

THE WORLD OF WORK OF FEMALE JOURNALISTS: feminism and professional discrimination

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ABSTRACT - This article discuss the gender question from the feminist perspective as part of the general struggle for female emancipation in the class struggle. It addresses this perspective creating a link between the main struggles of the journalist women for a respectful place of work and labour rights and the general feminist struggle along history. The argumentative line is based on bibliographic theoretic research, investigation on women conditions and profile data, as well as on research about the work of journalists with special attention to the work of female workers in new independent labour arrangements of media conglomerates. In conclusion, this article highlights the feminist protagonism and the necessity of professional engagement in defence of quality journalism as expression and place of speech for human rights and for its emancipation.

Keywords: Communication. Journalist. Feminism. World of the work. Journalist women.

O MUNDO DO TRABALHO DAS JORNALISTAS: feminismo e discriminação profissional

RESUMO - O artigo trata da discussão sobre gênero a partir do feminismo como aspecto da luta geral pela emancipação das mulheres nos embates das classes sociais. Aborda essa perspectiva traçando um elo de continuidade entre as lutas mais específicas das mulheres jornalistas por seus direitos no mundo do trabalho e a luta mais geral das mulheres trabalhadoras ao longo da história. A linha argumentativa baseia-se em pesquisa teórica bibliográfica, em pesquisa de dados sobre perfil e condições das mulheres, e em pesquisa específica sobre o perfil dos jornalistas e de seu trabalho em novos arranjos independentes dos conglomerados de meios, dando destaque à situação de trabalho das mulheres jornalistas. À guisa de conclusão, o artigo destaca a luta feminista e sua importância para a coletividade, o engajamento das profissionais em defesa do jornalismo de qualidade e como expressão e lugar de fala dos direitos humanos, pela emancipação.

Palavras-chave: Comunicação. Jornalista. Feminismo. Mundo do trabalho. Mulheres jornalistas

EL MUNDO DEL TRABAJO DE LAS PERIODISTAS: feminismo y discriminación profesional

RESUMEN - El artículo discute la cuestión de género viendo el feminismo como aspecto general por la emancipación en las luchas de las clases sociales. Esta perspectiva constituye uno eje de continuidad entre las luchas más específicas de las mujeres periodistas por sus derechos en el mundo del trabajo y las luchas de las mujeres trabajadoras al largo de la historia. La argumentación está basada en investigaciones bibliográficas, en datos sobre perfil y condiciones de las mujeres, y en investigación específica sobre el perfil de los periodistas y del trabajo del periodista en nuevos arreglos periodísticos independientes de los conglomerados de medios, con destaque para la situación del trabajo de las mujeres periodistas. En conclusión, el artículo destaca la lucha feminista y su importancia para la colectividad y también como las periodistas luchan por un periodismo de cualidad y por expresión de las voces ciudadanas por los derechos humanos y de la emancipación ciudadana.

Palabra clave: Comunicación. Periodista. Feminismo. Mundo del trabajo. Mujeres periodistas

Introduction

“O jornalista”, *the* (male-gender definite article) journalist – until the late 1990s. “A jornalista”, *the* (female-gender definite article) journalist – since then. In Brazil today most professional journalists are women. This is radically different from the situation that obtained in the twentieth century. There was a time when a meeting of female journalists in São Paulo would barely bring together ten professionals. Edy Lima, one of the most senior members of the São Paulo Professional Journalists’ Union (*Sindicato dos Jornalistas Profissionais de São Paulo*) – affirms that: “There were about seven or eight, including Helena Silveira, of the *Folha*; Carmem Almeida, of the *Estadão*; and Odete de Freitas, of the *Correio Paulista*”. (Costa, 2008, p. 4).

Ministry of Labor data compiled by the National Federation of Journalists (*Federação Nacional dos Jornalistas* – Fenaj) show that from the mid-1980s to the early 2000s, there was in Brazil the beginning of a change in gender profile among formally-employed journalists.

Table 1 – Number of formally-employed women journalists

Category	1986	1999	2001
Men	11,352	11,251	11,440
Women	6,176	8,693	9,521
Total	17,528	19,944	20,961

Source: FENAJ, Ministry of Labor (2002).

The data in table 1 are a portrait of journalists in all regions of Brazil. From 1986 to 2001 there was a marked increase (50%) in the number of women working in journalism. It should be stressed that the data show legally-hired professionals under Brazil's Consolidation of Labor Laws (*Consolidação das Leis Trabalhistas* – CLT). All other women working under precarious labor contracts are thus not included in the Ministry of Labor (MTb) statistics.

