the posts published in the first three months after each of the selected profile began using Instagram. Then, also posts published in three selected months from the fourth month of use onwards until April 2018 (months chosen at random, according to the flow of posts in each profile), and finally, in March 2019. This selection allowed to observe changes in the ways of appearance, in different mechanisms to obtain visibility and in the distinctions, over time, of objects, places and the modes in which the profile owners present themselves. I am also guided by a perspective constructed by Barthes (1990) in the reading of images - Instagram is understood here as one of the places par excellence, today, to publicize oneself.

We also need to underline that media recognition, as Campanella (2018) put it, unlike other forms of recognition observed in political sociology and philosophy, still "is not part of historical struggles that aim to integrate large parts of the population in minimally dignified forms of existence in society" (CAMPANELLA, 2018, p.1). In a society

structurally transpassed by image - and, today, by the exposing of oneself -, it is necessary to listen to the meaning of this self-production of presences. Especially when it is created by people that are historically made invisible or made visible in a distorted way (BRIGHENTI, 2007).

In this sense, it is worth saying that if the Honnethian perspective of recognition brought by authors such as Bargas and Maia (2017) is appropriately used to study vulnerable groups of various orders in the networks - such as *quilombolas* in Pará and their relation with WhatsApp -, the same does not happen with unorganized people and / or groups that appear on the networks showing themselves and their daily lives. We infer, at first, that there is a different valuation between a poor population that organizes itself politically and seeks visibility and those people, also poor, who, almost always individually, want to be seen on social networks. Their strong relations with a universe related to celebrities (still a “minor” subject in academy, despite its relative insertion in it) may be one of the reasons for this less interested gaze. But, if indigenous or *quilombola* groups, for example, have a trajectory of violence (which seems to increase in the current national context), the same can be said of the impoverished Brazilian population, the majority coming precisely from the groups previously mentioned. They are people who are exposed to a police whose social protection practices have become non-existent. They are also exposed to a technological apparatus that enables new ways of social interaction and self-constructing. The use of networks means, for a large portion of them, a way of valuing themselves socially and of trying to repair damages experienced in a daily life of constraints. This is how we think here of recognition: “from its meanings within intersubjective relations and its importance in identity formation” (CAMPANELLA, 2018, p. 4).

Instagram was chosen both for its success in Brazil and for being the network that best aggregates, in one same profile, texts, videos and photographs. First, we chose the account of Carlinhos Maia (@carlinhosmaiaof), who became widely known through this social network by showing his impoverished daily life enveloped in good humour, something that will be discussed below. In early April 2019, his Instagram profile counted with 13 million followers. His fame brought visibility to some of his neighbours, especially the teenager Cauã Kardashian and Branca Diva, Carlinhos' aunt, whose profiles will also be analysed here. It is interesting to observe the changes in Maia's strategies regarding his celebrification process, a phenomenon understood here, as Driessens brought up quoting Couldry, as “a media ritual” that confirms “the myth that the media is the main guardian of the idealized centre of society” (COULDRY, 2003, apud DRIESENS, 2012, p.

10). In this sense, Maia's celebrification presents us with a series of questions about the ways in which someone located in a stigmatized class (and region) organizes his massive appearance. The tensions present in the process suggest the often conservative ways employed for obtaining celebrity status.

Let's see: at the beginning of his appearance on Instagram, in 2013, Maia was posing with different colored glasses and designer caps. He used the hashtag *#itboy*, a term coined in 1927 in the film *It*, starring actress Clara Bow, to refer to women (and later men) who were built as a fashion and lifestyle reference (EVANGELISTA; POLIANOV, 2016). Maia exposed a fit body in pools of inns and hotels, photographed dishes, appeared in airports and yachts. Three years after trying to insert himself into the disputed media environment as an *#itboy*, however, he exhibited signs perceived as antagonistic to the good life he had shown until then on the networks: the photos and videos now show a village with modest houses of exposed bricks, streets without sidewalks, goats, horses, clothes spread out in the open, pots cooking beans and other miscellaneous elements that refer to a modest, rural environment. This new and impoverished ambience proved to be a phenomenon: it was only when he "took over" this poor environment and included in his stories and photos what had been left out during his early attempts to be famous that the boy became what his fans call today the "king of Instagram". The turnaround took place exactly in 2016, when Carlinhos posted a humorous video about wearing a hair cap, a common practice among several women from popular classes. In an interview, he talked about this change:

"When I started I was criticized a lot by people from my city (...) I remember that I made the first videos with a good camera, borrowed from a friend of mine, in a beautiful house, which was her house, I kind of didn't want to show my house, the reality. They were kind of forced videos, it wasn't me, I was making vlogs and trying to be a youtuber like the others. Then, nine months ago, I said 'ah, I want to show my reality as it really is'. So, I made the video at my house, without much editing and posted it, and it was this success that you are following" (QUEIROZ, 2017, electronic text).

