Gender Intersectionality and horizontal and vertical concentration of women journalists in Brazil, France and Belgic Francophone’s journalism. An introduction to the question

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Abstract: The growth of women in journalism has been occurring in different countries. However, there are asymmetries regarding positions, remuneration, form of hiring and segments of the labor market, according to the historical process and the social and cultural specificities of each country. The objective of this reflection is to discuss the feminization movement of journalism in three contexts and to assess the vertical and horizontal concentrations of women professionals in journalism in Brazil, France, and Belgium Francophone. The methodological procedures used are the review of studies carried out by the authors on the status of women journalists in the three countries and the bibliographic review of studies of gender, intersectionality and sexual division of labor. Among the results, we highlight that there are horizontal and vertical barriers for female journalists in the three countries, which are structural.


Introduction

Despite the gender asymmetries in organizations and labor relations in the field of journalism, female participation has been influencing the journalism practice in several countries, along with the transformations undergone by society and the business world (Figaro, 2005, 2013; Djerf-Pierre, 2007). However, in the global scenario, reports from the International Women’s Media Foundation (Byerly, 2011, 2013) point out that, although there are smaller or larger advances across many
nations, there is still much to be achieved, in all countries, regarding of equity in the professional market for women.

The authors of the present study adopted the conceptual premise of gender studies - which take the concept of gender as socially constructed - and also the gender condition as appropriate to apprehend research objects (Küchemann et al., 2015, p.67). We present the gender condition as interfering in the work world of journalists, in the profitable interface Gender and Journalism (Steiner, 2017).

This study is based on the facts that there are social, historical and political differences between Brazil, France, and Belgium Francophone, regarding the formation of the contexts and political, geopolitical and cultural development, as well as the debate on the role of women in society, the history of feminism and the introduction of articles on gender and its genesis (Rago, 1995, 1996; Bard, 2003, Praud, 2008). Similarly, journalism as a profession and the role of university education in the three contexts are different.

Even with these and other differences, Brazil and France but not Belgium Francophone, are experiencing a feminization process (a quantitative increase of women) in journalism: Mick and Lima (2013) show that 63.7% of journalism professionals in Brazil are women, 2012 data; and, in France, the Observatoire des Métiers de la Presse (CCIJP, 2010) presents 46.7% rate of women journalists, 2016 statistical data.

For Yannoulas (2011) feminization is a process in which the presence of women alters a professional field, not only in quantitative terms but also in the professional practices, inserting procedurally new rules of conduct. Thus, although feminization is not synonymous with “feminilization,” these two movements relate and cause changes in occupations and professions, from the sexual division of labor.

The problem-raising question of this research is: What are the movements of the professional market identified in studies of these contexts, Brazil, France, and Belgium Francophone, that demonstrate (or don’t demonstrate) the presence of a vertical and horizontal concentration of women in journalism, even considering the feminization process?

The methodological procedures were the triangulation of the diagnostics performed by the authors in authorial studies regarding the status of women in journalism in the three contexts. The methodological design of our comparative
research makes use of "data triangulation", in confirming "the search of data source according to spatiotemporal criteria and different levels of analysis" (Denzin, 1970 apud Alzás and García, 2017, p.401); as well as the "triangulation of researchers" when we have "with the observations of different professionals, specialists in the object of investigation" (Alzás et al., 2016 apud Alzás and García, 2017, p.403).

Another essential theoretical-methodological key in the present study is the observation of aspects of a horizontal concentration and a vertical concentration, recurrent in reviews about the presence of women in the labor market. According to a basis of studies (Charles, 2003; Charles & Grusky, 2004; Maruani, 2006; Damian-Gaillard et al. 2009) we reflect about horizontal concentration - the occurrence of a higher proportion of one of the sexes in some professional areas - and vertical concentration - situations in which the proportion of one sex is very high at one point in the hierarchy and very low in another, within the same area, career or profession.

This perspective allowed us to delimit and collect - through triangulation - empirical data on women journalist concentration in the labor market (horizontal concentration and vertical concentration) to introduce a comparative analysis of these three contexts - Brazil, France, and Belgium Francophone.