According to data provided by the Union of Journalists, compiled from the Annual Report of Social Information (*Relação Anual de Informações Sociais* – RAIS) for the state of São Paulo, there were 11,771 journalists employed in 2006. Of these, 52.09% (in other words, 6,131) were women (Costa, 2008, p.3). Numerically, the participation of women varies among branches of the profession. There were fewer women working in radio, TV and the Internet; women were traditionally present in the press, magazines and so-called non-pressroom functions (working as consultants, for example). However, this has been changing. Many more of them are currently present in novel news-providing initiatives based on social networks.

These figures are growing both in the state of São Paulo and nationwide. The most recent survey on journalists' profiles is a study carried out in 2012 by Jacques Mick and Samuel Lima (2013, p. 33), showing that women have become a majority in journalism. They account for 63.7% of this category in Brazil.

Why are more women coming into the profession? And what does this change mean for the practice of journalism? Under what conditions do these women work? What challenges do gender differences pose to the working practice of women journalists? How do aspects of social inequality affect women by gender difference? These are all questions that might lead to in-depth studies. The aim

of this article is to provide clues for a debate on the work of women journalists within the context of a gender and social rights discussion, and more specifically, to attempt to answer how aspects of social inequalities affect women journalists through gender difference. To do so, we resort to a historical and conceptual discussion of the term gender; we discuss controversies surrounding several approaches adopted by the social movement leading the feminist struggle; and we discuss the situation of women journalists in the world of work, without intending to have the last word on the issue, because this research is ongoing.

Re-examining the issue of gender

Alice Mitika Koshiyama (2001, p. 4) writes that “the man-woman gender issue is marked by a delimitation of the space allowed or forbidden to all. Thus, at their origin, cities marked out gender exclusion privileges, older even than class exclusions”. Koshiyama here inspires reflection on the presence of women in the public space, in the city, in the *polis*, which goes back to issues of citizenship, and to gender as a theme of exclusion predating the division of society into classes.

Her remarks are well-founded, because the first division of labor was a sexual division. In the history of civilization, women were restricted to the private space, the sphere of children and the family; man’s was the public domain, involving exploration and conquest. This is an issue that goes back to the history of private property. Preserving the body of the woman against the dominion of other men is a way of ensuring knowledge of who one’s heirs will be. It ensures the preservation of one’s property while one is away. The social determination of types of labor specific to the female universe also means assigning the role of inferiority to women, their place as submissive creatures, naturally inclined to details, and exposed to the orders of the *stronger*. Establishing what women may or may not do is an act of power. The entire concept of family in our civilization is based on the reclusion and submission of women. This trajectory of control and submission relates to women’s responsibility for generating life. Control over the body, as well as control over future generations and the perpetuation of a given form of social organization. The sexual division of labor, the monogamous family, the notion of inheritance

passing from fathers to children, are all fundamental aspects of the forms of social organization and of the institutionalization of the power of the State¹. In caste and class systems, poor women occupy the bottom rung on the ladder of social rights.

Throughout history, the several economic and social systems have therefore had woman's submission at their core. Likewise, to combat discrimination and exploitation, women have organized and demanded to be acknowledged as social subjects endowed with rights. One of the main aspects of the movement for female emancipation lies precisely in questioning the structures of power. In Brazil for example, the right to attend school was a victory for the struggle of women. Nísia Floresta (Dionísia Gonçalves Pin, 1819-1885) the founder of Brazil's first school for girls, was a militant in the emancipationist struggle. Claims concerning the right to work were taking shape even before the French revolutionary movement of 1871. The right to vote and to be politically represented also have an exemplary facet in Paris: Proudhon, the French thinker and politician, declared women incapable of voting. As Andrea D'Atri (2011, p.1) writes: "When French seamstress Jeanne Deroin was appointed a candidate in the 1849 elections, Proudhon declared her incapable because the breastfeeding apparatus women bear makes them unfit to vote".