When deciding to "show reality as it is", he chooses to strategically invest in the theme that made him more visible: the joke, humour, with poverty as the main motto. The feature is not new in Brazil, where several comedians and soap operas are successful using the same idea. Here, however, there are two factors: first, we speak of someone who tried to achieve visibility by erasing his modest surroundings but realizing, later, that it is precisely this "simple life" that will take him to Olympus (MORIN, 1984); second, as a

consequence, we have the representation of poverty for millions of people performed by someone who has always experienced it, and not by proxy.

To make this possible, Maia invested in a self-representation that comes close to the images elaborated in the programs and soap operas in which "being poor" is also being histrionic, exaggerated, expansive, overeater and not very fond of restraints understood as the property of elites. That is how he reaches his millions of followers, something that leads us to speculate: will it be that, by opting for a somewhat conservative strategy of trivializing poverty after failing as *#itboy*, Maia is suggesting that this is the easiest way for popular classes to gain recognition (if we can use that term) in high visibility environments? Is it necessary for poverty, to be seen, to fall into the stereotyped categories of grace and / or disgrace?

In this search for insertion in the networks, and convinced by the perception that assuming poverty would be what would distinguish him in the dispute for visibility, Maia went through another process proper to celebrification: commoditization (DRIESSENS, 2014) not only of himself, but as a phenomenon that extended to its neighbours and even its family. Several of them have become his commercial partners. His celebrity status, acting contagiously (NEWMAN; DIESENDRICK; BLOOM, 2011), ends up reaching Cauã Kardashian and Branca Diva (and even his mother, Maria Maia, two million followers on Instagram in April 2019). They enjoy the newly acquired success and create their own profiles on social networks. In both, one notes the courting of the elements associated to good life as Maia did in past, as we will see below. The appearance of both besides these signs of rarity, common among those touched by the magic of celebrity, makes them distinct in the eyes of fans while demonstrating that, in order to obtain a desirable appearance, which would translate into greater social esteem, they make use of material goods as a means of confirming their own value.

Cauã Pablo Kardashian (@cauakardashian), a teenager who borrowed the surname of the American hypermedia family, has 991 thousand followers on Instagram (April, 2019) and started his profile in 2013. Branca Maia (@brancadivaa, 1, 2 million followers in April 2019) started the account on the app on October 1, 2017. Both identify themselves on their Instagram pages as "Carlinhos Maia's characters", with telephone numbers for contacts. While Cauã takes many selfies, Branca, the teenager's aunt, appears in photo shoots using poses common among bloggers and models. The "diva", corruption of the divine, divinity, is used in a dubious way (at least at the beginning of the apparitions), both to value the character and to cause a certain contrast: thinner than most models, she has non-symmetrical teeth and speech difficulties. She does not belong to the group of



people that until today the fashion industry to which she refers would classify as "beautiful". She is presented by Maia as "extremely innocent". In 2017, he held for her, with the help of his followers, a themed party inspired by Disney princesses, in which the birthday girl, over 30 years old, appeared dressed as Snow White.

Cauã and Diva very often use and / or mention luxury products in their posts, besides appearing in distinctive places. Cauã appears as a child in a photo, in 2013, wearing a bracelet that reads Moschino (simile of an original model of the luxury brand), while Branca asks in a video, as a birthday gift, "a Chanel bag and a Prada dress". Months later, with the fame gained after the popularization of Maia, both appear in their pages recommending products, from hotels to shoes. Maia, the most famous one, is now paid to appear with products and institutions of greater weight, such as cars, banks and cell phone operators. Currently, he mixes in his profile the images of the poverty of the village in the hinterland and images of his international trips or with other celebrities (presenter Luciano Huck, singer Anitta). He repeats in several posts that he "got there" thanks to the love of the fans and his work, in a highly meritocratic and assistentialist-oriented speech ("I will help you, my "bixin" (little thing)").

The ways of appearing and taking care of oneself and the presence of highly valued consumer goods in these profiles let us see that even those who experience daily poverty possess a visual repertoire linked to the body and luxury consumption. Repertoire that is not exclusive, therefore, to the middle classes located just below the elite that consumes those luxury items (BOURDIEU, 2007). The most distinctive of these signs are widely spread, even among poorer populations of the peripheries of capitalism, who, even if not experiencing the good life, consume their images (LIPOVETSKY; SERROY, 2015). Such adherence to the simile - the praise of deprivation of possession identified by Bourdieu - has already been observed in several works, especially those that address the consumption of luxury copies, such as Souza, Ayrosa and Cerchiaro (2013). The mention the popular classes make to these luxury objects, especially when emulated, can sometimes cause laughter (by opposition, as suggested by Branca), and sometimes acceptance and admiration of those who also share such codes and desires. When appearing with the aforementioned Moschino bracelet, Cauã seeks to exhibit a certain rarity and a sense of belonging to a group (which recognizes the value of that bracelet), while a follower jokingly writes, in the comments, "Is it from Paraguay?"

