Hate speech dissemination in news comments: analysis of news about LGBT universe on Facebook cybermedia from Mato Grosso do Sul[1]

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Abstract

This paper is based on the background hypothesis that no discourse modality spreads socially if it is not supported by broader cultural patterns paved in everyday life. The goal is to analyze the modalities of the hate speech against the LGBT population in comments of news posts on Facebook platform in the Mato Grosso do Sul context. The research addresses the scenario of the constitution of social networks, the increasing appropriation of these spaces by journalistic companies for the dissemination of news and the consequences of these phenomena in the manifestation of hate speech. The paper presents a qualitative and quantitative analysis of comments classified as hate speech in the nine news posts of the three main cybermedia from Mato Grosso do Sul – Campo Grande News, Midiamax e Correio do Estado. Within a total universe of 1.784 comments from these publications, 477 were classified as hate speech, with the prevalence of the categories "repulsion for the existence or repudiation of LGBT people's attitudes" and "discrediting journalistic information".
Keywords: Communication. Journalism. Social networks. Hate speech. Mato Grosso do Sul.

Introduction

The present work is based on the background hypothesis that the weakening of symbolic contracts historically instituted around journalistic authority (VOS; THOMAS, 2018) is supported by broader cultural patterns consolidated in contemporary society that erode the credibility of a wider range of modern social institutions. These include

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justice, formal schooling, science and even democracy. Thus, it focuses on the context of constituting social networks on the internet and the growing appropriation of these spaces by journalism companies to publish news. It also focuses on the consequences of these phenomena in the manifestation of hate speech, especially in the space occupied by the region of Mato Grosso do Sul. The choice of theme is not random. According to the Gender Violence Map[2], the national rate of violence against transgender people in 2017 was two cases for every one hundred thousand people, with eight states above the national average: Tocantins (9), Roraima (7), Acre (5), Mato Grosso do Sul (5), Minas Gerais (4), Amapá (3), Alagoas (3) and São Paulo (3). Mato Grosso do Sul had the highest rate of violence against homosexuals or bisexuals in 2017: 91 for every hundred thousand people, over double the national rate of 41 per hundred thousand.

From a methodological viewpoint, the empirical cut was comments posted on the Facebook fan pages[3] of the three most popular online newspapers in Mato Grosso do Sul: *Correio do Estado,* with 495,000 likes and 493,000 followers; *Campo Grande News,* with 489,000 likes and 514,000 followers; and *Midiamax,* with 387,000 likes and 393,000 followers[4]. A non-probabilistic sample of social representativeness was used to constitute the corpus of the study (LOPES, 2005, p. 145). In practice, three stories were selected from each medium between 9 July 2016 and 28 August 2018 that addressed themes related to the LGBT community and garnered over 200 reactions and 50 comments on the fan pages of the three online newspapers. The nine stories with the aforementioned minimum number of reactions and comments were selected because they met the fundamental requirement of focusing exclusively on LGBT issues[5]. They also addressed a wide range of themes that encompassed the complexity of the groups included in the LGBT acronym and the issue of homosexuality in different scenarios and approaches.

The aim of working with the theme in question was to establish a quantitative and qualitative categorization of the comments that were analyzed and discuss the results obtained in light of the characteristics of contemporary processes of disseminating information on social networks. Therefore, in addition to a socially relevant issue, the work essentially focuses on the core of contemporary journalistic processes. It should also be noted that, although we work with the nomenclature "discourse" within the concept of hate speech, this study is not intended to be a discursive analysis, since it uses the methodological perspective of content analysis (BARDIN, 2009). Furthermore, the concept of "hate speech" is adopted as a reference to the detriment of other concepts, such as "hate culture" (MONDRAGÓN, 2009, QUADROS, 2018) or "online incivility" (CHEN, 2018), since these definitions include

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2   Available at https://mapadaviolenciadegenero.com.br/lgbt/. Accessed on: Aug. 15, 2020.
3   Specific page on Facebook directed at companies or brands.
4   Accessed on August 15, 2020.
5   There are many representations involved, in addition to the various changes in the acronym representing this movement in Brazil. The first one that was used, GLS (Gays, Lesbians and Sympathizers) was replaced by LGBT at the 1st National LGBT Conference, held in 2008. At the 5th and most recent National Conference, held in November 2019, this acronym continued to be used. The nomination of all the Ts, the inclusion of a Q (for queers) or an A (for asexual), and I (for intersexes) remains controversial. However, there is a consensus in the drive to include a wide variety of dimensions from the construction of inequalities, bringing to light sexual and gender belonging.

other types of controversial phenomena on social networks in addition to discourse, which are not the object of the analysis in question.

