

# The LGBTQIA+ journalist community and the effort of affirmative action in a conservative Brazil

## *A comunidade de jornalistas LGBTQIA+ e o esforço das ações afirmativas num Brasil conservador*

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### ABSTRACT

This essay discusses the effort undertaken by the LGBTQIA+ journalist community in gender affirmative actions in the workplace, considering the conservative wave that has taken over the Brazilian social-political scenario. We highlight three initiatives: the creation of an LGBT Commission by the São Paulo State Union of Professional Journalists; a survey, on journalism professionals who identify themselves with this acronym; and the *LGBTI+ Communication Manual*, aimed at supporting the work of journalists toward gender agendas. Although significant, in a context marked by prejudice and the silencing of minorities, these actions move slowly precisely because they collide with other issues resulting in a paradox similar to the one feminism found, long ago, regarding the sexual division of labor: “everything changes but nothing changes”.

**Keywords:** Journalism, journalists, gender, LGBTQIA+ Community, workplace.

### RESUMO

Este ensaio discute o esforço da comunidade de jornalistas LGBTQIA+ em ações afirmativas no mundo do trabalho, considerando a onda conservadora que tomou conta da cena político-social do Brasil nos últimos anos. São evidenciadas três iniciativas: a criação de uma Comissão LGBT pelo Sindicato dos Jornalistas Profissionais no Estado de São Paulo; uma pesquisa sobre profissionais de jornalismo que se identificam com a referida sigla; e o *Manual de Comunicação LGBTI+* destinado a amparar jornalistas em relação às pautas de gênero. Embora significativas, em um contexto marcado por preconceitos e por silenciamentos de minorias, essas ações caminham devagar, justamente porque esbarram em outras questões, resultando em paradoxo semelhante ao que o feminismo identificou, há tempos, sobre a divisão sexual do trabalho: “tudo muda, mas nada muda”.

**Palavras-chave:** Jornalismo, jornalistas, gênero, comunidade LGBTQIA+, mundo do trabalho.

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<sup>1</sup> This acronym represents the social group comprised of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders, queers or questioning, intersex, asexual, and other “identities such as pansexual, non-binary people, etc.” which are represented by the “+” symbol. Although there are variations, we use this acronym because we believe it to be the most inclusive and revealing “of a movement – not only in Brazil, but also in other countries – that has gained space and showed the importance of the uniqueness of these individuals who live through different experiences, prejudices and struggles” (Vicenzo, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Although the term “LGBTQIA-phobic” – in Portuguese, “LGBTQIA+fobia” (Pires et al., 2020) – may sound strange, perhaps that is why some authors prefer to use related expressions, such as “homotransphobia” (Oliveira & Mott, 2022, p. 15) or “LBGTphobia” (Vasconcelos, 2021, p. 127), we use the term as we consider it to be more comprehensive.

<sup>3</sup> A recent case involving two journalists from Rede Globo, Erick Rianelli and Pedro Figueiredo, are a case in point. On June 12, 2021 (Valentine’s Day in Brazil), Rianelli made a declaration of love to his partner during a live broadcast on the R/TV newscast. The video went viral and fueled homophobic attacks by a myriad of individuals, including a businessman from the Federal District and a priest from Mato Grosso.

HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS always say: Brazil is the country that kills the most LGBTQIA+<sup>1</sup> people in the world, a statistic that has escalated mainly due to the murders of transvestites and transsexuals. According to monitoring published by Transgender Europe (TGEU), Brazil has had the highest numbers of reported trans and gender diverse killings in the world every year since 2009 (Pinheiro, 2022). A report prepared by the National Association of Transvestites and Transsexuals (Antra) shows that an average of 123.8 transgender and/or transvestite people were murdered every year between 2008 and 2021 (Benevides, 2022). According to a survey conducted by the Gay Group of Bahia (GGB), 300 LGBTQIA+ people were murdered in 2021 alone, registering 276 homicides (92%) and 24 suicides (8%), which equates to one death every 29 hours. These numbers are alarming, especially when we consider that “mortality like this is only the tip of the iceberg of hatred and blood as our statistics are underreported due to the lack of criminal statistics from the government” (Oliveira; Mott, 2022, p. 13). This is therefore a group at constant risk, which has been exacerbated in recent years as a result of the rise in conservatism we have seen in politics, reflected in different social fields (Lacerda, 2019).

