

Religion: the rhetoric of “not unjust discrimination” towards homosexuals in the Roman Catholic Church

Objectives

This presentation offers an insight on the rationale of “not unjust discrimination” used by the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) to justify the legal discrimination of same-sex partnerships in their official documentation. From a psychological perspective, an analysis of religious discourse on homosexuality is fundamental to detect persisting conditions of social injustice towards LGB people, which impact on their well-being.

Design

The research is innovative in the academic panorama and consists in an extensive discourse analysis applied to 26 documents of public domain released by the Roman Catholic Church between 1975 and 2015.

Method

The documents were selected according two main criteria: they are available on the official Vatican website, and they explicitly contain the Holy See position towards homosexuals and same-sex partnerships recognition. The documents selected were systematically analysed using discourse analysis to identify the interpretative repertoires (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Potter 2012) and the ideologies underpinning the heterosexist arguments (van Dijk, 1993; 2011).

Results

Three main interpretative repertoires on homosexuality were identified: a serious depravity, a grievous anomaly, and a social threaten. These *topoi* mutually reinforce and sustain in the RCC discourse against the recognition of same-sex partnerships.

Conclusions

The interpretative repertoires are deployed in an ongoing ideological discourse aimed at sustaining an alleged superiority of heterosexual marriage over any other form of love. In particular, we will discuss the use of sexual orientation as a salient social category, and its implications for the RCC argument that it is “not unjust discrimination” not allowing equal rights to homosexuals.