**Women Journalists in Brazil, France, and Belgium Francophone: a comparative synthesis**

In the movement to observe the quantitative data from a qualitative perspective, there are also gender inequalities in the female occupation by sectors of the labor market in Brazilian journalism. Concerning horizontal and vertical concentration, it can be observed that, in Brazil: i) women journalists are more present in sectors outside the media (such as press offices and teaching jobs) and, within the media, they stand out in television stations, news agencies and magazines (Rocha, 2004; Mick; Lima, 2013); ii) in the more traditional sectors such as print media and radio stations there is a male predominance (Rocha, 2004; Leite, 2015); iii) "a large proportion of women are involved in precarious working relationships in the informal sector of the profession" (Leite, 2015: 70), (iv) the proportion of women journalists within the highest salary range and occupying leadership
positions does not match the proportion of women journalists in the national market (Mick and Lima, 2013; Rocha, 2004).

The above synthesis, in this paragraph, was elaborated from the process of data collection and social-historical survey on the Brazilian context, in which the authors responsible for such survey - Dione Moura and Paula Melani - resorted, in addition to the authors and mentioned studies, also to the following studies and sources: Alves et. al. (2017); Barbosa e Lima (2013); Bicalho (1989); Bonelli (1993); Bruschini (1994); Buitoni (2009); Crenshaw (1994); De Luca (1999); Hirata and Kergoat (2007); Karaweiczyk (2013); Koshyiama (2001); Küchemann et al. (2015); Martinez et al. (2016); Matos (2006); Moura and Costa (2018); Moschkovich and Almeida (2015); Muzart (1999); Sarmento (2017); Silva (2014); Souza (2009) and Yannoulas (2013).

In France, regarding the horizontal and vertical concentration, it can be observed: i) occupancy is unequal in relation to medias; ii) "the general feminization of the profession is accompanied by multiple disparities, both in terms of media types and functions performed, as well as responsibilities and wages" of women journalists (Damian-Gaillard, Frisque, and Saitta, 2009); (iii) there is a higher number of women journalists working as freelancers, and iv) there are function and work routine limitations as a consequence of gender stereotypes (Damian-Gaillard and Saitta, 2011; 2016). The synthesis above, in the present paragraph, was elaborated from the process of data collection and social-historical survey on the French context, in which the co-author responsible for such survey - Béatrice Damian-Galliard - recourse, in addition to the authors and studies mentioned in the paragraph, also to the following studies and sources: Chiffres (2017); Delorme and Raul (2008); Djerf-Pierre (2005); Löfgren-Nilsson (2008); Zoonen (van) (1998) and Neveu (2000).

Finally, in Belgium Francophone, according to a project "Women journalists in Belgium: the halted feminization of journalism" (ULB-AJP): i) women represent 33% of the total journalistic population in Belgium, while they represent 52% of young professional journalists; (ii) management positions are almost exclusively male and the project shows a shared representation of a "male" environment, a deeply gender-based organization, structured around male norms; iii) women journalists who have left the profession have suggested that the dilemma of
motherhood, conditions of insecurity (sexism, inappropriate behavior), inequalities in working relationships (status and economic conditions) and changes in journalism - have weighed in their choices. The synthesis of the above paragraph was based on data collection and social-historical survey on the context of French-speaking Belgium. The co-author responsible for the investigation - Florence Le Cam - has used, in addition to the study cited above, also the following studies and sources: Antoine and Heinderyckx (2011); Gemis (2010a, 2010b); Grevisse (2003); Heinderyckx et al. (2013); Le Cam and Tant (2018); Le Cam and Van den Dungen (2018); Libert (2017); Paulussen and Raeymaeckers (2010), Van den Dungen (2005).

The contribution and interrelations of the studies involving each of the three countries and contexts - Brazil, France and Belgium - , with research and data sources, will be demonstrated and discussed in a later article. For the moment, it should be emphasized that they supported the reports presented here.