Policies and theories about this social movement developed hand-in-hand with the struggle for female emancipation. Scholars of the movement have pinpointed different moments in its development. They have used the metaphor of waves to synthesize the complexity and diversity of these struggles. Matos (2010) and Saffioti (1986) identify the first wave in feminist struggles as concerning the right to vote, and to political representation. The suffragist movement, as it came to be known, spread around the world in the first decade of the twentieth century. The Soviet Union established the right to vote in 1917; the United States in 1920, Britain in 1928, and Brazil in 1932. However, in Switzerland, it was only in 1971 that women gained this right. In this first phase, demands for work, salary, and social rights placed women in the front line of the struggle for political changes, and they engaged in the anarchist, socialist and communist movements. Women played an outstanding role in the Russian Revolution and in resistance to Nazi-Fascism, thus taking their place in the major historical events of the last century. To downplay this period as the "struggle of white bourgeois women" (Bittencourt, 2015, p.200) is to diminish an understanding of the social movement

from the perspective of history, and even to minimize the value of the lives of so many women in the fields and in the factories who mobilized in the cause of feminism.

The second wave, according to Matos (2010) and Saffioti (1986), emerges with the counterculture movement of the 1960s to 1980s. That was a period in which women sought to extend the focus of their struggles, denouncing the patriarchy, and the class and racial characteristics of the oppression of women. Bittencourt (2015, p.201) writes that “it is in this period that questioning of the differences between gender, sex and sexual orientation arise, undermining any taking-for-granted of social roles that could be argued to be inherent to men or women”. In the so-called third wave, with globalization and post-modernist trends, gender issues will be re-examined from individualistic positions that see the axis of their struggle as being the issue of deconstructing the nature of the identity of gender; these struggles occur above all at a conceptual level in the Universities. Writers like Susan Bordo, Elizabeth Grosz, Judith Butler and Donna Haraway propose a reflection on the deconstruction of gender as an identity category and create what becomes known as Queer Theory. The core of this theory can be summed up by means of this statement by Balieiro ([undated], p.4): “The heterogeneity of social phenomena allows room for a reading of blurrings or transitions between the frontiers of the masculine and feminine, questioning how a socially imposed norm is taken for granted to predict continuity between sex-gender-desire-sexual practices”. (<http://www.ufscar.br/cis/2011/10/o-queer-e-o-conceito-de-genero/>).

The concept of intersectional feminism was also formulated at this stage of the conceptual development of the feminism-gender issue. US law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw first formulated this concept. She writes (2002, p.177), that

intersectionality is a conceptual definition of the problem that seeks to capture the structural and dynamic consequences of the interactions between two or more axes of subordination. It specifically addresses the way in which racism, the patriarchy, class oppression and other discriminatory systems create basic inequalities that structure the relative positions of women, races, ethnicities, classes and so on. Intersectionality also addresses the way in which specific actions and policies generate oppressions that flow along such axes, making dynamic or active aspects of disempowerment.

The perception of intersectional feminism therefore addresses the overlapping of discriminations and oppressions, as the experience

of black, Indian, poor, manual-laboring women from late-developed regions such as Latin America, Africa and many Asian countries shows. The concept seems to restore the relevance of struggles for human rights incorporated by intersectional diversities, as Crenshaw writes. The 2001 World Conference Against Racism in South Africa was extremely important for the discussion and dissemination of this concept. Here in Brazil, Luiza Barrios, former Minister of the Secretariat to Promote Racial Equality (*Secretaria para a Promoção da Igualdade Racial*) was a militant of this concept, pointing out above all how in Brazil discrimination against poor black women sets us on a collision course with the Federal Constitution and with human rights. Intersectional feminism thus enables different aspects of exploitation and discrimination to be interlinked, revealing where they overlap, and it also enables the feminist movement to regain its position on the political stage. In favor of achieving rights for all aspects. In Brazil, for example, poor black women are those who suffer most discrimination at work and in other social spheres. The issue of women cannot be set aside in any discussion on the structures of power and of social classes². It is about analyzing how the instruments of power operate on the production of social, economic and political inequalities. The issue of gender is thus not a problem of difference (difference is always welcome); it is a problem of inequality. That is where gender studies contribute towards understanding how the oppression of women is linked to a power structure whose axis of exploration is private property.

The feminist movement has therefore operated on several fronts to organize itself politically. Controversies about its orientation have thronged the pages of publications produced by its leaders. In such periodicals and journals, concepts about feminism are made manifest. According to the entry in CPDOC FGV, about the feminist movement in Brazil, the first period of this manifestation is “in the second half of the nineteenth century, when a series of newspapers edited by women raised the issue of female emancipation by demanding access to education and instruction”. (CPDOC, FGV, undated)

Such records may be highlighted throughout the twentieth century, because women’s participation in the struggle for rights was intense and aligned with that of other sectors of society. In the 1970s, under Brazil’s Civilian-Military Dictatorship, the Brazilian feminist movement played an essential role in the restoration of democracy. FGV’s CPDOC record lists countless feminist newspapers and periodicals linking the movement for women’s rights to the broader struggle for

democracy and freedom of expression, against the Civilian-Military Dictatorship that installed itself in the country in 1964.

