

# Sexuality and religion in the public sphere. Opinions of French students on mediatization of intimate sphere

*Sexualitatea eta erlijioa esfera publikoan.*

*Frantziako ikasleen esfera intimoaren mediatizazioari buruzko iritziak*

Sexualidad y religión en la esfera pública. Opiniones de estudiantes franceses sobre la mediatización de la esfera íntima

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**ABSTRACT:** This article explores the passive participation of French students within the construction of public opinion on sexuality and religion. The research was conducted on 375 French students' sample, aged 18 to 23 in the second year of Bachelor's degree in Humanities and Social Sciences within a control environment of documentary research, discursive production, and audiovisual creativity. The experience took place over two consecutive years, respectively, 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. The experiment was based on three distinct explorations corresponding to distinct individual cognitive experiences aimed at the representation, expression and meaning of the intimate limits assigned by students to public display through the mediatization of sexuality and religion. The opinion of French students on the mediatization of intimate sphere in view of their passive participation within the construction of this opinion feeds two scenarios: privatization of the public sphere and commodification of the intimate sphere.

**KEYWORDS:** French students; intimate and public sphere; mediatized public opinion; passive participation; religion; sexuality.

**RESUMEN:** Este artículo explora la participación pasiva de los estudiantes franceses en la construcción de la opinión pública sobre sexualidad y religión. La investigación se llevó a cabo con 375 estudiantes franceses, entre 18 y 23 años, inscritos en segundo año de la licenciatura en Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales, en un entorno controlado de investigación documental, producción discursiva y creatividad audiovisual. La experiencia tuvo lugar durante dos años consecutivos, 2017-2018 y 2018-2019. El experimento se basó en tres exploraciones distintas correspondientes a diversas experiencias cognitivas individuales dirigidas a la representación, expresión y significado de los límites íntimos asignados por los estudiantes en relación con la exhibición pública mediatizada de la sexualidad y la religión. La opinión de los estudiantes franceses sobre la mediatización de la esfera íntima a través de su participación pasiva en la construcción de opinión, alimenta dos escenarios: la privatización de la esfera pública y la mercantilización de la esfera íntima.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Estudiantes franceses; esfera íntima y pública; opinión pública mediatizada; participación pasiva; religión; sexualidad.

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## **Introduction. Theoretical considerations**

Sexuality and religion are two identity spaces, both individual and collective, that designate private or even intimate places (Giddens, 1992; Amiraux, 2018). The consensus of researchers is widely effective from this perspective despite the diversity of their theoretical and methodological approaches. Be it sexual identity (Johansson, 2016; Moran, 2017; White, Moeller, Ivcevic, & Brackett, 2018; 2018; Underwood, 2019) or religious identity (Hunsberger, Pratt & Pancer, 2001; Ebstynne King, 2003; Oppong, 2013) what is observable as a common element in the studies conducted to date is the presence of the transdisciplinary problem of the moving boundary that separates and organizes the places of crossover between these intimate identity spaces and the public sphere, especially when it comes to the mediatized public sphere (Hoover, 2003; Subrahmanyam, Greenfield & Tynes, 2004; Meyer, 2013; Lövheim, 2013). Media technologies in general and digital media in particular induce a permanent redefinition of public and private spheres by constantly decreasing the intimate sphere without managing up to now to occupy it completely and irreversibly. This statement has already been made by observing television at the end of the 20th century: «Private sphere and public sphere intertwine. Private life and public life collide. Intimacy and ‘extimacy’ merge, inner self and outer self resonate. However, while private space, privacy and intimacy gain visibility, the inner self remains, for the moment, sheltered from the limelight. Cases of conscience, introspection, reflection on the motives, irresolution are tied up outside the public eye» (Mehl, 1996: 234).