We understand that here, in the space of poverty, there is an appreciation of emblems common to the culture of celebrity, usually gathered in mythical spaces, true environments of exception, like the classic Ilha de Caras (MORAES, 2011). More: there is a

search for conforming to hegemonic, stabilized models, easily identified as "successful". These are ways of valuing oneself and of acquiring, in a mediated way, attention and esteem of an audience, common resources in a society in which being famous has become, for millions, also "being someone". This adherence to the signs of luxury (in line with a discourse of humility, as we shall see) has a real impact: more followers are gained and fans start to praise more effusively. It is understood that that person "got there". Thus, it is clear that the more fame the poor character gains, the more he is expected to adhere to the codes seen among the most visible celebrities. Poverty (and what is socially associated with it, including skin color) appears, then, as a "problem" to be corrected. It serves to catapult to a certain place, but then it needs to be accessed only when the famous person consents. There is a tension in this new appearance: a considerable part of followers resents when the characters distance themselves from the idea of "simplicity", whereas the apparent wealth is constantly underlined. There is a claim for the maintenance of an "essence", the simplicity that led them to adhere to those profiles.

In the characters observed here, a kind of crash between the good life and the life of the majority seems to be actively promoted (the more contrasting the codes, the greater the grace). The unpaved streets, the simple houses, the goats on the roads and the empty refrigerators are opposed to yachts, swimming pools, trips. The codes of lesser status are shown with a certain humour, as something good and that denotes a simple, honest character, of the inhabitants of the village. At the same time, they need to be overcome at some point - and this is where the profusion of images endorsing a good life appears. In this sense, we reinforce, adhere to, give continuity to the conservative way celebrity is seen and to which codes it needs to conform.

While Maia works hard on the opposition between the place he has conquered and the one in which he was born, continually and alternately marking his original condition as a poor person and then his entry into the mainstream of visibility and associated benefits, Cauã and Branca, in the construction of their characters - or of a public-self, as Sibilia (2008) calls it - invest in images in which they build themselves in the manner of successful and hyperfamous bloggers like the singer Beyoncé. The first already managed to "get there", the others are still moving towards the mythical space (BARTHES, 2002) publicized by their ex-neighbour. What one perceives in this search for recognition mediated by social networks is that, in a society that is strongly celebritized - as Driessens (2014) puts it, a phenomenon that happens at a social level, and not at an individual level -, the emergence, for impoverished classes, is also linked to conformities that involve racial and gender issues. Let's look at this issue both in Branca Diva and in another



important female celebrity in this analysis of recognition, poverty and mediated visibility, MC Loma.

### **Adhesion: whiten to appear**

Teenager Paloma Roberta Silva Santos, nationally known as MC Loma, had, in April 2019, 5.2 million followers on her Instagram (@mclomaofficial). His fame came in 2018 from the release of a homemade video. The song, entitled *Envolvimento*, quickly became a hit and turned her into a celebrity. The quickness of leaving the condition from an anonymous to a famous person and the tensions there involved can be seen in the images provided by the singer. There, we learn when she leaves the outskirts of Jabotão to live in São Paulo, what brings us the analysis of status assessments paired with the weight of the origin and location of the celebrity, according to Kurzman (2007). We also see her in a mansion recording a new version of her hit, now appearing alongside distinctive signs similar to those cherished by Carlinhos, Cauã and Branca: swimming pools, luxury cars, travel, beauty salons (a symptomatic reverse mirror of the original video: in the first, she was poor and not famous yet; now, massively visible, she needed to present herself as a rich person). The continuous appearance, reproduced on their networks, made followers of the artist both celebrate her for her success and demand a more "simple" posture, something that reached more weight in March 2018. That month, a TV anchor from Ceará stated that she did not appear in her program, as agreed, for "not being "modest" and making "a thousand demands, hair, car, helicopter" (State of São Paulo, 2018, electronic text). The statement hit the internet and the criticisms were reproduced on the young MC's social networks. After several statements denying the fact, Loma appeared showing connection to her origins, to the house without plastering (but loved anyway), which would be improved with her efforts. Elements that, despite their success, would be in her "essence". On her Instagram, she builds her narrative by inserting signs of the good life into her "normal" daily life as a peripheral girl - and in this sense, the young woman pays a price both for continually displaying her "humility" ("Thing of poor barbecue on the slab and *brejinha*", says a follower about a photo in which she appears next to a barbecue grill) and for showing signs of luxury. As in Carlinhos, the word overcoming is recurrent in the posts, and there is almost an apology for the success achieved. On April 4, 2018, a video published by Loma shows the moment she presented her mother with a cell phone. The text was written in capital letters, reproduced here. "I AM HAPPY TO BE ABLE TO GIVE YOU A GOOD MOBILE PHONE, I KNOW IT IS NOT A BIG THING, BUT I HAVE NEVER IMAGINED TO PROVIDES YOU ANYTHING OF VALUE" (SANTOS, 2018, Instagram, electronic