It is also true, however, that this rise in conservatism has gained more prominence since 2018, the year was elected as President of Brazil Jair Bolsonaro, politic who, over almost three decades as a parliamentarian, has openly expressed his disapproval of sexual diversity and gender diversity, as well as equal rights for these people (Guazina; Leite, 2021), something which is not new over the history of Brazil. Male chauvinism, misogyny, racism, LGBTQIA-phobic<sup>2</sup>, and other reactionary prejudices are structural elements of the country, which means trying to deconstruct them is a socially relevant, yet complex, endeavor. The fatality numbers presented in the beginning of this paper are not self-contained; they are indications of the tensions that LGBTQIA+ people are susceptible to and consequently of the obstacles they face in their daily lives.

Journalists who identify with the acronym face these kinds of issues in their work environment – a cis-heteronormative environment predominantly based on parameters of masculinity perpetrated over time (Darde, 2009; Silva, 2014). Those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transvestite, transsexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and other orientations and identities are often victims of attacks – especially on social media<sup>3</sup>. Additionally, the sexual and/or gender category they identify with is also made invisible due to the social structure that imposes an old and strong binary pattern.

This article, written in an essay format, seeks to discuss the commitment of that community to affirmative actions. To do this, we look at the following three

initiatives created between 2017 and 2018 (these are the most recent ones we were able to map out) and their actions and intentions: an LGBT Commission created by the union of journalists from São Paulo, a survey of journalism professionals who identify as LGBTI+ (headed by the aforementioned commission), and the publication of an *LGBTI+ Communication Handbook* (*Manual de Comunicação LGBTI+*), designed to assist the press when writing about gender issues. We shall describe each one of these actions in more detail further in this paper.

Before we go into detail about these actions, it is important to note the context of “neoconservatism”, a contemporary ideological political movement that began in the United States in the second half of the 20th century in response to the counterculture, organized and acting in defense of traditional values (Lacerda, 2019; Vaggione et al., 2020). It is in this macrocosm (explored below) that LGBTQIA+ journalists are inserted and try to make themselves seen and heard.

### **CLASHES BETWEEN DIVERSITY AND CONSERVATISM IN BRAZIL**

Diversity and conservatism are two diametrically opposed realities. The former presupposes openness, inclusion and acceptance, while the latter insists on exclusionary and discriminatory standards. The notion of conservatism is comprehensive, as Juan Marco Vaggione, Maria das Dores Campos Machado and Flávia Biroli (2020, p. 24) remind us. These authors define it as “positional” and conclude that it occurs “when social minority segments that challenge the established order are strengthened to the point of threatening the ideal and material foundations of institutions”. In other words, it is a defense of their ideals from groups that conquer space and legitimacy.

Conservatism is about maintaining hegemonic conventions and customs. It is not restricted to just one social field; it crosses through many and establishes a close link with orthodox religious principles and other systemic elements – in this case, the particularities of neoliberalism (Dardot & Laval, 2016). Finally, it gets its basis from a combination of intellectual and political positions that are guided by specific ideas of what is moral, especially when it comes to gender and sexuality, and is consistent with a model of society based on individuality and the downsizing of the state (meritocracy, privatization, entrepreneurship, etc.).

As the philosophy tends to reject or deny certain achievements reached in recent decades, such as those of feminism and the LGBTQIA+ movement, it seems reasonable to suggest that we are indeed talking about “neoconservatism”. Taking its limitations into account, Vaggione, Machado and Biroli (2020, p. 25) – drawing on political scientist Wendy Brown – explain that the term “characterizes the



rise of the phenomenon in the *current political moment*” and refers to “a political rationale which heavily regulates sexual morality”. Here, the issue of gender is not a one-off, it is a focal point in contemporary conservative discourse. This is either because its supporters wish to “protect and guarantee a sexual morality that defends the (heterosexual) family and is legitimized by its reproductive potential” or because they believe that the changes to this morality they defend are also responsible for a number of other changes, for example, in the world of work where a greater number of women are now gainfully employed.