The advent of digital media and the development of social media have led to major changes in the form of the interference that separates and connects both public spaces and private and intimate spaces. Nevertheless, the principle of spaces considered as «forbidden to the public» remains valid, observable and exploitable not only for scientific research, but also for the daily strategies of defense of personal intimacy facing the visibility «aggressively» imposed by new technologies of mediatization. Thus, in the era of social media empirical observation always imposes private space and intimacy as social realities (Atifi & Touati, 2020) even if the porosity of their limits with the public space appears more pronounced and the individual responsibility in the defense of these limits is increased: «the connections belonging to several social worlds are placed in a common virtual space (...) without any separation corresponding to the segmentations made in everyday life. The barrier of intimacy (...) protecting the personal sphere is reduced, which makes the individual management of the borderlines much more important than in the case of direct interactions and in the mediated private interactions. In the absence of institutionalized boundaries by distinct social contexts (home, office, coffee, street, etc.), the responsibility for creating and maintaining boundaries (...) lies entirely with the individual» (Ollier-Malaterre, 2018: 126). In the context of the mediatization of

everything (Livingstone 2009; Tudor & Bratosin, 2020)<sup>1</sup>, the main question of the present research is the following: do sexuality and religion preserve their character of private/intimate spaces at the cost of fluidizing their borderlines with the public sphere of a now liquid society (Bauman, 2013)?

## **1. Politicization of sexuality, publicizing religion and intimate motivations: Working hypotheses**

The sociological consideration of sexuality and religion as components of the public sphere has acquired a particular dimension at the end of the twentieth century in the body of work theorizing the concept of citizenship as new technologies and communication practices had disrupted the definition and functioning of traditional communities (eg Carver & Mottier, 1998; Richardson, 1998; Tahon, 1999; Spinner-Halev, 2000). The politicization of private/intimate spaces of sexuality and religion, however, raises as many questions as their publicization increased in the current context of mediatization. These questions may nevertheless be summarized in a single all-encompassing question: to what extent do sexuality and religion objectively belong at a given moment to the private sphere or public sphere or to the public and private sphere at the same time? Current epistemological and methodological approaches have produced and conditioned responses from hypotheses that focus more on spatial socio-political organizational and institutional determinations, which in most cases obscure the individual determinations of public opinion regarding the relations between public space and private/intimate spaces of sexuality and religion.

With regard to sexuality, the hypothesis of its politicization is dominant. It is illustrated in many debates on homosexuality, heterosexuality, sexual violence, gender, pornography, positive discrimination, sexual harassment, etc. and is developed in many research works (e.g. Weeks, Maudet & Thomé, 2015; Messina, 2018). Politicization gives rise to studies that «make it possible to evaluate the place and intensity of political opinions in private conversations, within the couple, with the family or in the context of friendship. It identifies certain social, psycho-affective and political types of this form of politicization by intimacy, which is framed by the space of interpersonal and private relations. It thus fits into a perspective that takes into account the private infrastructure of choices made in the public sphere to explain the place and content of politics as it deflects into individual lives» (Muxel, 2015: 544).

With regard to religion, two major hypotheses clash in the scientific debate: «de-privatisation of religion» and the «publicization of the intimacy» (Bellerose,

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<sup>1</sup> Everything (from institutions to individuals) is increasingly dependent on and shaped by media.

2008). According to the first perspective, «privatization and de-privatization are therefore historical options for religion in the modern world. Some religions will be induced by tradition, principle, and historical circumstances to remain basically private religions of individual salvation. Certain cultural traditions, religious doctrinal principles, and historical circumstances, by contrast, will induce other religions to enter, at least occasionally, into the public sphere» (Casanova, 1994: 221). As to the second perspective, «rather than ‘de-privatization’, it is a question of publicization of the intimacy where the belief intends to preserve its freedom and its private singularity while playing a public role» (Gauchet, 1998: 138).

Unlike previous perspectives regarding the social production of the symbolic boundaries between public sphere and the private/intimate sphere of sexuality and religion, we make the choice to consider the individual constitutive determinations of the public opinion. From this point of view, we thus form the hypothesis that the public/private-intimate delimitations induced by the social problems of sexuality and religion, the movements of these delimitations and the meaning of the passages they organize are found in individual intimate motivations on which rests the media construction of the public opinion.