document). The post had 5,314,604 views that month. In the following month, in May, when she would participate in an award ceremony, she posted an image made after undergoing a beauty treatment in a São Paulo salon. In the photograph, markers such as the teenager's light hair, blue eyes and whitened skin are noteworthy. Quickly, the opposition between this new image and the previous one gained prominence in the networks, with several accolades, in a seemingly innocent "before and after", the first negative, the second positive. The same strategy, which values elements associated with wealth in the popular imagination (in which occupying the place of prestige is something that belongs to the rich, therefore white people) is also seen in Branca Diva's posts.

Symptomatically, the two of them were, according to current slang of their fans read in their posts after beauty treatments, hit by the "ryca virus", that which turns them into celebrities, into more beautiful people ("spent millions on surgery to have this face", "there is no ugly woman, there is a battered woman", we read in Loma's post). In this tense game of appearing and being recognized as worthy of such importance in the celebrity world, poverty is not exactly a problem, but to look poor, yes. It is necessary, therefore, to move away from what "delivers" this condition, and, in this sense, the dark skin appears as something to be overcome. The greater the visibility, the more it is necessary to "correct yourself" to be part of the pantheon of the media environment. Racism is reiterated, the canonical models of the most viewed are reiterated. The specific menu of those who deserve to be on stage and those who should remain as mere spectators is preserved. It is noted that, for poorer people who try to appear in the media (and, in particular, black women), seeking recognition is something that goes hand in hand with failing to show themselves.

### **Opposition: the poverty that cracks Paradise**

The process of being recognized (as deserving of attention, as someone worth photographing) through self-exposure on social networks, also arise central questions to think about the specifics of the media visibility acquired by poor people who reach the celebrity. In the case of Carlinhos Maia, the one with the largest number of followers analysed in this article (he also reached the mark of the "second most viewed Stories in the world", award from the MTV station, losing only to socialite Kim Kardashian), this visibility for millions was achieved first through humour and even scorn (in this case, something produced by Maia himself, who makes himself a motive for laugh). There is also, as we have seen, an intense association of all the profiles analysed here with the elements of luxury which are usual among those who enjoy high visibility.

But it must be said that the presence of people of humble social origin in the networks, who film themselves in these environments of poverty and who end up attracting thousands of followers, also cracks the menu of specific types that dominate the environment of the most celebrated ones (MORAES, 2005 , 2011). In it, lean bodies, white skin, economic and social capital dominate. It is when this adhesion can also mean, if read more broadly, also an opposition. When claiming the right to be seen, even when associating themselves with the cars and yachts valued in Olympus, the popular classes end up reorganizing, in contemporaneity, the meaning of who deserves or not to be in the spotlight. It is not, definitely, just an ordinary change.

As we browse the images (of environments, family members, ways of life) that the four profiles display, we are led to think: what would be the chance that people from a popular community in the interior of Alagoas would gain notoriety on the internet showing their day to day life? Or a young black woman from a very poor neighbourhood in Jaboatão, Pernambuco? People far from the centres of power and without the canonical markers of the famous, without the degrees of status pertinent to these media players (KURZMAN, 2007; MILLNER JUNIOR, 2010, MORAES, 2011)? In an industry that has established itself following a vertical model (GABLER, 1999; MARSHALL, 1997), the production of visibility born from the agents themselves, mainly people from the lower class and distant from the canonical centres of production, is an important sociological. As Brighenti says, visibility is political and it matters (BRIGHENTI, 2007). From these images and videos, we can observe new forms of appearance that are related to the power to corrode what is stabilized, in actions related to what is currently called "slaying", a both political and performative act. These are images that give more dignity to those who self-portray themselves, in contrast to much of the visual production that exhibits peripheral communities in Brazil. Maia, Loma, Cauã and Diva demand the right to be seen, but not as passive agents. These appearances, we know, are not devoid of tension, but they have a property that cannot be left aside: they are organized and spread by the protagonists of the content disseminated. And being visible is a fundamental condition for this (re) affirmation.

