

Articles

Humor and sexuality in visual impairment: a phenomenological analysis

Humor e sexualidade na deficiência visual: uma análise fenomenológica

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Abstract

Humor, when mobilized by a blind woman in public performances, operates as a discursive practice that challenges stigma and repositions visual impairment within the domains of desire, agency, and female autonomy. This study aims to analyze how representations of visual impairment, sexuality, and humor are articulated in videos published on a public Instagram profile, as well as to examine indications of audience reception through associated comments. This is a qualitative, exploratory-descriptive study, grounded in documentary analysis with a phenomenological orientation, whose corpus consisted of three videos selected during the first half of January 2024. The findings indicate that humorous performance disrupts historically constructed myths of asexualization and infantilization attributed to people with blindness, while simultaneously revealing ambivalences in interpretation, ranging from recognition and immediate laughter to estrangement and the reactivation of stigmatizing meanings.

Keywords: visual impairment; blindness; sexuality; humor; phenomenology.

Resumo

O humor, quando mobilizado por uma mulher com cegueira em performances públicas, pode operar como prática discursiva que tensiona estigmas e reposiciona a deficiência visual no campo do desejo, da agência e da autonomia feminina. Este estudo tem como objetivo analisar como se articulam, em vídeos publicados em perfil público do Instagram, representações da deficiência visual, da sexualidade e do humor, bem como indícios de recepção do público por meio de comentários associados. Trata-se de pesquisa qualitativa, de caráter exploratório-descritivo, fundamentada em análise documental com orientação fenomenológica, cujo corpus foi constituído por três vídeos selecionados na primeira quinzena de janeiro de 2024. Os achados indicam que a performance humorística desloca mitos de assexualização e infantilização historicamente atribuídos à pessoa com cegueira, ao mesmo tempo em que explicita ambivalências de leitura, entre reconhecimento, riso imediato, estranhamento e reatualização de estigmas.

Palavras-chave: deficiência visual; cegueira; sexualidade; humor; fenomenologia.

INTRODUCTION

Phenomenology, by privileging the description of lived experience and the understanding of how the subject is constituted in experience, offers a fertile theoretical-methodological framework for examining the organization of self-image under specific bodily and sensory conditions. This is because the relationship with oneself, with others, and with the world is traversed by perceptual regimes, socially shared expectations, and culturally legitimized narratives that act upon the body and upon modes of self-presentation (Merleau-Ponty, 1999; Moreira, 2002; Martinez; Silva, 2014).

Within this horizon, disability, although inscribed in organic conditions, comes to operate as a socially judged and relational marker. It thus produces interactional and symbolic effects that exceed the functional plane and reach domains such as recognition, affective bonds,

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Data availability:

The three videos analyzed are available on Tatá Mendonça's Instagram profile (@ceganacomedia). Access to the posts may require prior authentication on the platform. Direct links to the analyzed materials:

Video 1: <https://www.instagram.com/p/C2XhjWrOJCZ/>

Video 2: https://www.instagram.com/p/C2lqA6_uOEU/

Video 3: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/CuXztr1OWi2/?igsh=M2xoNjZqcTdsd2xs>

Study conducted at Universidade Federal de São Carlos (UFSCar), São Carlos, SP, Brasil.



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eroticism, and belonging—especially when the body is read according to normative standards of normality and desirability. In the field of sexuality, studies have pointed to the persistence of stereotyped beliefs directed at persons with disabilities. These beliefs range from silencing, infantilization, and asexualization to readings of bodily inadequacy vis-à-vis hegemonic models of beauty and performance. In this way, they configure obstacles to affective-sexual experience and to the circulation of repertoires of information and rights (Dalavale; Pereira; Castro, 2018; Oliveira Sobrinho et al., 2018; Gomes; Caetano; Pinel, 2020).

In this article, visual disability is understood as a broad category that encompasses blindness and low vision, distinguishing itself from other disabilities insofar as it centrally affects perceptual regimes and forms of access to information and spatial orientation, with specific repercussions for the construction of bodily references and self-image. In brief, blindness is understood as the total or near-total absence of functional vision, whereas low vision refers to the presence of residual vision with significant limitations. In view of these differences, the present study is delimited to the congenital blindness of the comedian analyzed, recognizing that diverse sensory trajectories produce likewise distinct conditions of socialization, autonomy, and affective-sexual experience (Oliveira Sobrinho et al., 2018).