## **2. Passive participation in the public opinion and critical thinking**

Studies distinguish two types of participation in the construction of mediatized public opinion: a) active participation – activist, engaged, propagandist one (Hubbard, 2001; Amiraux, 2018) and b) passive participation consisting of affective non-activist positioning – more or less cyclical – of the possible circumstantial choice in relation to convictions, values, judgments, prejudices and personal beliefs (Gefen, Ragowsky & Ridings, 2008; Ergler, 2011). The present research falls within the scope of the second type of participation. This choice is motivated by the fact that «the new forms of mobilization place greater importance on passive participation, from the moment that they no longer involve direct contact between members, being content with electronic and media contacts» (Dragoman, 2011, 125), even if «they demand (...) a high political and intellectual sophistication» (*Idem*). In this sense, studies based on the theory of «Spiral of Silence» (Noelle-Neumann, 1974) in Digital Social Networking Spaces (DSNS) have already shown that passive participation plays a decisive role in the construction of public opinion. This body of works – in continuation of research based on this theory in order to study the role of personal relationships (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003; McDevitt *et al.*, 2003; Hayes, 2007; Neuwirth *et al.*, 2007) – is of additional interest for our research since it focuses on explaining passive participatory behaviors in the theoretical perspective of «Spiral of Silence» at the micro level. However, they point out the persistence of the reluctance of individuals with minority opinions to express themselves even

when it comes to give their opinions online (Kim, 2016; Stoycheff, 2016). This situation therefore poses the problem of the undifferentiated way in which passive participation is apprehended in current studies and reveals the methodological necessity of setting up sociotechnical observation apparatus specific to passive participation. This choice is also motivated by the fact that passive participation in previous studies has been approached from observable behaviors in the mediatized individuation practical contexts of the society and only incidentally in relation to the symbolic forms of these contexts, that is to say in relation to the laws of the human spirit that determine the contextualization of these observable behaviors (cf. Cassirer, 1972). These studies clarify and propose qualitative and quantitative approaches to a) the diffusion of public opinion based on the influence of social media on people's opinions and on how the information that they get through these networks could influence the opinions of individuals (eg Dubois, Gruzd & Jacobson, 2018; Weidong, Qian & Jie, 2018) and to b) the practices and means to be put in place for the control of public opinion (Zhang *et al.*, 2018). Certainly, «public opinion formation can be understood as a process taking part in different types of social networks (and) theories and figures of social network analysis may offer a fruitful addition to traditional approaches to deal with public opinion» (Urban & Bulkow, 2013: 109). But all these works focused on predictability only consider data that allow the management of opinion as socio-cultural product of the public sphere. They are interested, however, in the collateral contributions induced by the construction and dissemination of public opinion, such as the production of symbolic frontiers which organize not only the delimitations, but especially the passages between the public sphere and other spheres of human activity. These collateral contributions are the result of passive participations in the construction of public opinion.

The interest attached to the present article does not come solely from the need to study these «micro opinions» that are the foundation of symbolic frontiers, but especially of the epistemological necessity of questioning of media determinism in sociological approaches of public opinion as well (Juszczuk, 2004; Watts & Dodds, 2007). By exploring the opinion of French students on the mediatization of sexuality and religion, we propose to reconsider the validity of the public sphere's enlargement hypothesis consecutive to the phenomenon of «mediatization of everything».

### **3. Empirical and methodological delimitations**

#### **3.1. COGNITIVE PRACTICES AS A SOCIO-TECHNICAL APPARATUS**

We place our study in the sociological perspective of symbolic interactionism (Strauss, 1992) which qualifies the «face-to-face domain as an analytically viable domain (...) whose preferred method of analysis is microanalysis» (Goffman, 1988:

191). Therefore, within the framework delimited by the theoretical approaches previously announced, we considered for our research the socio-technical apparatus that engages the reflexive capacity of the human mind to promote passive participation in the construction of an already existing public opinion through practices of social construction of the individual (Cassirer, 1975) which aim neither the diffusion, nor the control of this opinion, because «the society does not need to be internalized in the individual in the form of representations, but it is inherently evident at the outset to the individual in the form of a common sense. The acquisition of the content of common sense could certainly be taken into account, but what always remains primary is the cognitive relationship that we have with the spirit of the other: the ‘social’ is present at the cognitive level in a basic form, the ability to share and implement beliefs, which is a social skill. The organization of the individual experience has a social dimension» (Bonicco, 2006: 46-47).