I leave the political dimension aside to insist on a specific point: to provide some people with the condition of visibility. This is a decisive attribute in defining the issue that interests us. The identified individuality can only be affirmed within the public space, it is the territory of its representativeness. In order to become something recognizable, the individual cannot be confined to his privacy; this must be projected on a terrain shared by "public opinion" (ORTIZ, 2016, P. 675).

There are other radical issues raised by this visibility. Observing the comments of followers in the four profiles, we noticed that the majority makes praises, some expressing the beauty, the “simplicity” of the famous, others with declarations of love and showing a similar “will to win”. All the newly visible ones are transformed here into life models, a role that is no longer exclusive among the technically and vertically produced celebrities, those whose perfect lives have historically populated celebrity programs and magazines (appearances mostly performed by white, young, thin, rich people). The massive appearances of people like MC Loma and Cauã thus help to break part of this hierarchical system: we can say (despite a series of snags, like the pact with the whitening) that there is a democratization of life models and, of course, of the possibilities of becoming visible. This phenomenon frightens those who usually inhabit the Olympus: in 2009, the socialite and writer Danuza Leão wrote a text in Folha de S. Paulo in which she regrets this new era. Below are some excerpts:

A long, long time ago, it was cool to be noble; started with the queen, then came the duchesses, countesses, marquises, etc. Time passed, heads were cut off, and the new rich were the heirs, shall we say, of the elite of the time.

Time continued to pass; came the big industrialists, the businessmen, the supermarket owners, the bicheiros, the marketers, the fashion industry, even the politicians, there were the yuppies and a curious new variety emerged: that of celebrities. This group includes television actors, characters from artistic life, soccer players, *pagodeiros*, *sertanejos*, etc., and dozens of magazines whose objective is to show the intimacy of these celebrities started popping up, telling the details of the life (or death) of a princess Diana, Madonna or Michael Jackson.

The more intimate and lurid, the better. In this brave new world, fashion imports enormously, and in this regard what counts - more than elegance and good taste - is knowing of which brand is each piece being used; how much each cost everyone knows, since they are so educated. A small detail: when two celebrities meet, even if they have never met, they greet each other effusively.

Before, long before, it was different: a nobleman, even poor, was respected for his origins, for what would have been done by one of his ancestors. Later, businessmen were admired for their intelligence, their ability to build something important in life. Now people are defined by symbols, namely: where they live, the brand of the shoe, the skirt, the jacket, the bag, the watch, the car, whether or not they have Blackberry, where they usually travel, in which hotels they stay, the brand of their bags, which restaurants they go, here and when they travel. Nobody has the courage to risk a vacation in a new place, a restaurant that is not famous, to use a bag without an easily identifiable label [...].

And football players and *pagodeiros*, who did not learn what is beautiful in childhood, because they were poor, or in adulthood, because there was no time, look at the magazines, dress an Armani and have the party, since they are also celebrities.

There is no more room for imagination, creativity, for a last-minute insight, which makes a particular woman the most special of the night. I'm not part of this world, but every now and then I accidentally bump into it, and it's difficult. A world of clichés; but as everything goes, I am waiting for the time to wake up and think that this time was just a nightmare (LEÃO, 2009, electronic document).

It is important to note that there are different degrees of hierarchy in celebrity positions, as pointed out by Rojek (2008) and Torres (2014) in two well-known classifications. The first draws the following distinctions between celebrities: conferred (royalty), acquired (actresses, singers of different degrees of fame) and attributed (celetoids, something that would be close to ephemeral sub-celebrities). The second, when talking about a celebrity economy, points out the stars, celebrities (or famous), the known (with the subtype known for a day) and also the personalities, a interesting category about who is famous despite avoiding public appearances. But it is important to underline that these distinctions are not supported only by a matter of talent and charisma (or lack of both): in the hierarchical system within the universe of celebrities, race, gender, social and geographical origin are fundamental markers for the constitution of a greater or lesser power (MORAES, 2016), which makes the massive self-produced appearances of poverty even more important. Neither Torres nor Rojek points to such questions, which are extremely important in the more comprehensive construction of their classifications.

The permanent gaze at the celebrity's female body shows us the strength of the discourse of normativity that is still strongly present in the system that offers us a good part of the images we consume. Despite certain media "dating" with other possible forms of existence (often guided by the profitability that these "other" existences can offer) and struggles for greater heterogeneity of people seen on social networks, the fact is that the status of black celebrity women suffer constant fissures when their appearance is not supported by markers of privilege. If fat, famous women need to stay "in their places" (comedies, for example, in the case of actresses) or quickly seek to "overcome" the weight considered above the allowed. Being black, this search needs to be even more urgent, since the association of the two characteristics relates them to an environment that cannot (yet?) be part of the celebrity universe, except in a folkloric way.