**Final Considerations**

From the identified in the analysis of the process of feminization of journalism in France, co-author Béatrice Damian-Galliard constructed a reading from three processes, which we understand to have an interpretative potential for the comparative analysis that we undertake here. The first process concerns the logic of the distribution of women and men between different journalistic specialties. Feminization relies above all on a dynamic of gender specialization, self-appropriation of women in the media or editorial sector immediately built like women, such as women's magazines, etc. Gendered specialization processes can be interpreted on a more general level, linking them to the growing importance of economic and commercial logic in the press that imposes to attract new audiences, especially women. Several researchers hypothesized that the rise of economic constraints in the journalistic field might constitute a structure of opportunity to transform the balance of power within the journalistic space in a more favorable way for women and to promote specialties, practices, and formats previously devalued (Neveu, 2000). As for Liesbet van Zoonen (1998), she puts forward the idea of a convergence between the commercial logic of journalism and the feminine perceptions of information (woman view). These hypotheses have to be questioned
on two points: the essentialist perceptions of a feminine practice carried by editorial leaders and the multiplicity of femininities and masculinities.

The second process concerns the logic of inclusion and exclusion from the positions of power in newsrooms. The still limited access by women to the decision-making process in newsrooms (the "glass ceiling") is well documented in the existing literature. But it is not enough to count men and women, to identify the positions and the job profiles. The challenge is now to understand the mechanisms that exclude or include certain groups of the positions of power. The existence of parity between men and women in the hierarchies of the media does not automatically lead to a transformation in production processes. This is what Monica Löfgren-Nilsson (2008) demonstrate about the Swedish public TV channel SVT, where women having reached decision-making functions mostly adopt, for their more significant part, repair rituals to restore the symbolic order which they broke, not to weaken their position of power. It, therefore, seems essential to bring to light the interpretations - masculine or feminine - of daily work, of actions and of language within newsrooms and the way in which this structure the daily the decision-making processes, the selection of subjects, the distribution of tasks, the choice of sources, etc. More widely, it is necessary to question the dynamics of reproduction of a balance of power favorable to the men in the media.

The third process focuses more specifically on the organizational, economic and professional logic that would participate in the construction and the stabilization of forms of exercise of journalism, more exercised explicitly by journalists, either women or men. These logics are involved because they refer to the modes of structuring the media sectors, in connection with an economic model linked to market adjustments and commercialization, and also information sources. Editorial editors may decide to recruit women journalists because they consider that they will be better able to interest such or such an audience or to collect such or such information from such sources. Similarly, they may consider that their gender identity predisposes them more to such or such journalistic discourse, more in line with their marketing strategies. From then on, these mechanisms of assignment to information sectors linked to themes and confined in certain social spaces work simultaneously as principles of legitimacy and as principles of the structuring of the categories of the sexes. They are internalized by the journalists
themselves through cultural and professional socialization processes, under forms of representations, values, modes of action. They perform them in and through their journalistic practices. Gender modes of information processing can, therefore, underlie strategies of integration into the profession, access to positions or valued journalistic specialties. Therefore, the gender dimension can intervene in the construction of professional postures within newsrooms between women journalists and their male colleagues. These differentiated postures also define themselves partially by a reflexive process, that is, by the way, the journalist builds his or her relationship to gender, linked to the values and professional conventions at work in the field in the journalistic field.

In concluding the triangulation of comparative data between the three realities of the scenario of women journalists in the market in Brazil, France, and French-speaking Belgium, we point out that there are socio-historical differences between the three experiences. What they have in common is the maintenance of horizontal and vertical barriers for female journalists. Brazil and France also share the increasing of women in journalism. We indicate that the presence of vertical and horizontal ascension barriers for women must be related to the intersectionality of gender, race, and class (Crenshaw, 1989). And that these realities need to be analyzed pari passu, in the course of later phases of the study, to the practices and professional representations as well to the evolution of journalism and the operation of press organizations and the media field, as proposed by Damian-Gaillard, Frisque, and Saitta (2009). The present reflection is the first stage of the joint research by these authors, elaborated in an agreement between the University of Rennes/France and UnB/Brazil and UEPG/Brazil, with the collaboration, in this specific comparative study, of the Livre University of Brussels, ULB / Belgium.

References