Thus we selected as sociotechnical apparatus focusing on teaching, research and professional training cognitive practices. More precisely, we conducted our observations on 375 French students’ sample aged 18 to 23 in the second year of Bachelor’s degree in Humanities and Social Sciences, including 76% women and 24% men, within a control environment of documentary research, discursive production and audiovisual creativity. The experience took place over two consecutive years, respectively, 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. The experiment was based on three distinct explorations corresponding to distinct individual cognitive experiences aimed at the representation, expression and meaning of the intimate limits assigned by students to public display through the mediatization of sexuality and religion.

### 3.2. DESCRIPTION OF THE EXPERIMENT

#### A) *Documentary research: production of a corpus of articles*

The first individual cognitive experience was the production of a corpus of articles on «Religion and sexuality in the mediatized public sphere». More precisely, in order to answer a pedagogical prerequisite for documentary research, the students have generated a double list of articles: a) a list of at least 20 scientific articles addressing topics related to religion and sexuality in the public sphere and the media and b) a list of at least 20 online press articles published between 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 on religion and sexuality. The experience was based on the assumption that the students have acquired knowledge, know what it is used for in the construction of the corpus and, therefore, the establishment of these lists is a reasoned choice. «Reasoned choice requires knowledge, knowledge requires information, and information requires attention. However, reasoned choice need not require either full information or unlimited attention. Instead, reasoned choice requires information that generates accurate predictions about the choice» (Lupia,

McCubbins & Arthur, 1998: 25). The reasoned choice of students as it relates to the media offer, i.e. knowledge and information concerning sexuality and religion is considered as passive participation in public opinion, that is to say as a cognitive action based on their beliefs and desires (Hornsby, 2007, 2008). The composition of these lists was observed as an indicator of the students' relationship to the knowledge and information media offer concerning sexuality and religion.

B) *Discursive production: writing an essay*

The second individual cognitive experience observed was the writing of an essay in the form of a critical commentary on «Religion and sexuality in the mediatized public sphere». Precisely, each student has written an essay illustrated with examples from the media coverage of sexuality and religion to answer the following three questions: a) Do religion and sexuality fall within the public sphere or private sphere or both? b) What are the main topics of media debate related to religion and sexuality? c) What are the political motivations for societal issues' mediatization related to sexuality and religion? The experiment is based on the assumptions that the text produced by each student constitutes an act of interlocution, the interlocution is a form of recognition of oneself and of others, and the «writing maintains the debate and renders available an archive of individual and collective memory» (Ricœur, 1986: 156). Thus, the recognition given by students while writing their essays is therefore a critical recognition (Franco & Marques Vieira, 2018; Sabat, 2019) of which «the sphere of the 'being-recognized' is constituted by the accumulation of the results of all the individual formation processes (*Bildungsprozesse*) combined» (Honneth, 1992: 83). Hence we consider critical recognition as the passive participation in public opinion about intimate/private-public delimitation in the mediatized context of sexuality and religion. Therefore, the text produced by each student has been observed as an indicator of the private boundaries imposed on the public sphere by the education «of both the conscience and the will, which engages ones' individual and social being at the psychological, social, and epistemic level» (Olivier, 2015: 82).

C) *Audiovisual production: making a video*

The third individual cognitive experience observed was the production of a video material of up to three minutes on «Religion and sexuality in the mediatized public sphere». More precisely, each student has produced a vertical video by using a smartphone with a duration of one to three minutes, embellished with and key phrases to account for the mediatization of sexuality and religion by published images sourced from online newspaper sites and capturing the related social media content. The student video production experiment has been considered – within

the paradigm of creative design – as a form of passive participation in public opinion since «the role of the knowledge base in creative design is to provide the content and organization of design knowledge that can be used to generate a creative product. This is similar to the role of experience (...) Creativity is rarely the result of naivety, but rather it results from the ability of a highly intelligent person to put different ideas together and recognize their value. The knowledge base serves the purpose of providing such knowledge. In knowledge-based creative design we are able to explore the role, content, and organization of suitable knowledge bases» (Gero & Maher, 2013: 13). The content of these videos has been observed as an indicator for the integration, restructuring and the reformulation of the knowledge previously acquired by the students within the limits that the mediatization of sexuality and religion is imbedding in the public sphere.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. REASONED CHOICE