The major periodicals of the movement, with nationwide outreach, included *Brasil-Mulher* (16 numbers from 1975 to 1979), *Nós-Mulheres* (eight from 1976 to 1978) and *Mulherio* (1981-1988). However, many of the groups and associations mentioned produced and distributed countless newsletters and newspapers, most of which were ephemeral and highly localized. (CPDOC/FCV, undated)

Women, whether journalists or otherwise, founded and produced periodical publications that helped disseminate the feminist ideal. That was an extremely rich phase in the history of feminism in Brazil. Younger and future generations must study the history of feminism in Brazil in order to consolidate achievements of demands and boost the understanding of the movement leveraging its organizational practice and conceptual and theoretical heritage³. These struggles owe much to the permanent presence of feminist newspapers and women journalists.

Take, for instance, the historical example of professor and journalist Clara Zetkin in the international feminist movement and her efforts to provide women's struggles with the class approach that is so necessary for their advancement. She was chief editor of the newspaper *Die Gleichheit* (Equality), set up in 1892, and was an important instrument in the struggle up until it went out of print in 1917. As a means of discussion and dissemination of emancipatory ideas, the newspaper helped Clara Zetkin organize international conferences of the feminist movement. At the second conference in 1910, Clara Zetkin and Alexandra Kollontai proposed International Women's Day as an annual celebration of the rights of women that were to be conquered by emancipation and socialism. Just as in the general emancipatory struggle, women's fight for equal rights was boosted by the presence of women journalists, and by the newspaper itself as a means of expressing their demands and proposals for change.

Women journalists and discrimination in their exercise of the profession

The job market has fluctuated in Brazil concerning the creation of more openings for women. Clemente Ganz Lucio, director of the Inter-Union Department for Statistics and Socio-Economic Studies (*Departamento Intersindical de Estatísticas e Estudos*

Socioeconômicos – Dieese), on the basis of a paper published by Brazil's national statistical office IBGE underpinned by 2010 Census data, has commented on how far the job market has incorporated women over the last decade, so much so that 55% of them, in general terms, are taking part with full-time contracts. However, according to the study mentioned by Lucio, they do so in the context of smaller salaries than men's. "We commonly observe smaller salaries for women doing identical jobs to those of men. The average wage, in 2010, was R\$1,587 [about US\$ 952.47 on December 2010] for men and R\$1,074 [about US\$ 645 on December 2010] for women—meaning they were earning 68% of men's wages". (Lucio, 2017)

The demand for equal pay for men and women doing the same jobs and in the same professions, and for access to more senior positions in career hierarchies, has always been in the forefront of the feminist struggle, and is still valid in today's economy. In journalism, some aspects have changed for the better, because jobs are being occupied by a majority of women, although wages remain lower.

In most areas of the world, journalists are young women, who have been in the profession for less time. Studies in Brazil (Figaro, 2013; Mick & Lima, 2013); France (Damian-Gaillard, Frisque & Saïtta, 2010) and Portugal (Silveirinha, 2004) have shown that women journalists have university educations (even when this is not specific or mandatory) and their professional profile has become extremely versatile. Women journalists are working in a range of different types of outlet, using analog, digital or hybrid languages and technologies.

The reasons underlying this change in the profile of the profession have the following factors in common: urbanization, the growth of the female population, increased university-level professional training among women, the importance of communications in contemporary society – above all outlets such as television – and the advent of the Internet. In her study of women journalists in São Paulo, Rocha (2004, p. 105) stresses that increases in salaries, professional specialization in the newsrooms of several publishing houses, demands for higher levels of knowledge in writing skills, technological changes brought about by online journalism, digital televisions and the Internet have driven "the inclusion of women in newsrooms".

Despite these advances, the sociology of professions defines journalism as only a partially-consolidated field (Bonelli, 1993; 2002; and Freidson, 1996; 1998), owing above all to the fact that there is no mandatory specific training, as is the case in several countries.