It should be noted that neoconservatism is not just a project to defend values or a power to be legitimized. It acts as “a normative and disciplinary logic internalized by contemporary subjects” (Vaggione et al., 2020, p. 26) and therefore overlaps into a number of intrinsic elements of social relations, ultimately intruding on them. What this means is that this opposition to identity affects certain groups not only on moral issues, but also on other issues such as economics. Biroli (2020, p. 149) has an interesting thought to this point:

Neoconservatism defends moral traditions but does so in order to instrumentalize them in political disputes. One angle to this defense is the praise of an age-old order where gender roles are “clearer” and women meet the demands of everyday family life while men could “take on the burdens of masculinity”. Defenders of moral traditions cling to varying degrees of repressive approaches to diversity and mobilize anti-pluralist views that see the acceptance and naturalization of sexual roles and inequalities as a response to the supposed decline of the moral order.

Marina Basso Lacerda (2019) also talks of the “new Brazilian conservatism”, comparing it to that of US neoconservatism. She points to the Chamber of Deputies, a place where parliamentarians defend conservative flags, especially of “hard line” public security, agribusiness and Christian fundamentalism. Her research is not limited to analyzing the Legislative Power, she also sees the Chamber of Deputies as a regulator of social aspirations. These parliamentarians, particularly strengthened after the 2018 election (Tatemoto, 2019), are the reflection of a society that identifies with regressive ideas and that is unwilling to abandon its prejudices.

Even though attention was beginning to be drawn to the LGBTQIA+ community in the 1990s, once they started to gain visibility<sup>4</sup> and subsequently more rights (albeit quite slowly), the conflict between conservatives and defenders of diversity has always been on the “agenda” in Brazil, including being endorsed by journalism, which often holds a position very close to that of conservatism. One example can be taken from an interview conducted with

<sup>4</sup>Inspired by the international movement, the LGBT Pride Parade was first held in São Paulo in 1997. Approximately 2,000 people participated in the Parade that year. This number has skyrocketed to an impressive 3 million in 2019, the last time the Parade was held. The event was held online in 2020 and 2021 due to social distance restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

television show host Hebe Camargo (1929-2012) on the television program *Roda Viva*, broadcast on TV Cultura in August 1987. When asked why she defended homosexuals and, more specifically, whether her statements as an opinion maker might be “promoting homosexuality”<sup>5</sup> (a question asked by a viewer and by journalists José Roberto Paladino and Ricardo Kotscho), Hebe gave a frank and to-the-point response, which is probably why it was circulated across social media decades later. She said: “What I say does not change anything. Either people are born that way or they are not. It’s not because Hebe Camargo said it and now people will go... ‘Ah, Hebe Camargo said it, how wonderful, now I’m going to be homosexual!’ Those who are meant to be, will be”<sup>6</sup>. The tension between the question raised and the answer given is symptomatic of the sexual order defended by the *status quo*, which is often necessary to state the obvious.

It is true that from the 1980s to the 2020s the LGBTQIA+ community has achieved some victories in the country. In 2011, the Federal Supreme Court (STF) ruled that preventing same-sex marriage was unconstitutional, setting a precedent that led the National Council of Justice (CNJ) to publish a resolution<sup>7</sup> two years later, “establishing the right for same-sex couples to marry in a civil registry just as heterosexual couples do” (Simões, 2021). In 2019, the STF also ruled LGBTQIA-phobic to be a crime, labeling it as a category of racism. This ruling has become an important protection mechanism, but it still runs into obstacles such as “difficult access and proper framework by security operators and/or the judiciary. One of the biggest reasons for this ineffectiveness is the difficulty in denouncing these crimes, since the justice system also reproduces LGBTIphobia” (Vasconcelos, 2021, p. 127).

It should be noted that the two achievements mentioned above were the result of judicial decisions and not of legislation proposed by the Legislative Power. The role of the Legislative Power, at the federal level, is deferential when it comes to the constitutional right to sexual and gender diversity. The National Congress has not proposed an LGBTQIA+ bill since the re-democratization and the 1988 Constitution; there are however 50 bills pending, some of which are on the verge of expiring (Brito, 2021). One of these bills (Senate Bill No. 134 of 2018, which proposes for the creation of the Statute of Sexual and Gender Diversity) has been awaiting approval since 2019, with no opinion having been issued so far (April 2022). A symbolic example, one that is also in line with Lacerda’s perception (2019) that Congress reflects social behavior, is a poll available on the Senate page<sup>8</sup>. As of April 8, 2022, this poll had a total of 93,672 respondents, with 40,460 (43.19%) in favor of establishing the statute and 53,212 (56.81%) against establishing the statute.