In order to analyse the corpus of articles produced by the students related to the knowledge and information media offer concerning sexuality and religion we have constituted a grid of six discriminatory categories of which: three for the definition of the public sphere and three for the definition of the intimate/private sphere. Regarding the public sphere we have chosen the following categories: «debate», «symbolic» and «visible» (Bratosin, 2001). Regarding the private sphere, we have chosen the categories of «knowledge», «dignity» and «freedom» (Post, 2000). Then, according to the categories selected, we coded the articles of the three corpuses, each time respecting the distinction between the scientific and press articles. Of all the articles chosen by the students (2017-2019), 72.33% are focused on the public sphere and 27.76% on the intimate sphere. More precisely, 68.10% of the scientific articles are revealing research results on themes corresponding to the public sphere and 31.90% on themes corresponding to the intimate sphere, while 75.89% of the press information offer is linked to the public sphere and 24.11% to the intimate sphere. This trend is also confirmed when looking at the corpus of articles on sexuality and religion separately (same period, i.e. 2017-2019). The scientific articles on sexuality selected by students address 64.81% of the subjects related to the public sphere and 35.19% of the subjects related to the intimate sphere. Press articles selected by students on the same subject deal with 70% the public sphere issues and for 30% the intimate sphere issues.

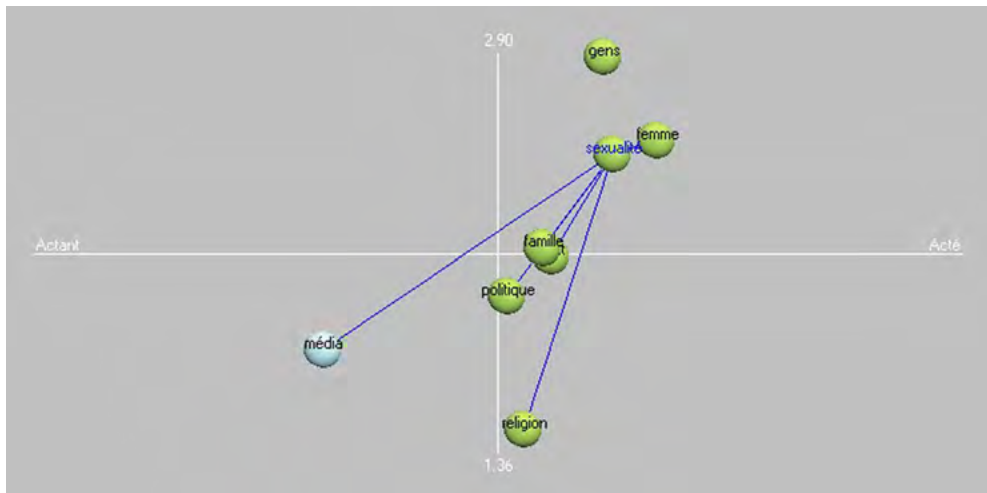
Regarding the scientific articles on religion selected by students (2017-2019), 72.50% account for research on the public sphere issues and 27.50% on intimate sphere issues. 81.13% of online press articles provide information on public sphere issues and only 18.87% on intimate sphere issues.



## 4.2. CRITICAL RECOGNITION

In order to observe the intimate boundary imposed by students on the public sphere, we have considered the semantic construction of four discursive occurrences in their essays: «sexuality», «sex», «religion» and «belief». The choice of these four words was decided in relation to a) their direct link with the object of this research, b) their generic scope which covers large multi-disciplinary and transdisciplinary thematic areas allowing to group very heterogeneous references and c) their ambivalent and cross-border meaning situated between «public» and «private»/«intimate». From this perspective, the indicator taken into account to identify the public sphere was the occurrences of «media» and its variations as fundamental component of the notion of public sphere.