Although the professional issue and the question of respective knowledge is controversial and talks to the dispute between scientific fields for power, one thing is certain: there is a great demand for university courses in the field, as well as for specialization and professionalizing M.A. courses. However, Rocha (2004, pp. 107-108) states that professional stratification is a constant issue, where “the informal, internal and competitive accreditation system (...) uses discriminatory criteria such as gender, race, religion, ethnicity and class culture”. These discriminatory elements work together so as to forge “careers and set up a stratification system within the profession”.

This “stratification within the profession” also has to do with the editorial lines of hegemonic journalism outlets. In this respect, journalism is no different from other professions. And with regard to women, the discriminatory ingredients are very traditional: lower salaries than those of men, subordinate positions, difficulties in obtaining promotions so as to rise within the profession. Francisco Sant’Anna (2002, p. 13) cites discrimination against women journalists in their working routines. They are given less important stories to research, and superficial appearance values are always to the fore when choosing a female professional. The author states that:

(...) women journalists are even discriminated against with regard to the content of their reporting. More complex or possibly more impactful stories tend to be handed out so as to privilege male journalists. Esthetics—above all on television—is another form of segregation. Women who are black, fat, or considered ugly, or who do not meet an Anglo-Caucasian standard, find fewer opportunities for work as reporters on TV channels than those who meet the chauvinistically-imposed esthetic standards.

There is also an overwhelming perception of professional discrimination, bordering on sexual harassment and violence. It might seem unthinkable that a newsroom should witness such actions, but they are frequent and present in many countries. The study entitled *Violence and harassment against women in the news media: a global picture* by International Womens Media Foundation and International News Safady Institut (Barton & Storm, 2014), carried out from August 2013 to January 2014, employing a snowball sample technique⁴ among over 1000 female journalists from around the world (South/Latin America, USA, Europe, Asia and the Pacific, Arab States, and Africa), found alarming rates of harassment and violence against women journalists. Most of the respondents were journalists/reporters,

editors and producers; they were aged between 18 and 34; most of the women identified as employed and working for newspapers or online media. Among respondents, two-thirds (64.8%) said they had experienced acts of “intimidation, threats and abuse” in their work. The most frequent accounts classify the acts as abuses of power or of authority by male bosses, supervisors, colleagues, interviewees, government officials and police. Of all respondents, 21.6% state they have experienced physical violence during the performance of their job; 14.3% say they have suffered sexual violence at work; and 47.9% suffered sexual harassment at work.

The information has been extracted from the answers of women journalists working in different regions of the world. One example of an account recorded by the study (Barton & Storm, 2014, p. 13) is that of an American journalist who stated:

After reporting...harassment and intimidation, I was the one sent home and removed from my normal responsibilities. Quickly the investigation turned on me. Embarrassing details about my personal life were dragged out and discussed by my supervisors. The HR department ruled against me based on incorrect factual information, and I appealed the decision. After the appeal, which also caused me extreme emotional duress and panic, my harasser was let go with a very generous severance package... I never really recovered from the stress of reporting, and am not sure if I should have done it.

This type of harassment and sexual violence is normally addressed as an individual moral deviation, as the behavioral degeneration of a single man. But that is not what it is: this worldwide survey shows, even if the sample does not have statistical validity and cannot be extrapolated, how deep-rooted and socially structured such procedures are; and that they are addressed with leniency by those who ought to prevent and punish such occurrences.

The appropriate explanation must be given by an understanding that goes beyond the individual aspect and encompasses the situation of women in a broader sphere of what power over the female body means and the control of it in order to perpetuate the social structure and the market's logic of exploitation. As Bourdieu (2002) writes, it is undoubtedly an ingrained tradition in daily life, reiterated by the family, by the school and by the media. Attitudes and behaviors placing women in inferior, subordinate positions, are taken for granted to justify their redoubled workload, the long, double working days, the role of homemaker and carer for children, among other responsibilities characterized as pertaining

to women. However, beyond these aspects, the imperative is class domination by means of the submission of personality, exploitation of time, distortion of women's spirit of citizenship and autonomy. As the cheapest form of labor, submissive and reproductive of the status quo, women – and here women journalists – either become victims of the structure, or both victims and guardians of it.