In this sense, Loma is currently spreading, through her Instagram, the more visible signs of a policy of opposition to the expected, corrected, technical body of the celebrity woman: in the photos in which she appears in a bikini she is strongly criticized (although the number of fans who defend her is even bigger), even if this does not prevent her from posting other similar images; she makes fun of the weight has put on in the last few years ("here is 65 kilos, because it's really good to eat", she says in a video in which she holds her abdominal fat, posted in early April). While she is observed with the scorn already experienced by generations of poor people who are inserted in some way in the media environment, she is at the same time praised for her "authenticity" and courage. For many, it doesn't matter her body's appearance or her humble origins if, in the end, she is being seen by more than five million people on one of her social networks. That's what makes her a winner.

We realize that success is generally understood as the result of both a personal and meritocratic effort ("struggling", "humble") and a divine consequence, bringing characters closer to the magical properties observed by Weber (2004) in his famous analysis of charismatic leaders. Maia himself often says in the networks that his light is divine - reason, he reinforces, why it will not go out. That is, he perceives, as a quality that is innate to the celebrity, something that shines, that is proper to that condition – and that is supernatural. In this sense, we can think about what Ortiz brings:

The celebrity condenses in herself/himself the traits of her/his own individuality, and this is the mark for which she/he is recognized. The status, the social class, the fact of belonging to a group become secondary (but not erased) in face of the presence of personal idiosyncrasy (ORTIZ, 2016, p. 675).

Here, we can infer that the followers, thousands of them from the popular classes, also see themselves represented by those residents of the Brazilian Northeast inlands. They start to consume images generated not only in advertising, in soap operas and other hegemonic means of producing representations, but also from people who historically were only spectators. The scorn that erupts many times is overcome by the positive reception of these self-narratives, which are extremely political, cracking, and coloured in black skin, making the representations of people who serve as a reference for different communities much more heterogeneous. In a selfie by Branca, a follower comments: "you are awesome, a person who believes that everything can change, simple, humble and talented! don't care what people say what matters is what you are inside!" (DIVA, 2018, electronic document). Carlinhos Maia, after conquering his millions of followers, performs



in theatres across the country, sometimes accompanied by Branca and Cauã, as well as Maria Maia, his mother, and other neighbours and relatives. His village also became a television attraction. Thus, the celebrated manages to transform not only his own life, but also the lives of those around him.

### Final considerations

Visibility capital (MORAES, 2011) is one of the most valued currencies in the contemporary world and, for many peripheral groups, those distant not only from places, but from positions of power - being visible is also a way of acquiring importance and social ascension. The construction of this capital is thus directly related to one of the spheres of recognition brought by Honneth, the one that relates to social esteem, in which there is a community of common values, of reciprocity (ALBORNOZ, 2011). Carlinhos, Branca, Cauã and Loma make themselves over the years on their social networks and gather millions of views on themselves, most of them supported by a solidarity based on values such as success. But the search for this recognition that occurs through media platforms is extremely hard: it happens, for poor people, in opposition to a whole established set of representations of who are the real ones that deserve attention. In this game where one consumes ways of life in which the idea of success is strongly related to the lean body, to the colour of the skin and to material goods, a strong desire to adapt to the proposed model is generated, as well as a race in which one tries to diminish the differences so explicitly marked; it is generated, mainly, a continuous and naturalized dissatisfaction with one's own existence (Carlinhos, in the end, becomes the it boy that he wished to be precisely when exploring his poverty, now something overcome, which appears as a scenario). These "qualities" related to celebrities and emulated by those we analyse here appear as natural and never built (MORAES, 2011). The lean body, the children, the romance, the personal fulfilment, the happiness, the beautiful house, the white skin: all these are symptoms of the very rare nature of the celebrities. When trying to make space on the visibility platforms, the four profiles end up adhering to these values, which are also assimilated and applauded by fans. At the same time, they need to send signs of purity, of an essence, that this good life can never corrupt: it is in getting rich but remaining desirous of the homemade food of the mother who lives in the Sertão that Carlinhos Maia will trace the thread that distinguishes him from the other famous. Loma, very applauded when blonde, with clear eyes, thinner, uses an iconoclastic mood to tear the image that she herself divulged in her network: in a bikini, she says that her black and fatter body is valuable, as well as her "imperfections". It is precisely here that

the desire and the dispute for visibility are important phenomena to analyse a country whose social inequality worsens after a period in which the poorest sectors experienced, at least in the sphere of consumption, some taste of the "good life". They point us not only to a supposed desire for exposure - where narcissism is responsible, in the most intellectualized sectors, for the disqualification of such will - but to the need for recognition in the midst of a highly mediated society in which to appear has also become an important capital for one's own survival and acceptance - of others, of themselves.