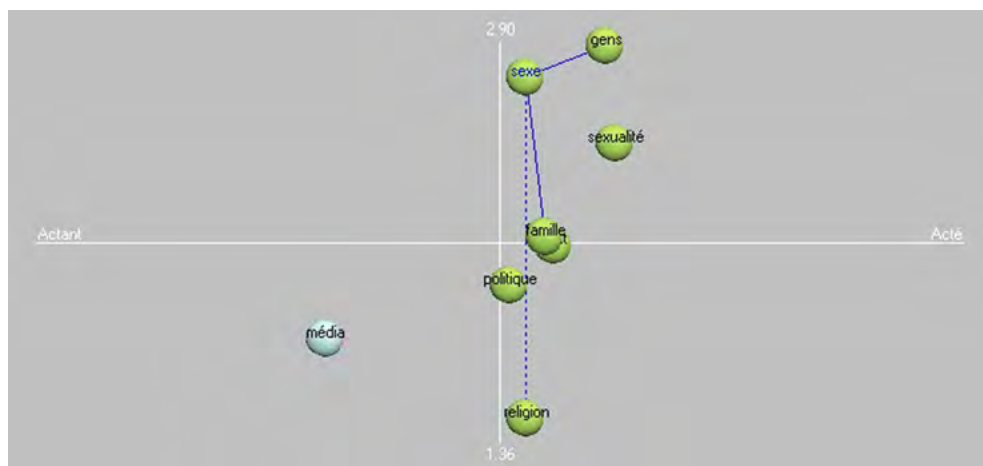
The analysis, carried out using the semantic analysis software and text search Tropes<sup>2</sup>, highlighted that students correlated in their essays the incidence of «sexuality» with the incidence of «media» (Graph 1). Conversely, they do not correlate the incidence of «sex» with the incidence of «media» (Graph 2).



GRAPH 1

Relationship between «sexuality» and «media» occurrences

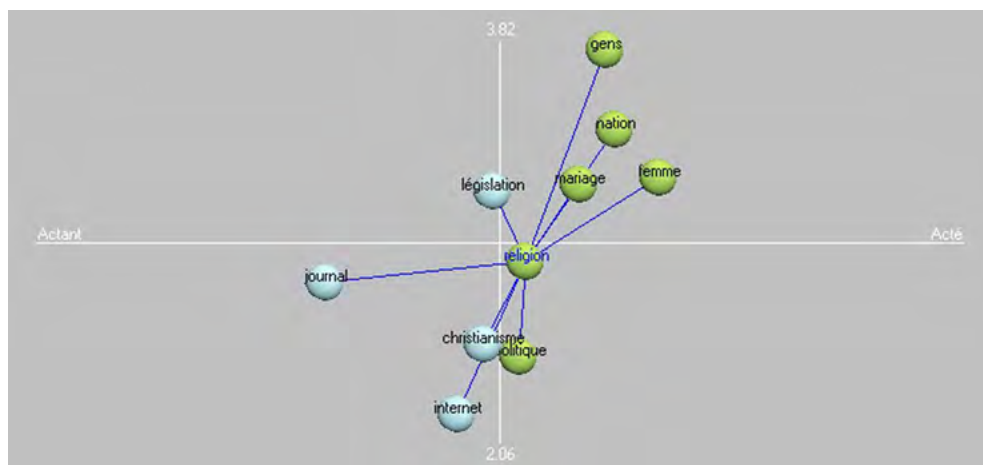
<sup>2</sup> Tropes is a semantic analysis software developed by Pierre Molette and Agnès Landré starting from the research of Rodolphe Ghiglione (Mininni, Ghiglione and Sales-Wuillemin 1995), used to analyze the content of a text. For more details see: <https://www.tropes.fr/TaxesManualV840.pdf>



GRAPH 2

Relationship between «sex» and «media» occurrences

This distinction made by the students is reiterated with regard to «religion»-«belief». Thus it appears that students correlate the incidence «religion» with the incidence «newspaper» and «Internet» (Graph 3). Nevertheless, they do not associate the incidence «belief» with the same incidences «newspaper» and «Internet» (Graph 4). More precisely, students recognize «sexuality» and «religion» as social and therefore public practices, while the «sex» and «belief» that underpin sexuality and religion are assigned to the intimate sphere, respectively.