In parallel, the expansion of social media has intensified the circulation of humorous performances as a way of narrating everyday life and producing engagement, turning comic discourse into an arena of symbolic dispute over stigmas, belongings, and discursive legitimacies. On platforms structured by public metrics and algorithmic dynamics, certain representations may gain amplified reach and stabilize rapid readings; at the same time, the person with a disability can reinscribe their experience in the first person, tensioning stigmatizing framings and reorganizing meanings around body, autonomy, and desire (Freitas; Borges; Rios, 2016; Giupponi, 2021; Possenti, 2023).

It is in this context that this article analyzes audiovisual productions published on a public Instagram profile maintained by a comedian with congenital blindness, whose performances thematize sexuality, relationships, and situations traversed by attitudinal barriers directed at visual disability. Considering the platform's dynamism and the fluctuation of metrics over time, the corpus was delimited in the first fortnight of January 2024, based on explicit criteria: (a) videos whose theme focused on sexuality and disability; (b) selection of the three videos with the highest number of likes within this window, as recorded on the date of data collection; and (c) centrality of the person with a disability as the protagonist of the performance analyzed. This delimitation seeks to ensure internal coherence between the empirical material and the investigative problem, assuming that numerical indicators are situated and depend on circulation conditions at a specific moment in the profile's trajectory.

Accordingly, the general objective is to understand, in light of a phenomenological orientation, the meanings mobilized in humorous performances about sexuality and visual disability, examining discursive traces of self-image and indications of stigma and normative expectations directed at a person with blindness. The specific objectives are: (i) to describe how the comedian organizes, in her narratives, situations of social interaction related to sexuality, making explicit attitudinal barriers and regimes of normality that act upon the body with visual disability; (ii) to interpret how humor operates as a strategy for signifying lived experience, producing discursive displacements that tension stereotypes; and (iii) to analyze, in a situated manner and without any claim to generalization, how comments associated with the videos update forms of recognition, estrangement, and paternalization, thereby contributing to a discussion of the symbolic reach of these representations in digital environments.

Finally, although the material is publicly accessible, the identification of internet users is preserved in the excerpts analyzed, given that the academic reinscription of digital interactions involves asymmetries between the spontaneous production of comments and their circulation in scientific writing—an ethical caution that becomes more pressing when the analysis addresses domains regulated by taboos and stigmas, such as sexuality and disability (Giupponi, 2021; Possenti, 2023).

PHENOMENOLOGY, EMBODIMENT, AND SELF-IMAGE

Phenomenology, by privileging the description of lived experience and understanding experience as a route of access to meaning, makes it possible to address self-image as a situated construction, configured in the relationship among embodiment, language, and intersubjectivity. Within this frame, the subject recognizes and narrates herself through a body that functions as a condition of presence in the world and, at the same time, as a social surface for reading, evaluation, and expectation.

Accordingly, self-image is not reducible to an inner representation or a stabilized mental picture. It is organized in the flow of concrete situations in which the lived body is affected, perceived, and signified. In this process, self-image is traversed by cultural norms of acceptability, tacit criteria of value, and regimes of visibility that produce belonging, estrangement, or disauthorization, reaching dimensions such as self-esteem, social recognition, and possibilities for self-realization (Merleau-Ponty, 1999; Moreira, 2002).

When this framework is shifted to the field of disability, self-image must be understood within a social weave in which discourses about ability and functionality operate as an implicit measure of full humanity. In this sense, the experience of the disabled body tends to be captured by stigmatizing marks that, as they are updated in interaction, shape how the person perceives herself, anticipates judgments, and negotiates her self-presentation in public and private spaces.

