

Chapter 8

The People's Audience: The Relationship Between TV Presenter Silvio Santos and His TV Studio Audience

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ABSTRACT

This chapter analyzes the previous ethoiscal projections of Programa Silvio Santos' (PSS) studios audience about its presenter, trying to understand—in parallel—who are the women considered as co-workers and the reasons that make them participate in the PSS and in its fandom. The data collection methodology is based on field research based on individual interviews conducted in March 2014. The ethos is understood as the image of oneself and the other, which may have a prior and discursive dimension. This image is supported by partially stable crystallized knowledge (sociodiscursive imaginary). The basic theoretical framework is composed by Morin, Sousa, and Lunardi; the notion of ethos is read in Charaudeau and Amossy. It is observed that the presenter has reached the Olympian myth curve and his ethé is based on credibility and identification.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyzes the previous ethoical¹ projections of the studio audience (“Co-workers,” as the audience is called by the presenter) of the Brazilian TV Show, *Programa Silvio Santos* (known by its acronym, PSS, or the *Silvio Santos Show*, in English), which aired on the Brazilian TV network, Sistema Brasileiro de Televisão (SBT; Brazilian Television System, in English), owned by presenter Silvio Santos. The aim of this study is to understand the women in the audience, who are considered by Mr. Santos to be *Co-workers*, and the reasons they participate in PSS as a fandom.

On the air for more than five decades, PSS was, according to the 1993 Guinness Book, the longest running Brazilian television show. Part of this longevity can be credited to the relationship between Silvio Santos and his studio audience, better known as the *Co-workers*. The auditorium show became a

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major reference for the Santos TV station, SBT. Even in the face of public renewal, it is clear that Silvio Santos' image retains certain traces of the socio-discursive imaginaries that sustained the projected *ethe*² in partial stability.

Television is a phenomenon in Brazil. According to a survey conducted by the Brazilian government, television is the main media support in the country. Television moves the public debate and different spheres of expression of the Brazilian culture. It may be said that three types of programs have shaped Brazilian television in recent decades: telenovelas, sports, and Silvio Santos. Even though he is a person, it is possible to define Silvio Santos as a television genre. Far beyond representing an entertainment TV show, with games, music, and prizes, he has managed to change the nature of variety shows in Brazil. Silvio Santos is a sui-generis case in global communication (as someone who worked in a media outlet and later conquered the means of production). In terms of Latin American media power, Santos can be compared to Oprah Winfrey. Building his image as a self-made man, Santos built his career selling an important idea to viewers: "hope." Santos has two profitable products: *Chest of Happiness* and *Tele Sena* (a lottery owned by Santos with drawings on TV). Both products draw prizes like money, houses, and other products (e.g., TV sets, cosmetics, and kitchen utensils).

With low average salaries, the less privileged classes do not have the purchasing power to acquire the goods drawn at Santos' TV shows, appealing to his products to be drawn and won. As he advertises the products and is the presenter of the drawings, the viewer believes the idea that Silvio Santos, in person, has given the prizes, creating the familiar and hopeful images that Brazilians have been watching for decades. This image has been passed down from generation to generation and remains in the popular imagination to this day. This enables us to understand why several women have become his Co-workers. But the reasons about this behavior still need to be mapped, and this study intends to do this mapping.

To understand the diversity of the PSS audience and its impact on Brazilian culture, Sunday is traditionally a highly competitive day on Brazilian television. Free-to-air (FTA) channels offer a range of shows on Sunday that compete in a strong way for ratings. Even with such competition, according to Feltrin (2019), the PSS auditorium show is a phenomenon, remaining in the second position of Brazilian TV ratings, second only to TV Globo, the largest TV channel in Brazil and largest television content producer in the Southern Hemisphere, which shows the variety show *Domingão do Faustão*³ and newsmagazine *Fantástico*⁴ during the same time slot as PSS. Nevertheless, the battle between PSS and *Fantástico* in ratings after 11 P.M. has traditionally been won by Mr. Santos. In 2014, Globo aired *Rising Star*, a music reality show in the Israeli format, a program well known for using technology to attract a young audience. In every confrontation between the Brazilian version of *Rising Star* and the *Silvio Santos Show*, Mr. Santos led the ratings. Stycer (2014) argues that technological appeal is not enough to take away PSS's audience.

Diversity on television is also reflected in the audience, which has members from different age groups. To understand the composition of the PSS public audience, its diversity, and who these women are, this study conducted field research at SBT studios to get to know some "Co-workers."

The main objective of this work is to raise the socio-discursive imaginaries and *ethe* linked to the presenter and his program. We then attempt to understand who the women are that compose the audience and the reasons that led them to participate in PSS recordings. Data collection was supported by the application of a pre-formatted individual questionnaire that returned quantitative and qualitative information. Individual interviews were conducted in April 2014.

Silvia Sousa (2009) believes that there is communion between Silvio Santos and the audience, an idea demonstrated during a visit of the author to the SBT studios, where Silvio Santos's projection of the im-

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