GRAPH 3

Relationship between «religion», «journal» and «internet» occurrences

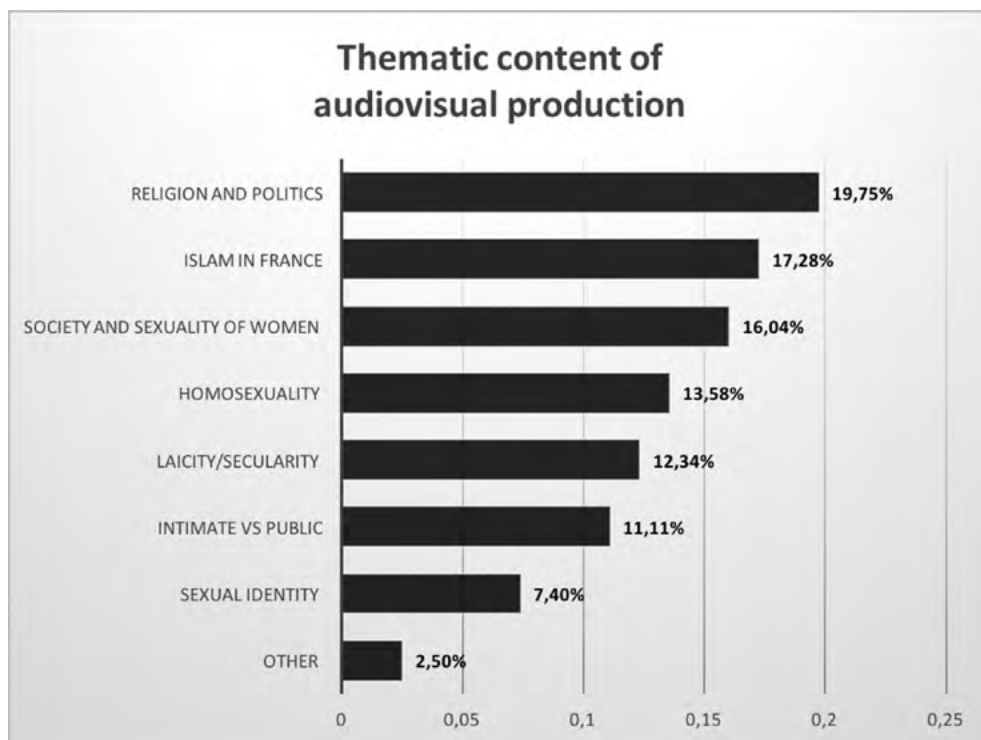


GRAPH 4

Relationship between «belief», «journal» and «internet» occurrences

#### 4.3. CREATIVE DESIGN

In order to observe the integration, restructuring and reformulation of knowledge previously acquired by students within the limits which mediatization of sexuality and religion projects into the public sphere, we have identified, listed and quantified themes derived from the content of the students' audiovisual production. The content gathers only seven themes which each cover more than 3% of this content at different rates which vary between 19.75% and 7.40%. These themes are closely linked to the publicization of high-profile debates: *religion and politics* 19.75%, *Islam in France* 17.28%, *society and the sexuality of women* 16.04%, *homosexuality* 13.58%, *secularism (laïcité)* 12.34%, *intimate vs. public* 11.11%, *sexual identity* 7.40% (Graph 5). It is necessary to underline here the absence of the themes related to the intimate sphere. This absence may seem surprising but it is coherent with the critical recognition of the existing boundary between the public and the intimate spheres presented above. The students tend to keep away from the media the content of the intimate sphere.



GRAPH 5

Thematic content of audiovisual production (2017-2019)

## 5. Discussions

The results highlight two major trends in the passive participation of French students in the construction of public opinion on the mediatization of intimate sphere: a) the typical preponderance of the public sphere over the intimate sphere in their choices and b) the reluctance of the intimate sphere to mediatization.

### 5.1. TYPICAL PREPONDERANCE OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE OVER THE INTIMATE SPHERE

The representations of the public sphere take precedence over those of the intimate sphere in students' choices. Hence, the representative preponderance of the public sphere over the intimate sphere is a tendency which characterizes passive participation. This is by definition related to the environment of the object taken

into account. More exactly, this tendency should not be understood directly in relation to students' sexual and religious relationships, but, in this case, in connection with the «mediatization of everything» as a sociocultural phenomenon. The typical preponderance of the public sphere over the intimate sphere in the choices made is thus due to the four augmented media predispositions within the context of new media students' uses.