In this direction, the notion of stigma, as formulated by Goffman (1963), contributes to understanding how certain bodily attributes come to operate as socially discreditable marks, reorganizing expectations of conduct, forms of treatment, and conditions of recognition. Contemporary discussions of ableism further show that discrimination against persons with disabilities is not limited to explicit practices of exclusion; it is articulated with symbolic processes of designation and signification that reiterate disability as lack, deficit, or inadequacy, producing impacts on identity construction and modes of social belonging (Marchesan; Carpenedo, 2021).

VISUAL DISABILITY, SEXUALITY, AND HUMOR ON SOCIAL MEDIA

In the case of visual disability, because it encompasses heterogeneous conditions, analytical caution is required to avoid generalizations about perception, learning, development, and ways of accessing the world, since distinct sensory trajectories have repercussions for the construction of bodily references and the elaboration of self-image. Even so, when the focus falls on congenital blindness, it becomes pertinent to consider that processes of social and sexual identity formation are produced within an intensely image-centered culture in which standards of beauty, eroticism, and desirability circulate as dominant referents, guiding expectations and evaluations about bodies and modes of presence.

In such a framework, the absence of functional vision does not eliminate the incidence of these symbolic regimes; rather, it may intensify mechanisms of stigma, infantilization, and social control over the body of the person with visual disability, interfering both in forms of social recognition and in the discursive conditions through which the subject sustains and negotiates her narrative of self. In this key, the notion of intersectionality helps to understand that such effects do not operate uniformly, since race, gender, and disability co-constitute vulnerabilities, controls, and regimes of recognition that differentially configure social experiences (Crenshaw, 1989; Theodoro, 2022).

Under these conditions, the construction of identity and self-image—as well as the very formation of references and concepts about body, desire, and relationships—tends to occur through predominantly tactile, auditory, kinesthetic, and linguistic routes, in interaction with others and with cultural artifacts. This prerogative underscores that congenital blindness does not prevent the production of meanings, although it reconfigures the sensory and social mediations through which such meanings are stabilized and circulated (Theodoro; Costa; Theodoro, 2023).

The literature on sexuality and disability has shown that persistent myths, such as asexualization and infantilization, operate as symbolic barriers that are articulated with silencing and informational restrictions in socialization processes, affecting access to repertoires for naming the body, pleasure, consent, and relationships. Maia and Ribeiro (2010) indicate that socially disseminated prejudices about the sexuality of persons with visual disability reverberate in self-esteem and body image, especially when disability functions as a totalizing marker, reducing the subject to the functional dimension and obscuring her protagonism and legitimacy as a subject of desire.

In this scenario, social media expands the circulation of humorous performances as a means of narrating everyday life and disputing meanings around socially regulated themes. Within this dynamic, comic discourse is converted into a device for engagement, visibility, and recognition, while also being capable of updating stereotypes, reinforcing symbolic inequalities, and producing subtle forms of delegitimation (Possenti, 2023). When the person with a disability occupies the position of enunciator and organizes her narrative in the first person, humor can operate as a discursive strategy for reappropriating lived experience: it makes visible attitudinal barriers often naturalized and repositions the social gaze upon autonomy, desire, and embodiment.

Even so, the reception of such content—expressed in comments and interactions—tends to reveal ambivalences, insofar as it may alternate between recognition, estrangement, paternalization, and undue eroticization. This composes a fertile field for situated analysis, without any claim to totalizing generalization about “society,” but with attention to the discursive traces that emerge in the space-time of the platform (Maia, 2011; Marchesan; Carpenedo, 2021; Theodoro, 2022).

By mobilizing the notion of standpoint within this discussion, the text treats it as an ethico-political operator that indicates the social position from which certain experiences are narrated and recognized, emphasizing that first-person enunciation by a woman with visual disability offers privileged material for understanding how lived experience is signified in contexts of stigma. Such recognition does not amount to turning experience into an unassailable argument from authority, since phenomenological analysis requires the researcher to describe and interpret the meanings that present themselves in the material, situating them in relation to the social and cultural mediations that traverse both the production of the content and its circulation and reception.