<sup>5</sup> The term “homosexuality” is considered “incorrect and prejudiced by virtue of the suffix ‘ism’, which denotes disease and abnormality. The term was substituted for homosexuality, which correctly refers to an individual’s sexual orientation, describing a ‘way of being and feeling’” (Reis, 2018, p. 64).

<sup>6</sup> The interview can be seen in its entirety on the *Roda Viva* YouTube channel. Retrieved from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvE09tDb\\_Ls](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvE09tDb_Ls)

<sup>7</sup> Resolution No. 175 of May 14, 2013, which reads: “The competent authorities are prohibited from refusing a license, a civil marriage, or converting a stable union into a same-sex marriage”. Retrieved from <https://atos.cnj.jus.br/atos/detalhar/1754>

<sup>8</sup> Retrieved from <https://www25.senado.leg.br/web/atividade/materias/-/materia/132701>



If it is true that advances have been made, it is also true that their effects are relative because they are stuck in the neoconservatism (particularly with regards to religious doctrines, many of which uphold fundamentalism and the male chauvinistic nature of a patriarchal model of society) that override the principles of equality and freedom guaranteed by the Constitution. These obstacles affect the LGBTQIA+ community on a number of levels and various aspects of life, such as professional activities (Lando et al., 2020), hence the need for affirmative actions.

### AFFIRMATIVE ACTIONS IN THE WORLD OF WORK

There are a number of affirmative actions that can be taken in the world of work; we shall talk about two of them. The first is the diversity of groups in the workforce in terms of class, race and gender (Abreu et al., 2016). The other involves issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity and their claim for rights and working conditions (Souza, 2020). Addressing these agendas in the *locus* of the productive sector, in addition to combating prejudice, can help legitimize LGBTQIA+ rights, which includes equal access to professional environments.

Many of the individuals who identify as LGBTQIA+ – particularly those identified by the letter “T” – face a number of difficulties when entering the world of work, many end up having to unwillingly work in low-skill and low-paying jobs, or even turn to undesirable alternatives such as prostitution (Paniza, 2019). Promoting discussions on gender issues and putting policies into place that protect LGBTQIA+ workers allows for advances to be made to the rights they deserve.

The core of the issue here is that this community needs to be made more visible in order to successfully obtain spaces in professional environments and society as a whole. Doing this within a dominant system that tends to evade or gloss over anything that deviates from the norm has a direct impact on how the economic contribution of LGBTQIA+ community and their place in the social environment are perceived. We can compare this observation to what Margaret Maruani and Monique Meron (2016) conclude about statistics related to women’s work: official figures underestimate women’s participation in gainful employment as a result of much of the data being erased or deleted.

As important as they are, gender affirmative actions are relatively recent. They were initiated in the second half of the 20th century – in the 1980s, according to Anabelle Carrilho da Costa (2011, p. 11) – considering “discrimination in this context as a consequence of complex and diverse previous relationships that are reflected in inequalities that need to be focally fought, however, without prejudice to policies that also act at their origins”. Despite not having all the



available data, what has been achieved so far, especially with regard to women and feminist initiatives (which share similar demands and actions as the LGBTQIA+ community), is that the cis-heteronormative and masculine standard that had remained hegemonic and unchanged for centuries has now been challenged.

It is important to highlight the “sexual division of labor”, a concept of French origin that refers to the systematic unequal delegation of tasks – professional or domestic – which demonstrates, in the words of Helena Hirata and Danièle Kergoat (2007, p. 596), “processes which society uses to hierarchize activities, and ultimately the sexes, basically creating a gender system”. In other words, this sexual division follows relationship structures in a patriarchal society where men are primarily the breadwinners and women are housewives and responsible for childcare.

This particular form of the social division of labor has two organizing principles: the principle of separation (there are men’s jobs and women’s jobs) and the hierarchical principle (a man’s job is “worth” more than a woman’s job). These principles are valid for all known societies, in time and space. They can be applied through a specific process of legitimation, the naturalist ideology. This debases gender to biological sex, and reduces social practices to gendered “social roles” that refer to the natural destiny of the species (Hirata; Kergoat, 2007, p. 599).