- a) The extension of the public sphere. In order to push the limits of the public sphere, digital media give themselves means to penetrate into the private sphere.
- b) The substitution of the intimate sphere. This predisposition is constantly augmented by the continuously developing performances of new media in the sense of responding to users' impulses: «Access to communication means being democratized, the media product (information) circulates extremely fast. Each media user increases his phantasmagorical potential by putting into perspective desires and impulses of which he is the sole propagator. Each media user is both subject and object. Being a person capable of creating information and disseminating it, each individual using any form of media, imposes his/her power of will and influence to others» (Dutertre, 2013: 31). In the present case study, each student created information and formatted it for dissemination by its own choices, which gives meaning to his/her passive participation in public opinion on the mediatization of sexuality and religion.
- c) The amalgamation of the intimate sphere over the public sphere. New media are no longer just technologies that respond to information and communication needs, but also new forms of «living» collectively and publicly personal and intimate experiences.
- d) The accommodation of intimacy to the public through the massive use of digital media. The prevalence of the representation of public sphere over the private sphere in the passive participation of French students in public opinion on mediatization of intimacy shows that technology must be considered as an almost ideological influencer of the political choice of individuals.

## 5.2. RESISTANCE TO THE MEDIATIZATION OF INTIMATE SPHERE

Despite the strong quantitative superiority of representations of the public sphere over those of the intimate sphere, the second major tendency of French students' passive participation in the construction of public opinion on the mediatization of intimate spaces is the resistance to the mediatization of intimate sphere as a component of passive participation. The three individual cognitive experiences have emphasized this tendency. During the documentary production, students

have reserved almost a third of the corpus of articles to intimate sphere. While participating in the discursive production they seem to manifest their resistance to the passage of the private sphere into the public sphere by making a semantic distinction that keeps the words «sex» and «belief» outside the referential universe of the public sphere (media, Internet, newspaper). Finally, during the audiovisual production, they seem to refuse to show what belongs to the intimate sphere. The social role of this resistance is correlated to the students' choices to self-respect of which the media users intend to impose in the public sphere. «Intimacy and extimacy are inseparable by a third term: self-esteem, the latter these needing foremost a space of intimacy to build itself. But as the intimacy of somebody becomes boring if it cannot be shared it with anybody, this phenomenon allows the construction of the self-esteem and the identity of the subject by bringing into play, alternately, the desire of intimacy and extimacy» (Sauvaget & Skrzypek, 2010: 58). This resistance to the invasion of the public into the intimate sphere through media technology is also an economic issue. Intimate sphere is a vital economic resource for new information and communication technologies and the expansion of the public sphere that they promise corresponds precisely to the exploitation of this resource at the risk of reducing it and making it disappear (Bratosin, 2018). Finally, this resistance to the mediatization of the intimate sphere highlighted by French students' cognitive experiences shows that the political orientation of the students' passive participation in the construction of public opinion on the mediatization of sexuality and religion is part of neo-liberal paradigm. The protection of the intimate sphere against the erosion induced by its mediatization paradoxically amounts to defend freedom in the face of the boundless and limitless publicization of human experience.

## 6. Conclusions

The French students' opinion on the mediatization of intimate sphere in view of their passive participation in the construction of this opinion feeds two scenarios that revisit the presence of sexuality and religion in the public sphere. The first scenario is the privatization of public sphere. The questions of sexuality and religion, previously reserved for the private sphere, become in the students' choices themes devolved primarily to the public sphere due to the facilities for individual and instant expression induced by the innovative technologies associated with new media. This tendency indicates that students have understood the political issue of mediatization and that «intimacy can be used as a weapon and deliberately exposed in the public sphere as by its emotional and transgressive power, it attempts to change morals or laws» (Berrebi-Hoffmann, 2010: 16). The second major scenario that revisits the presence of sexuality and religion in the public sphere is the commodification of intimate sphere. The resistance to mediatization of the intimate sphere revealed by the results indicates rather less the cultural fidelity to traditional social practices and more so the understanding that the economic stake of the mediatization of sexuality

and religion, a stake directly linked to affective capitalism where intimacy becomes a commodity and the use of new media is akin to negotiating the profit to be made from this commodity, of which new information and communication technologies are so keen on capitalizing.

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