### References

- ALBORNOZ, Suzana Guerra. As esferas do reconhecimento: uma introdução a Axel Honneth. *Cad. psicol. soc. trab.*, vol. 14, n. 1, jun. 2011, pp. 127-143.
- BARGAS, Janine de Kássia Rocha; MAIA, Rousiley Celi Moreira. Quilombolas no WhatsApp: o papel do aprendizado coletivo nas lutas por reconhecimento. *Comun. Mídia consumo*, vol. 14, n. 41, set-dez 2017, pp. 31-52.
- BARTHES, Roland. A retórica da imagem. In: \_\_\_\_\_. *O óbvio e o obtuso*. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Mitologias*. 3.ed. Rio de Janeiro: Difel, 2002
- BENJAMIM, Walter. *Obras Escolhidas*. Trad. Sergio Paulo Rouanet. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1985.
- BENEDICTO, Marcelo; MARLI, Mônica. 10% da população concentram quase metade da renda do país. Agência IBGE Notícias. Rio de Janeiro, 11 abr. 2018. Disponível em: <https://agenciadenoticias.ibge.gov.br/agencia-noticias/2012-agencia-de-noticias/noticias/20844-10-da-populacao-concentram-quase-metade-da-renda-do-pais>. Acesso em: 02 abr. 2019.
- BRIGHENTI, Andrea. Visibility: A category for the social sciences. *Current Sociology*. vol. 55, n. 3, maio 2007, pp. 323-342.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre. *A distinção: crítica social do julgamento*. São Paulo: Edusp, 2007.
- CAMPANELLA, Bruno. Em busca do reconhecimento midiático: a autorrealização do sujeito na sociedade midiaticizada. *E-Compós, Ahead of Print*, abr 2018, pp. 1-20. Disponível em: <http://www.e-compos.org.br/e-compos/article/view/1499/1895>. Acesso em: 02 abr. 2019.
- COULDRY, Nick. *Why voice matters. Culture and Politics after Neoliberalism*. London: Sage, 2010.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Media, society, world: social theory and digital media practice*. Cambridge, Polity Press, 2012.

- DIVA, Branca. Penedo (Alagoas), 14 dez. 2018. @brancadivaa. Disponível em:  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BrXv4bPndsL/> Acesso em: 11 ago. 2020
- DRIESSENS, Oliver. A celebritização da sociedade e da cultura: entendendo a dinâmica estrutural da cultura da celebridade. *Ciberlegenda*, n. 31, 2014, pp. 8-25.
- EVANGELISTA, Simone. POLIVANOV, Beatriz. Construções Identitárias periféricas na rede: as It Girls das favelas cariocas no Instagram. *Anais do XXXIX Congresso Brasileiro de Ciências da Comunicação, Sociedade Brasileira de Estudos Interdisciplinares da Comunicação*, 2016. pp. 1-15.
- ESTADO DE SÃO PAULO. Apresentador cancela participação de MC Loma na TV após exigências. Disponível em:  
<https://emails.estadao.com.br/noticias/gente,apresentador-acusa-mc-loma-de-falta-de-humildade-apos-exigencias,70002227222>, acesso em 3.03.2019
- GABLER, N. *Vida: o filme*. São Paulo: Cia das Letras, 1999
- KURZMAN, Chales et al. Celebrity status. *Sociological Theory*, vol. 25, n. 4, dez 2007, pp. 347-367.
- LEÃO, Danuza. Sobre as modas. *Folha de São Paulo*. São Paulo, 09 ago. 2009. Disponível em: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/cotidian/ff0908200909.htm>. Acesso em: 04 abr. 2019.
- LIPOVETSKY, Gilles; SERROY, Jean. *A estetização do mundo: viver na era do capitalismo do artista*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2015.
- MARSHALL, P. David. *Celebrity and power: fame in contemporary culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
- MILLNER JUNIOR, Murray. Is celebrity a new kind of status system? *Society Magazine*, vol. 47, n. 5, jul. 2010, pp. 379-387.
- MORAES, Fabiana. *Do pseudo-evento à não notícia: um estudo sobre a revista Caras*. 188 f. 2005. Dissertação (Mestrado em Sociologia) – Centro de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Recife, 2005.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *É tu nada estrela: revista Caras e o consumo da felicidade nos salões de beleza de periferia*. 259 f. 2011. Tese (Doutorado em Sociologia) – Centro de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Recife, 2011.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Não acredito que estou vendo isso”: raça, peso e origem social no status instável da mulher celebridade. *Anais do XXXIX Congresso Brasileiro de Ciências da Comunicação, Sociedade Brasileira de Estudos Interdisciplinares da Comunicação*, 2016. pp. 1-15.