The separation and hierarchization of work, which has historically situated women as inferior to men, also places LGBTQIA+ in a similar position, mainly because they are at the bottom of the pyramid (cis and heterosexual men at the top). The more the LGBTQIA+ community is distanced from this paradigm (that is, performing aspects different from heterosexual cis men), the more unfavorable the conditions are for performing their professions. It is in this sense that the concept of “sexual division of labor”, despite being based on the binary pattern (male-female), can very well be used in the discussion proposed here. Luiz Henrique Braúna Lopes de Souza (2020, pp. 271-272) echoes this idea when he says:

It is also necessary to critically understand that the inequalities, prejudice and discrimination faced on a daily basis by the population who do not comply with the norms and rules imposed by heterosexuality and natural and compulsory cisgenderism, condition and determine the space in which these subjects will be inserted in the world of work, as well as remuneration for their labor power. Not only that, but these aspects also affect the real possibilities of achieving professional training. They even affect access to basic education. In other words, these subjects’



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lives are marked by greater precarious living conditions and, consequently, will be subjected to precarious jobs.

A survey conducted in 2021 by Mais Diversidade consultancy on the LGBTQIA+ community and its insertion into the labor market presents some interesting data: 74% of respondents see the labor market as not very inclusive, while 54% claim there is a lack of LGBTQIA+ references in their areas of activity (Rodrigues & Tadeu, 2021). Another survey conducted in Brazil by the Center for Talent Innovation in 2019 adds to this: 61% of gay and lesbian employees claim they hide their sexuality from colleagues and managers for fear of losing their jobs; 33% of companies would not hire LGBTQIA+ people for leadership positions; 41% of workers who identify as LGBTQIA+ have already suffered some type of discrimination in their work environment due to sexual orientation or gender identity; and 90% of transvestites resort to prostitution because they cannot find gainful employment – even those who have qualifications (Simor, 2020).

The symptoms of LGBTQIA-phobic in the world of work are also – and perhaps mainly – a reflection of capitalism, which itself is based on inequalities. Similar to the “functionality of racism” (Menezes, 2010), the sexual division of labor contributes to the capitalist mode of production where the unfavorable conditions of certain groups make them susceptible to exploitation. There is an interrelation between class, race and gender. In saying this, we look back to Souza (2020, p. 272) and his line of thinking, based on Marxism, where “political emancipation is fundamental to guaranteeing the survival of the working class, but human emancipation is an outlook for revolutionary struggle”. This author concludes that the obstacles related to sexual and gender diversity will only be overcome by overcoming capital.

### LGBTQIA+ JOURNALISTS: REFLECTIONS ON THEIR EFFORTS

Apart from binarism, considering gender variables is something relatively new, even in demographic notes. In the case of journalism, there are two important works on professional profiles – carried out over the last decade and coordinated by Roseli Figaro (2013, p. 29) and Jacques Mick and Samuel Lima (2013, p. 34)<sup>9</sup> – yet they only collected information and divided it into “male” and “female” journalists. It is only recently that we found studies going beyond this categorization, such as the survey on the performance of communicators during the Covid-19 pandemic, also conducted by Figaro (2021, p. 26), which include the gender identity categories “non-binary” and “others”<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> The cis-heteronormative standard, rarely questioned in studies on the world of work (particularly those pertaining to journalism), is evident in the titles of the two highlighted studies: *As mudanças no mundo do trabalho do jornalista* (Figaro, 2013) e *Perfil do jornalista brasileiro* (Mick & Lima, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> The research report entitled *Como trabalham os comunicadores no contexto de um ano da pandemia de Covid-19: ...1 ano e 500 mil mortes depois* (in English, *How communicators are working one year into the Covid-19 pandemic: ...1 year and 500,000 deaths later*) makes the following analysis: “The issue of gender identity is quite relevant in the case of communicators, as these are the professionals who deal with this approach in the varying communication and cultural products they produce; the production of meanings is the structural axis of the profession. 59% of respondents claimed to be female, while 41% claimed to be male. In addition to the gender options of female and male, the closed questionnaire included non-binary, I prefer not to declare, and other as alternatives. Not many of these alternatives were selected by the respondents: 4 respondents preferred not to declare, 2 identified as non-binary, and one identified as other, without giving any further details. This is yet another survey demonstrating the female profile in the communication profession” (Figaro, 2021, p. 26).