METHOD

This study is qualitative in nature and exploratory-descriptive in scope (Gil, 2008). It articulates documentary analysis and a phenomenological orientation as the interpretive axis for describing and understanding the meanings mobilized in humorous performances that thematize sexuality and visual disability on social media. The empirical material consists of three videos published on a public Instagram profile belonging to a woman with congenital blindness who works as a comedian. The choice of this platform is justified because it constitutes an environment of intensive circulation of short videos and everyday humor, in which algorithmic dynamics and public engagement metrics directly affect content visibility and the stabilization of certain representations, thus requiring that the corpus delimitation be explicitly temporally bounded.

The corpus was constituted in the first fortnight of January 2024 through the selection of three videos based on the following criteria: (a) explicit thematization of sexuality in interface with visual disability; (b) protagonism of the person with a disability herself in the enunciation; and (c) the highest number of likes among the videos that met the thematic delimitation, considering the full set available on the profile at the time of data collection. It is acknowledged that such metrics vary over time; therefore, the recorded values correspond to the study's dated sampling window.

It is also noted that, during the collection period, the platform predominantly displayed temporal information in a relative format, without providing, in a standardized way, an absolute date (day/month/year) for all posts. For this reason, the study is anchored in the temporal marker of data collection and in the record of the material available at that moment, understanding the videos as situated public documents within the digital ecosystem of the profile analyzed.

In order to preserve the material and enable a rigorous description of the scenes, the selected videos (Instagram, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c) were downloaded and their respective audio tracks were fully transcribed, constituting a textual corpus to support analysis. The analysis proceeded in a sequence compatible with a phenomenological orientation, beginning with a dense description of the scenes based on the transcripts and on the systematic recording of elements relevant to the construction of the humorous effect and to the narrative organization of the performances. Next, units of meaning and recurrent thematic nuclei were identified and organized, with the aim of making explicit the significations mobilized in the narratives and their articulations with stigma, normative expectations, and attitudinal barriers related to visual disability. Finally, a comprehensive interpretation of the extracted meanings was conducted in dialogue with the study's theoretical framework, seeking to discuss how humor, when produced by a woman with blindness, tensions socially disseminated myths about sexuality and visual disability, while also evidencing ambivalences in audience reception.

Although the analyzed content is available on a public profile, ethical precautions were adopted in the presentation of data, preserving the identification of internet users in the excerpts of comments mentioned. This care is warranted because the academic reinscription of digital interactions involves asymmetries between the spontaneous production of utterances and their circulation in scientific writing—especially when the analysis addresses a theme marked by taboos, stigma, and moral disputes, such as sexuality articulated with visual disability.

RESULTS

The documentary analysis of the three videos and their associated comments, within the dated sampling window, made it possible to organize the findings into four articulated empirical axes: (i) the production of the humorous effect through friction between vision-centered expectations and tactile exploration as a route of apprehension; (ii) the explicit first-person enunciation of sexuality, with emphasis on female pleasure in the narrative progression; (iii) the recurrence of “care”-framed utterances coupled with commands and attempts to steer female conduct in intimate situations, accompanied by performative responses marked by irony and confrontation; and (iv) audience reception in comments, evidencing heterogeneous readings that oscillate between identification, valorization, eroticization, and the questioning of disability itself.

In the axis related to the “palpable test,” Video 1, recorded in a podcast setting, is organized around an interpellation about the absence of mental images, as in “You don’t have an image of anything?” / “No.” It then moves to an invitation to identify objects by touch, under the interviewers’ insistent guidance. Humor is produced in the way the participant negotiates the task in real time, alternating inference and assertion—“A lamp? A globe?”—being pressed to choose, and, after guessing correctly, explicitly articulating an interpretive gesture anchored in tactile exploration: “Because turning it here, looking on this side...”. That gesture is immediately tensioned by the demand for spatial reference—“Point to a country. What country is that?”—culminating in a reaction that condenses the break in expectation: “Oh, [...]! It really is a globe?”.

Still in this video, the introduction of a penile prosthesis intensifies the comic effect through a combination of surprise, colloquial vocabulary, and analogies—“The head is even kind of purple. It looks like a table leg”—while also making explicit the interlocutors’ discomfort (“Why me, my God!”) and, within the interaction itself, the attribution of exceptionalism to tactile exploration, as in the comment: “She’s never seen, but just by barely touching it she already knows what it is.”