In Brazil, the situation of journalists as working women also suffers from discrimination and domination. A recent study⁵ was carried out by the Union of Professional Journalists of the Federal District (*Sindicato dos Jornalistas Profissionais do Distrito Federal*), of 535 women journalists from around Brazil, who answered a questionnaire on the union's web page from March to May 2016. The survey showed that 77.9% of respondents claimed to have been harassed by their bosses and/or workmates; 44.7% said they had suffered violence as they covered stories; 78.5% replied that they had been subjected to chauvinistic behaviors by interviewees; 70.7% said they believed they had been pulled from stories because they were women; 61.5% said they had experienced situations where workmates were paid more for doing the same job; and 86.4% of respondents stated that black women enjoy fewer opportunities in journalism.

The declarations show how newsrooms are traditional strongholds of chauvinist practices. An extreme example is Pimenta Neves, former director of editing at the newspaper *O Estado de S.Paulo*, who murdered his lover and colleague, Sandra Gomide in 2000. He was given an 18-year jail sentence, but spent no more than five years in prison, and is currently serving his sentence in a minimum security facility⁶. At the time, it was widely said that Gomide was cheating on him with another man, that he was under stress, under the effect of sedatives, and thus committed the crime. This version of events is hackneyed, and repeated in the daily lives of thousands of women who suffer violence at the hands of their partners, husbands, boyfriends, and even their fathers and other family members.

In their article entitled “Mulheres jornalistas e a prática do jornalismo de imersão: por um olhar sem preconceito”, (*Women journalists and the practice of immersion journalism: for an unprejudiced gaze*) Ana Carolina Temer, Francisco de Assis and Marli dos Santos (2014, p. 84) present the results of a survey of immersion coverage performed by journalists, and stress that “the lack of time and/or infrastructure of journalist companies, and character defects among certain professionals, have been accused of being constraints

on reporting". Women professionals that they interviewed also reinforced these reports of discrimination and low self-esteem. Let us look at some highlights:

They [the male interviewees] think they can more easily get away with lying to us. And not only the men, but women also, when they are responsible, see us women journalists and think they can talk their way around us.

It's harder for women, we are living in a chauvinist world. If you are writing a denunciation piece you are often bullied (...)

What do men do? Firstly, women are unable to gather information. They are not brave enough... Then we are browbeaten into respecting the interviewees [because of their positions or their status]. [Our interviewed sources] use tricks to get round us (...)
(Temer, Assis & Santos, 2014, p. 87).

The accounts given by these women journalists show clearly that they are coerced into submission. To keep their jobs, they know they must bow down to domination and act submissively. They suffer from awareness of their submissiveness. The authors also point out that along with the "scorn and bullying," there is also the discourse of "protection" (Temer, Assis & Santos, 2014, p. 87), used as an argument not to put women at risk. That is a biased concept because by claiming to protect the journalist, it actually prevents and rules out professional self-realization and the exercise of free will. However, the gender meaning of the term "protection" does not take into consideration respect for working conditions, health, salary or other labor rights.

Roberto Heloani (2012) finds in his study that stress and feelings of humiliation cause journalists many health problems, and women are not immune to these conditions. He has studied the health of both men and women journalists for some ten years and sought the causes of health problems. Intimidation has been identified as one part of such motivations.

In my own survey, *As mudanças no mundo do trabalho do jornalista* ("Changes in the working world of journalists", Figaro, 2013, p.105), I have found journalists of both genders being subject to overwork, increasingly precarious working contracts (as legal persons and as fixed freelancers), the pace of work, and dissatisfaction with inadequate working conditions—above all with challenges to checking facts. Aline (fictitious name), a 28-year-old journalist, helps clarify these market constraints: "I certainly did not choose to become a freelancer. (...) Companies put you on the path to eventually becoming that type of professional".

Project-based work in their home office poses other challenges to a productive routine for a woman journalist. Deadlines and demands come without interruption, they are never-ending, and women are paid less. Fabiana (fictitious name), a 29-year-old journalist, spoke to me about her experience in a news agency and about a project she led:

I have to have my lunch by half past three otherwise the restaurant runs out of food. I often left it too late and there was no food left, above all towards the end of the project, which was a huge work overload. We worked on it for nine months, and towards the end, in the drafting and edition stage (...) [a female colleague] spent a week with me where we were working together, albeit remotely, 99% remote, and I was going to bed later and later and getting up earlier and earlier. What I mean by later was three in the morning, and by early I mean six in the morning. (Figaro, 2013, p. 95)

This overlapping of tasks (drafting and editing) is by no means new in journalism, and the workload, owing to smaller and smaller team sizes, is becoming overwhelming. Very often, thanks to digital media and distance activities, this workload piles up with the double or triple load of chores, caring for children, preparing meals, and household cleaning tasks. In these circumstances, women journalists face the same dilemma as most other women in the job market.