This lack of gender identity categories is not a mere observation, but an expression of the invisibility of the LGBTQIA+ community. In a society where the patriarchal family is the normative standard and the advances of feminism and “minorities” are constantly being stymied, especially by movements that mix religious interests with secularism (Lacerda, 2019), expressing sexual orientation and/or gender identity hits an institutional wall, one which affects the dynamics of different social fields.

Affirmative actions are, for this very reason, a necessary tool to mitigate discrimination, violence, and other obstacles faced by the LGBTQIA+ community, both socially and in the workplace. In the case of Brazilian journalism (with its prominent male representation, as mentioned earlier in this text)<sup>11</sup> there have been a number of mobilizations seeking to legitimize LGBTQIA+ over the years, publishing their issues in journalistic productions (Carvalho, 2012; Ribeiro, 2010) and giving visibility to journalists who identify as members of the LGBTQIA+ community. The newspapers *Lampião da Esquina* (1978-1981) and *Chana com Chana* (1981-1987)<sup>12</sup>, produced by gays and lesbians, respectively, are examples of this advocacy for rights before the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Both of these publications were created during the civil-military dictatorship that ruled Brazil in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1964-1985) and championed counterculture movements.

LGBTQIA+ journalists are no longer located solely in alternative spaces, they have gained space in the *mainstream* press over time. However, public demonstrations in favor of sexual orientation and gender identity (like the one mentioned previously, and others<sup>13</sup>) are still seen as experiences that deviate from the norm, especially when they involve TV professionals. It should also be noted that this visibility has basically been granted to white men who adhere to cis-heteronormative masculinity.

We shall discuss three current initiatives in this area. The first two initiatives came from the Union of Professional Journalists in the State of São Paulo (SJSP), a leading entity in the defense of LGBTQIA+ rights in the country. In May 2017, the SJSP board created an LGBT Commission based on the principle that “LGBT journalists are harassed and discriminated against on a daily basis in the labor market, often the subject of disrespectful jokes and comments” (“Jornalistas organizam”, 2017).

This collective held a meeting at the union’s headquarters on May 30th, 2017, where they decided on an agenda of actions to carry out immediately, such as participating in the June 18<sup>th</sup> LGBT Pride Parade in the same year, held on Avenida Paulista in São Paulo. They produced stickers, t-shirts, and a banner with the phrase “Journalists against discrimination” written on it (Figure 1).

<sup>11</sup>Up until the early 2000s, Brazilian journalism was performed predominantly by men, who accounted for 50.30% of all professionals, according to an estimate from 2003 (Rocha; Sousa, 2011, p. 16). More recent data show that the percentage of male journalists in the country is 41.9%, while female journalists are at 57.8% (Perfil..., 2021), maintaining the trend of feminization verified since the late 2000s (Rocha & Sousa, 2011; Figaro, 2013; Mick & Lima, 2013).

<sup>12</sup>Even though they are widely considered significant initiatives, *Lampião da Esquina* and *Chana com Chana* were not the first initiatives of this nature to circulate in Brazil. Flávia Péret (2012, p. 130) identifies that the pioneers were launched in 1963. That year, “in Rio de Janeiro, the fanzine *O Snob* was created by Agildo Guimarães. This publication, which was published until 1969, became a small-format magazine [...] dedicated to issues of gay culture and behavior. In Salvador, the fanzine *Fatos e Fofocas* was created, which reported on gay culture and behavior. It was edited by Waldeilton de Paula”.

<sup>13</sup>Two other journalists who became the subject of articles on sexual orientation in the workplace were Matheus Ribeiro and Marcelo Cosme. The former drew attention in 2019 for being the first openly gay news show host on *Jornal Nacional*, from the Rede Globo network (Dias, 2019). The latter attracted attention in 2021 when he talked about his boyfriend while hosting a live broadcast of *Em Pauta*, from GloboNews network (Carvalho, 2021).

Figure 1. The SJSP LGBT Commission at the LGBT Pride Parade (2017)



Note. Archives/SJSP.