In the axis concerning the enunciation of sexuality, Video 2, performed as stand-up, is constructed as a report of an affective-sexual encounter in which narrative progression combines refusal and insistence—“I need to go” / “it’ll be quick”—with a discursive escalation that blends reference to sexual practices, hyperbole, and an acceleration of desire—“[...] the mailman said ‘good morning’ and I’m ovulating”—until it reaches the core of the scene: “He put it in, penetrated, I went there and had an orgasm!”

The subsequent segment shifts the event’s meaning toward a comic dispute about performance and recognition, when the male interlocutor claims competence—“I’m really good!”—and the narrator responds with irony—“When I saw you in the mirror’s reflection, I got wet!”—closing the episode with a refusal to stay and with a retort that reorders the asymmetry of sexual expectation: “You lasted the same amount of time I did—you just didn’t come because you didn’t want to!”

In the axis concerning attempts to steer conduct and the issuing of commands in an intimate context, Video 3 organizes humor around a situation in which utterances framed as “care” appear articulated with instructions about what a woman should do. The narrative begins with the partner asking “How do I guide you?”, to which the comedian responds through direct sexualization and by repositioning “guidance” in: “Guide me to your dick and I’ll do the rest,” and it proceeds with statements that modulate conduct: “Can you get the snack... by yourself?”; “go, but get dressed!”. The scene intensifies when the partner reacts hostilely upon encountering the delivery driver — “Didn’t I tell you to get dressed?”—and the comedian produces laughter by articulating literalness, misunderstanding, and implicit critique: “I’m wrapped in a sheet”; “but it’s transparent”; “oh... I didn’t know,” concluding with a summarizing line: “No, [...] I’m not alone. I’m blind, not depressed.”

Regarding the reception axis, comments associated with the posts evidence a heterogeneous field of reading. In a key of identification and symbolic strengthening, the comment on Video 1 stands out: “Tata I’m losing my vision and you motivate me, I’m sassy like you, I relate...”, in which the narrated experience exceeds entertainment and is mobilized as affective support. By contrast, there are formulations that shift the content toward a curious eroticization of the disabled body, such as “Now every guy will want to hook up with a blind woman just to see if it’s really all that” (Video 2), producing a reading in which sexuality becomes an object of verification.

Added to this is the presence of invalidation and suspicion, visible in “Sometimes I think she pretends she’s blind lol” (Video 1), indicating that the circulation of the performances simultaneously elicits adherence to laughter, recognition of the comedian, and reactions that place disability itself in doubt. Finally, in Video 3, laudatory and appreciative comments predominate (“Amazing”; “Perfect, congratulations”), composing a relevant contrast with the eroticizing and questioning movements observed in other materials, without eliminating the corpus’s overall heterogeneity of reception.

In light of this set, empirical regularities can be delineated which, although emerging from a small corpus, show recurrence both in the construction of laughter and in modes of reception: vision-centered expectations are tensioned by tactile exploration; sexuality is narrated in the first person as an ordinary experience; and “care” talk appears associated with commands and attempts to steer conduct, while comments oscillate between recognition, eroticization, and the questioning of disability. In the next section, the focus shifts from the description of episodes to the interpretation of their meaning effects, articulating them with the theoretical framework and debates on stigma/ableism and on the normativities of gender, sexuality, and race.

DISCUSSION

Building on the empirical regularities described above, the discussion shifts the focus from “what was observed” to the interpretation of the meaning effects produced when humor and sexuality are enunciated by a woman with blindness within a digital ecosystem. In this scenario, first-person speech does not merely thematize intimate experiences; it publicly disputes regimes of normativity that have historically linked visual disability to asexualization, infantilization, and tutelage. By placing pleasure and agency at the center of narration, the performance reconfigures the conditions of sayability of sexuality, removing it from the status of an exceptional or interdicted theme and reinscribing it as an ordinary dimension of life, in an affirmative and unmitigated key. This gesture confronts myths and silences repeatedly noted in the literature on sexuality and visual disability (Bruns, 1998; Maia; Ribeiro, 2010; Maia, 2019; Theodoro, 2022).