Working alone outside the newsroom also poses its own challenges. It may often create departures from the very concept of the job of a journalist. This has become apparent as a concern for women journalists, and is one among several forms of suffering within their work. Mariana (fictitious name), a 31-year-old journalist, told me she conceives of journalism as a collective job, and that she needs the interaction with other colleagues in order for the final product to be improved. She is aware of the need for collaboration:

(...) even when we are working in isolation, the production never stems from one journalist only. Never. (...) it is a collaborative task. (...) Someone always chips in with an idea like "this bit here... hasn't it already been published somewhere else?" Or, "you know, wouldn't it be a good idea to check out this or that?" It's brilliant when we do that, like having a news list meeting and so on. But even when people are working in isolation, the product never belongs to one journalist alone. Never. Because... there is always a colleague's suggestion, that you go to check up on. and then you make a selection. (...) And then the editor gets involved, (...) and it passes through a whole series of heads. (Figaro, 2013, p. 58)

Working conditions are precarious for these freelance women journalists: ranging from the lack of a formal contract and welfare coverage, through task intensification conditions, owing to shortened deadlines, the pace of work, to the length of the working days. The conditions are set up by how news companies organize the news business. Connections to the financial market and to the global logic of the organization of capital prevent both male and female workers, as well as the news product, from receiving the company's due attention or being given priority in terms of quality-of-life and the end product quality.

A new development has arisen according to a current survey being carried out by the Communication and Work Research Center (*Centro de Pesquisa em Comunicação e Trabalho* — CPCT): the overwhelming presence of women in novel news providing arrangements. They are groups of experienced, rookie or volunteer professionals that get together to make up a news-providing organization. Women head up many of these initiatives, and even the issue of gender has been appropriated in different aspects within the reporting and in the setting-up of specialized communications outlets on the basis of a feminist approach. The research is entitled “As relações de comunicação e as condições de produção no trabalho dos jornalistas em arranjos economicos alternativos às corporações de mídia, Fase 1” (*Relations between communication and production conditions in the work of journalists participating in alternative economic arrangements other than media corporations, Phase one* Processo Fapesp 2016/06992-3). The survey into novel news-providing work arrangements in Brazil identified 180 such initiatives. Seventy of them are in Greater São Paulo, a conurbation with more than 20 million inhabitants. These 70 arrangements that are independent of large media conglomerates are mostly led by women journalists. In 54.2% of such arrangements they are led by women, 28% of them were set up and headed by women journalists; and 17% of the arrangements have directorates where both men and women journalists sit.

These data corroborate the majority presence of women journalists in the profession; they show the agency of these women professionals who in the context of increasingly precarious employment and disappearance of jobs are seeking alternatives for the exercise of journalism; and more than that, seeking to exercise the profession so as to practice responsible journalism addressing

social issues that afflict large swathes of the population. The journalism they practice is concerned for human rights, gender issues, the right to education, the right to political participation, but also addresses cultural matters: music, soccer, cinema. Many of these new journalistic initiatives that they are heading up are responsible for selecting and discussing topics relevant to feminism and gender. Among the 70 new arrangements studied, we may highlight some whose editorial purposes are linked to issues of a range of aspects of gender and feminism: *AZMina*; *Geledés*; *Gênero e Número*; *Lado M*; *Mulher no cinema*; *Nós, mulheres da Periferia*; *Ovelha Mag*; *Revista Capitolina*; *Think Olga*; *Blogueiras Negras*. To take an example, I have selected the self-introduction text of *Ovelha Mag*:

Ovelha is a digital magazine for women who feel unrepresented by newsstand magazines and who are looking for fun, sassy, alternative content, entirely different from what traditional media serves up to its female readership. (Retrieved on 20/1/2018).

This clearly points up the alternative perspective to the corporate journalistic status quo. The wording reminds us of an interdiscourse that female readers will remember – represented by newsstand magazines – to then affirm *Ovelha Mag's* editorial product as a counterpoint. They are therefore offering readers an interlocution that goes beyond standards of beauty, behavior and world view as sold in the traditional magazines.