The Commission also conducted a survey with the goal of learning more about the issues that LGBTQIA+ journalists face. The survey was made available on an online platform, and the following partial results were released in September of 2017: 39.3% of the respondents stated that they had already been discriminated against in their profession because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, while another 17.9% stated that they may have been discrimination against. This data is in line with what we are discussing here.

Some of the prejudices mentioned included inappropriate jokes in the workplace, unequal treatment, not to mention even more offensive actions such as openly homophobic slurs, insults, and name-calling. The research participants also suffered discrimination in the form of job opportunities, for example, promotions and sections of the workplace which openly excluded LGBT professionals ("Quase 40% dos", 2017).

The purpose of the questionnaire was to provide support for the Commission's actions based on conclusions reached from the collected information. There were, however, a few obstacles this questionnaire encountered which slightly hindered its progress. The main obstacle was the labor reform, enacted in 2017<sup>14</sup>, which made for more flexible rules, reduced rights, and particularly sought to weaken the union<sup>15</sup>. Since that year, the union has begun to turn

<sup>14</sup>Law nº 13,467 of July 13, 2017, sanctioned by Michel Temer, who assumed the presidency of the Republic in 2016 after the legal-parliamentary coup that removed Dilma Rousseff from office. Retrieved from [http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/\\_ato2015-2018/2017/lei/113467.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2015-2018/2017/lei/113467.htm)

<sup>15</sup>One of the alterations put into place by the new legislation was discontinuing the mandatory payment of union dues which the unions needed for their survival.

more of its attention to actions aimed at maintaining rights and adequate remuneration for the LGBTQIA+ community, which unfortunately left the union with less time to focus on other initiatives. This lack of time not only affected the LGBTQIA+ group, but also other associations within its scope, such as the Commission of Journalists for Racial Equality and the Commission of Journalists for Gender Equality (formerly known as the Women's Journalist Collective).

What is clear is that initiatives focusing on diversity in the world of work encounter other obstacles – something which is significantly exacerbated in times of political and economic instability. The “cascading effect” of harmful actions to the working class (like the new labor legislation) hinders any forward movement for agendas that embrace other claims not directly related to employment and income. As a result, many discriminatory acts end up becoming normalized, which makes it much harder to fight them. This is what happens with sexual and moral harassment, which mainly affects women but does tend to spill over to other members of the LGBTQIA+ community<sup>16</sup>. One case in point is the survey carried out by the SJSP Commission which revealed how some journalists reported being neglected or even excluded in or from certain editorials due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

For journalists, an antagonizing factor in all this is that discrimination tends to be “concealed” by the false idea that there is no prejudice in their field, which makes *bullying*, harassment, and even censorship go widely unnoticed. “It may be less than [in] other professions, you may have less difficulty than [in] other areas, but that does not mean that you are free from any discrimination or that you will not encounter any problems related to this”. This was a statement, in October 2017, from former SJSP Secretary of Communication and Culture, Priscilla Chandretti, who was head of the LGBT Commission<sup>17</sup>.

It is safe to say that (self)reflection on LGBTQIA+ journalists and their situation is one of the aspects that affirmative actions can help explore further. Additionally, the apparent lack of in-depth studies on this issue could be one reason why this group's movements have fallen short of expectations. This movement appears to make more progress when compared to other places. While initiatives in Brazil are less organized and dispersed<sup>18</sup> throughout the country, the United States has had the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association (NLGJA) since 1990, founded on the ideal of “improving media coverage of LGBT issues. Similarly, the Association des Journalistes LGBT (AJL), founded in France in 2013, works on issues such as marriage equality (also passed in 2013) and gives wide coverage to LGBTQIA-phobic issues (“Pour une association”, 2013, our translation).

<sup>16</sup>Concern over harassment led the SJSP to push forward on this issue in salary campaign negotiations (Serafim, 2017) and create a channel which journalists could use to report cases that occurred in the workplace (“Sindicato tem canal”, 2018).

<sup>17</sup>Interview with Priscilla Chandretti on October 10, 2017.

<sup>18</sup>In addition to the SJSP's LGBT Commission, we also identified a similar entity in the Union of Journalists in Ceará and a collective in the Union of Professional Journalists in Minas Gerais.