This displacement is not produced only at the thematic level, but also at the level of address and the subject position constructed in public speech. When the comedian narrates sex without softening and organizes laughter through inversions that reposition the value of performance and recognition—an axis in which female pleasure becomes a narrative criterion—the performance tensions gender normativities that regulate what women can say in public spaces and, simultaneously, questions the social expectation of dependence attributed to persons with visual disability.

From this perspective, humor operates less as an “entertainment resource” and more as a mode of enunciation that authorizes a woman with blindness to manage vocabulary, timing, and discursive closure, producing a self-definition that displaces disability from the place of deficit to the place of socially situated experience—one involving desire, limits, decisions, and the negotiation of boundaries.

In the axis concerning the friction between vision-centered expectations and tactile exploration, the performance makes visible an interactional grammar in which vision is taken as the tacit norm for accessing the world and, therefore, as an implicit measure of competence.

When that norm is tensioned by tactile exploration, interaction begins to operate through an economy of “testing” and verification, in which competence tends to be read as exception, surprise, or spectacle, converting the disabled body into an object of public scrutiny. Even when laughter seems to disauthorize the interlocutor’s embarrassment, the very need for a test indicates the presence of a normative regime that precedes concrete experience and organizes the reading of the subject through expectations of incapacity.

This dynamic connects to Goffman’s (1963) formulation of stigma, in which social marks function as filters that structure interaction and modes of attributing meaning to the other in advance. In this register, the suspicion expressed in reception (“she’s pretending to be blind”) does not appear as an isolated phenomenon, but as a modality of symbolic control activated when the person with a disability performs competence, autonomy, and command of the scene, thereby contradicting the expected script of fragility or dependence.

In the axis concerning “care” talk articulated with commands and attempts to guide conduct, the material shows how tutelage can present itself in protective language, which renders it socially acceptable to direct, restrict, and monitor—especially when disability is mobilized as sufficient justification for disauthorizing autonomy. The interpretive relevance of this pattern lies in the fact that tutelary logic is not limited to institutional spaces; it emerges in intimate everyday life as a form of managing body and conduct, often traversed by gender normativities.

In this key, the performative refusal of the command, mediated by irony and confrontation, becomes a discursive strategy that returns to the interlocutor the problematic character of his presuppositions and exposes the recurrent confusion between visual disability and generalized incapacity—an element central to understanding ableism as a structure that naturalizes control and disauthorization in the name of supposed care (Marchesan; Carpenedo, 2021; Bernardes, 2024).

Reception, in turn, indicates that the digital circulation of these performances produces ambivalent effects, because the same content can be appropriated as identification and symbolic strengthening, as invasive eroticization, or as invalidation—thus precluding any reading of humor as a practice with intrinsically emancipatory effects. Comments of identification suggest that the performance functions as representational reference and affective support for subjects in proximate experiences.

However, eroticized comments shift the enunciation from a register of rights and agency to a logic of verification and fetishization of the disabled body, while suspicious comments reinsert disability into a register of doubt and fraud. This heterogeneity reinforces the understanding of humor on platforms as a situated practice, traversed by fast-paced consumption, diverse repertoires, and circulation dynamics that facilitate readings dissociated from critical reflection, such that the same performance may simultaneously displace stabilized meanings and reactivate crystallized stigmas (Possenti, 2023).

An intersectional reading adds a necessary layer to interpretation, since the comedian is a Black woman with blindness and thus occupies the digital public space under multiple regimes of visibility and judgment that cannot be reduced to the sum of isolated oppressions. Crenshaw’s (1989) perspective helps to understand how race, gender, and disability are co-constituted in the production of vulnerabilities and regimes of recognition, such that the public enunciation of desire and autonomy by a Black woman with visual disability takes place on terrain marked both by tutelary expectations about disability and by historical processes of hypersexualization and moralization of the Black body. Thus, racialized references do not operate merely as thematic content, but as a marker that can alter reception effects, making more evident the risk of stereotype reactivation depending on the repertoire mobilized by the audience.