- MORIN, Edgar. Cultura de massas no século XX: O espírito do tempo, Neurose. Rio de Janeiro: Forense-Universitária, 1984.
- NEWMAN, George E.; DIESENDRUCK, G.; BLOOM, Paul. Celebrity contagion and the value of objects. *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 38, n. 2, august 2011, pp. 215–228.
- ORTIZ, Renato. As celebridades como emblema sociológico. *Sociol. Antropol.*, vol.6, n. 3, set-dez 2016, pp.669-697.
- QUEIROZ, Beatriz. Com mais de 4 milhões de seguidores, Carlinhos Maia quer despertar sorrisos. *Correio Braziliense*, Brasília, ano 58, 15 nov. 2017. Disponível em: [https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/app/noticia/diversao-e-arte/2017/11/15/interna\\_diversao\\_arte,641019/com-mais-de-4-milhoes-de-seguidores-carlinhos-maia-quer-despertar-sor.shtml](https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/app/noticia/diversao-e-arte/2017/11/15/interna_diversao_arte,641019/com-mais-de-4-milhoes-de-seguidores-carlinhos-maia-quer-despertar-sor.shtml). Acesso em: 26 maio 2018.
- ROJEK, Chris. *Celebridade*. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 2008.
- SANTOS, PALOMA (MC LOMA). [sem título]. Jabotão (PE), 4 abril 2018. Instagram: @mclomaofficial. Disponível em: <https://www.instagram.com/p/>. Acesso em: 11 ago. 2020.
- SIBILIA, Paula. *O Show do Eu: a intimidade como espetáculo*. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 2008.
- SOUZA, Danielle Soutilha; AYROSA, Eduardo André Teixeira; CERCHIARO, Isabel Balloussier. “Do Bom e Do Melhor”: O consumo de bens de luxo na classe C. *Sociedade, Contabilidade e Gestão*, vol. 8, n. 1, jan-abr 2013, pp. 80-97.
- TAYLOR, Charles. *Multiculturalism: examining the politics of recognition*. Ed. Amy Gutmann. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994
- TORRES, Eduardo Cintra. Economia e carisma da indústria cultural da celebridade. In: FRANÇA, Vera et al. (orgs.). *Celebridades do século XXI: transformações no estatuto da fama*. Porto Alegre: Sulina, 2014. pp. 71-94.
- THOMPSON, John B. A nova visibilidade. *Matrizes*, vol. 1, n. 2, abr 2008. pp.15-38.
- WEBER, Max. *Economia e Sociedade*. Brasília: Editora Universidade de Brasília, 2004.

**RESUMO:**

Este artigo analisa os perfis de quatro pessoas presentes nas classes populares do

Nordeste brasileiro: Carlinhos Maia, Branca Dìva, Cauã Kardashian e MC Loma. Com milhares ou mesmo milhões de seguidores e

seguidoras na rede social Instagram, todas elas exibem uma narrativa — incrementada pelos fãs — na qual elementos usualmente relacionados aos hipermediáticos (mansões, piscinas, viagens) são valorizados, ao mesmo tempo em que sublinham signos de humildade. Nesse lugar instável, percebe-se a existência de uma tensão específica no processo de ser reconhecido entre aqueles que experimentam pela primeira vez a fama. Estão aí presentes tanto pactos de embranquecimento da pele e de apagamento da pobreza quanto a exibição desta última como valor em si mesma — é a pobreza, afinal, que vai sustentar o mito da superação.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Celebridade; Pobreza; Redes sociais; Racismo; Reconhecimento.

o incluso millones de seguidores y seguidores en la red social Instagram, todos exhiben una narrativa, aumentada por los fanáticos, en la que se valoran elementos generalmente relacionados con hipermedia (mansiones, piscinas, viajes), al tiempo que subrayan signos de humildad. . En este lugar inestable, existe una tensión específica en el proceso de ser reconocido entre aquellos que experimentan fama por primera vez. Hay dos pactos para blanquear la piel y borrar la pobreza, así como la exhibición de este último como un valor en sí mismo: es la pobreza, después de todo, lo que sostendrá el mito de la superación.

**PALABRAS-CLAVES:** Celebridad; Pobreza; Redes sociales; Racismo; Reconocimiento.

**RESUMEN:**

Este artículo analiza los perfiles de cuatro personas presentes en las clases populares del noreste de Brasil: Carlinhos Maia, Branca Diva, Cauã Kardashian y MC Loma. Con miles