These new arrangements of the work of journalists are taking shape as a possibility/attempt to ply their trade at a distance from the framings of traditional media corporations. Hand-in-hand with challenges of sustainability, one detects the vigor and commitment of these journalists (both male and female) to their task. Each is seeking a specific niche, and testing the possibilities enabled by lighter, more affordable technologies. They also face political constraints: lawsuits and restrictions. On the other hand, they are seeking creative angles, the inclusion of feminism and gender as issues, new languages and an intimate relationship with their readership, in a collaboration made tighter by empathy, and the possibilities of a more participatory interlocution.

By way of final remarks

To make explicit the complexity of issues surrounding the presence of women in journalism, and to zero in on points of view on this topic, it is worth highlighting Souza's affirmation that:

if the differences between men and women are social constructs, the belief that the presence of women in journalism can make a difference – for better or for worse – in the exercise of the profession conveys an essentialist thinking. (...) A more qualified journalism, with information that meets the needs of greater support and respect for the human rights of women, will be developed by a change of culture, and the fostering of public policies to that end. (Souza, 2009, p.9)

The author understands the challenges that, beyond the mere presence of women in journalism, women journalists should have clarity as to the relevance and commitments of journalism to improving the conditions of life of majorities. The professional challenges are daunting. Women do not want less. They want to be respected for who they are and what they do. The mode of production of the system of financial and informational capitalism poses – for women journalists – the challenge of understanding the feminist struggle in the context of, and in relation to, more general struggles for emancipation. Technological developments obey a rhythm of appropriation by capital, which subsumes rights and the respect for people's work. All the issues of gender discrimination continued to obtain in journalism with the new media. But a convergence of media and discourse may open up possibilities for women journalists, although this is not an inherent feature of the technological media, above all because these media are being appropriated by a market logic. To reiterate: the issue of gender in journalism transcends its specificity, it is an issue linked to overcoming discrimination and the domination imposed on women by the established power structure. Achieving respect and rights in the profession, for women, entails the achievement of a more equal and more democratic society.

Feminist struggles are part and parcel of the standpoint of structural change of society. Gender issues are not tangential. They are deep axes of change in society regarding private property, distribution of income, and racial/ethnic discrimination.

Women journalists also undergo discrimination and domination at work, exactly like most women in the world.

Class-oriented feminist studies show that this situation can only be overcome by understanding that the struggle of women is complementary to more far-reaching struggles for equality and emancipation. The concept of intersectional feminism, therefore, helps understand how the gender issue is intersected by issues of class and race/ethnicity. The studies show that women journalists in Brazil and worldwide are in a majority in the profession, and that gender discrimination appears in journalism in the shape of inferior salaries, overlapping tasks, increasingly precarious working conditions, as well as under the form of bullying and sexual harassment. It is essential to highlight that a significant number of these women journalists have sought work alternatives enabling the exercise of their profession in producing quality journalism on issues of human rights, gender and feminism.

*Translated by Lee Sharp

NOTES

- 1 This discussion may be revisited from the perspective of F. Engels. *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*.
- 2 Mirla Cisne (2005, p. 4) wrote a noteworthy synthesis of the positions between gender and feminism: "In other words gender must be analyzed within the framework of the contradiction between capital and labor and of conflicting social forces between the fundamental classes determining this contradiction. Contradiction is the focus of social inequalities, and the conflict is the struggle between social classes, making it necessary to relate women's struggle as a legitimate movement against inequalities within and along with the working-class struggle. The point that unites women must therefore be class identity, because it is in class contradiction that inequalities, oppressions and exploitations emerge to mark the lives of working women. Gender can therefore not be analyzed separately from economic and social determinations." However, we should add what Crenshaw (2002) proposes to Cisne's (2005) understanding, since the overlapping of discrimination and exploitation has led exclusion to be taken for granted.

- 3 Thinkers like Heleieth Saffioti (2000), Lelita Oliveira Benoit (2000), Maria Lygia Quartim de Moraes (2000), Clara Araújo (2000), and Mary Garcia Castro (2000) have made the broadest contributions to the debate on gender, feminism and capitalism.
- 4 In this case the sample is socially representative, but is not a statistical sample.
- 5 The survey does not have a statistical sampling basis. It is an exploratory survey that gathered information in order to enable the later drafting of union policies. However, it reveals an unfavorable environment for the women journalists to work in.
- 6 *Folha de S.Paulo*, 13/3/2017. Retrieved from www1.folha.uol.com.br/cotidiano/2016/02/1740615-jornalista-pimenta-neves-sai-da-prisao-e-cumpre-pena-em-casa-desde-o-dia-10.shtml

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