Within this framework, synthesizing utterances such as “I’m blind, not depressed” condense a discursive boundary operation: they distinguish disability from psychic suffering, refuse the automatic association between blindness and emotional incapacity, and disauthorize the expectation of loneliness, abandonment, or pity as a discursive destiny for a woman with blindness. Here, humor operates as a political language of presence by disputing the ways of signifying disability in the public sphere, confronting framings that tolerate the disabled body only when it appears as inspiration, overcoming, or an object of pity, and reinscribing disability experience in the register of ordinary social life, with contradictions and confrontations.

The findings, therefore, support the interpretation that humor and sexuality function, in the analyzed corpus, as languages of agency that render the woman with visual disability visible as a desiring, autonomous, and socially competent subject, while reception evidences the coexistence of recognition, identification, eroticization, and invalidation.

Considering the documentary nature of the corpus, the dated temporal window, and the selection by public engagement metrics, no generalizations are proposed about “the audience” or about the totality of experiences of women with blindness.

Rather, it is indicated that the digital circulation of humorous performances about sexuality and visual disability operates within a field of symbolic dispute, producing ambivalent effects that at times displace socially stabilized meanings and at others reactivate stigmatizing and tutelary regimes. This reinforces the pertinence of analyses attentive to ableism, stigma, and intersectionality, with interpretive caution commensurate with the delimitation adopted.

CONCLUSION

This study showed that when sexuality is enunciated by a woman with blindness in a humorous performance, it ceases to occupy the position of an exceptional theme and begins to operate as a public language of presence. In this scene, laughter does not function merely as an aesthetic effect, because it organizes a mode of speaking and of being read that destabilizes recurrent expectations of tutelage, infantilization, and asexualization attributed to persons with visual disability. Accordingly, the material analyzed makes it possible to understand how humor can displace disability from the register of lack to that of a socially situated experience, without reducing the body to a figure of pity, moral correction, or suspicion.

By making desire, pleasure, and decision explicit in the first person, the comedian produces a self-image marked by autonomy and social competence. This gesture confronts myths and silences reiterated in the literature on sexuality and visual disability, especially those sustained by moralizing discourses and by inequalities in access to sex education, information, and rights (Bruns, 1998; Maia, 2019; Theodoro, 2022). In this way, the performance shows that sexuality, beyond a bodily dimension, involves recognition, legitimacy, and the possibility of enunciation in public spaces.

The study also indicates that the critical potential of humor coexists with structural limits of reading. Reception in comments combines support and identification with eroticization, objectification, and invalidation, indicating that digital circulation can reactivate stigmas even when the performance tensions them. This ambivalence resonates with the logic of stigma as a filter that precedes concrete experience and reorganizes interaction (Goffman, 1963), and it dialogues with readings of ableism as a structure that naturalizes disauthorization and control under the appearance of “care” (Marchesan; Carpenedo, 2021; Bernardes, 2024). On platforms, such effects tend to intensify due to the speed of consumption and the heterogeneity of repertoires, which makes it difficult to stabilize meanings and sustain reflective readings (Possenti, 2023).

When intersectionality is incorporated, it becomes even clearer that meaning effects are not distributed in a neutral manner. The public presence of a Black woman with blindness tensions multiple regimes of visibility and judgment, in which gender, race, and disability are co-constituted in the production of recognition and vulnerability (Crenshaw, 1989). In this respect, the performance may function as a strategy of discursive (re)existence, insofar as it affirms desire and self-determination on terrain traversed by the hypersexualization and moralization of the female body and by tutelary expectations about disability.

As a contribution, the study offers an analytical delimitation of how humor, sexuality, and visual disability articulate in the digital public sphere, evidencing a symbolic dispute in which displacement and reactivation coexist. The material does not authorize totalizing generalizations about “social perceptions,” but it supports consistent indications of meaning-making mechanisms that operate in the public circulation of the disabled body. Finally, further investigations are recommended that combine analysis of digital materials with direct listening, in order to deepen the relationships among self-image, stigma, accessibility, social opportunities, and cultural production—especially in contexts traversed by ableism, racism, and moralizing discourses about the female body (Crenshaw, 1989; Maia, 2019; Theodoro, 2022).

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AF: Conceptualization, Data curation, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. FED: Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Supervision. MPRC: Project administration, Validation, Supervision.

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