<sup>19</sup>The manual is free to read and download. Retrieved from <http://www.grupodignidade.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/manual-comunicacao-LGBTI.pdf>

Lastly, there is the LGBTI+ *Communication Handbook*<sup>19</sup> (Figure 2), released in 2018, the aim of which is to combat hate speech and strengthen the democratization of the media. The handbook was prepared by the National LGBTI Alliance and the GayLatino Network and received funding support from the LGBTI Center of the Union of Journalists in Ceará (Sindjorce), the Union of Professional Journalists of Paraná (SindijorPR), and the National Federation of Journalists (Fenaj), among other entities. In the words of its organizer, Toni Reis (2018, p. 7), the handbook seeks to “reduce prejudices and stigmas, and collaborate for a better understanding of recurrent terms within the LGBTI+ population [...] in order to contribute to a more inclusive journalism, and one that is more attentive to realities”.

**Figure 2.** LGBTI+ Communication Handbook



*Note. Reproduction.*

The handbook is divided into ten chapters and discusses issues such as “sexuality, gender and biological sex”, “gender identity and expression”, “terms and behaviors to avoid” and “suggested agendas for the LGBTI+ Movement”, among others. In the preface, the director of the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) in Brazil, Georgiana Braga-Orillard (2018, p. 9), states that the handbook is “essential not only for media professionals and communicators, but for all people who want to advance human rights and the rights of LGBTI+ people”.

The material denounces LGBTQIA-phobic (which is often quite subtle in the way it occurs, even in the world of journalists) and helps make the legitimizing process more accessible. As important as claiming equal rights and social recognition are, it is also just as important to have these guidelines communicated properly, replacing “prejudice with information”, as highlighted by Sindjorce when the handbook was released (“Manual de Comunicação”, 2018). Gender activists, including other members of the community who play a less active role in this constant struggle, have demonstrated that they are aware that real change to their living conditions can symbolically occur through media communication.

Although we do not have any concrete data showing the effectiveness of the *LGBTI+ Communication Handbook* on the daily life of the Brazilian press, it does seem reasonable to consider that its existence at least regulates attitudes and helps encourage LGBTQIA+ mobilizations within journalism. Considering the visibility of certain agents in the field (like the TV journalists mentioned earlier in this paper) there has been somewhat of an advance, a slight change in the way identity issues are raised in the binomial media and society. Of course, we must not be seduced by the appearance of change within this process; we must recognize its limitations and its possibilities. There is still so much to be achieved.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

If we look from the 1960s when the “gay press” emerged in Brazil (Péret, 2012, p. 11) up until the 2020s, we can see how journalists have slowly but surely been “coming out of the closet”, especially those who work in the conventional press; however, going public with this information continues to be fairly unaccepted. Despite the progress that has been made, we are a long way from being able to say that LGBTQIA+ are properly incorporated into the dynamics of the field. This means that the sexual orientation and gender identity of these people are still being treated as exceptions to the rule, and not inclusive elements of a diversity, as they deserve to be.





Not all is lost, however. Even if the three initiatives we discussed in this paper do not become very successful, they are at least extremely valuable contributions. Going back to the initial argument in this paper regarding the dominant conservatism in Brazil (especially over the last five years) and the distressing statistics that show the country as having the largest number of homicides in the world, it is important to note that there are some Brazilian LGBTQIA+ journalists who have managed to assume their identities in journalism, that is, they have been able to “be themselves in the work environment” (Lando et al., 2020).

Despite these considerations, we understand that the community of LGBTQIA+ journalists faces the same paradox as feminism: “everything changes, but nothing changes”. Similar to how changes to women’s situations in the labor market “are always evolving” yet have not been sufficient enough to bridge the gap in the sexual division of labor (Hirata; Kergoat, 2007, p. 597), the achievements of the LGBTQIA+ community have also not been able to eliminate the prejudices, have not led to employment equity, nor have they been able to break the cycle of discrimination which they are subjected to. With the exception of the odd case here or there, the scenario has not changed much, which leads us once again to concur with Hirata and Kergoat (2007, p. 607-608) when they say: “We need to reflect not only on the reason for this change, but more importantly on how to change it”. This is the main challenge that gender affirmative actions in the field of journalism face. ■

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