Internet, networks and transformation into journalistic processes

The interfaces between the dynamics of social network sites on the internet and transformation into journalistic processes have been widely addressed in the academic literature. Authors have reflected on debates on disinformation (SOARES *et al.*, 2019, RECUERO; GRUZD, 2019), political communication (SAINZ; RECUERO, 2019), ideological polarization in networks (RECUERO; ZAGO; SOARES, 2019) and dissemination of discourses regarding the denial of otherness (QUADROS, 2018), as in the cases of propagation of hate speech, contributing to the reconfiguration of journalistic languages (CANAVILHAS, 2011, ZAGO, 2017, LONGHI, 2019).

The author boyd (2007, p. 2) defines social networks as a generation of "mediated publics", in other words, environments in which people can gather publicly through mediation technologies. Although she recognizes that there are similarities to interactions in the unmediated universe (for instance, people can expand the conversation circle if the conversation is interesting, or ignore it if it is not). The researcher highlights four unique properties of online conversations in the dynamic of cyberspace. According to boyd (2007), the main aspects that enable the dynamic of conversations in a network are persistence, searchability, replicability and invisible audiences. Persistence is related to the recording of conversations by a network's technical tools. In other words, as individuals communicate on social media, their messages are stored in the system and remain in that space, "unless an action can be taken to remove them" (RECUERO, 2013, p. 116). The second property is intrinsic to the first. This is searchability, because messages are stored and can be searched for and located at any time by software mechanisms that enable information processed by the network to be retrieved.

Replicability has to do with the ease with which messages can be reproduced by other players and thus "spread among diverse groups in networks, migrate and become increasingly public conversations, shaping and expressing opinions, causing debates and advancing ideas" (RECUERO, 2013, p. 116). The last property, defined as invisible audiences, is related to the replicability of messages and their extension beyond the actors in a conversation. In this respect, it propitiates the possibility of hundreds of people participating with thousands of interactions that can be accessed by all actors, diffusing them and making sure they spread to other groups and sites on social media (RECUERO, 2013). These four properties constitute a fundamental and fertile scenario for the transmission of information. This is because after messages are published, the information they contain remains in cyberspace and can be located by the searchability mechanisms and replicated by individuals in a network to an invisible audience, reaching a large number of publics with different characteristics and cultures (RECUERO, 2007).

This scenario is appropriated by journalism, which identifies in social media a terrain that is ripe for spreading news on a large scale, using the characteristics of conversation through networks and reinventing its practices on technological media communication platforms (CANAVILHAS, 2011, ZAGO, 2017, LONGHI, 2019). According to Canavilhas (2011), some of the consequences for journalism of this appropriation of cyberspace are the virtual increase in audience and the possibility of strengthening ties with readers, transforming an audience into a community. To this Portuguese author, social media networks facilitate a change in how users relate to means of communication, strengthening ties through the development of a feeling of belonging to a community.

In this respect, according to Recuero (2007), social media on the internet function as sources, filters or spaces for the spread of information. Networks complement the journalistic function, not presenting the same deontological commitment, but helping to mobilize people in the construction of discussions and even in pointing out different viewpoints on a certain subject. The reverberation of journalistic content on social media, according to Recuero (2007), can improve the reliability of information, indicating the importance of content to a community and adding value to news within online communities. "The information made available on social media become more accessible, less private and have a wider circulation" (RECUERO, 2014, p.117).

On their platforms, social media networks like Facebook provide the necessary conditions for their users to express opinions. "They also add comments and new analyses, involving users also as producers of information" (RECUERO, 2007, p. 12). In this respect, publications on Facebook provide a space for social media users to react in various ways to posts published on news pages. With this relative autonomy enabled by a decentralized space and with not many set rules (be it on social media platforms, which facilitates the interaction of users, be it by journalists, who use the reach of these networks to publish information), there is a scenario with a propensity for multiple comments in a network, with no prior control or moderation. It is not by chance that contemporary phenomena such as disinformation (SOARES *et al.*, 2019, RECUERO; GRUZD, 2019), ideological polarization (RECUERO; ZAGO; SOARES, 2019) and the dissemination of discourses on the denial of otherness (QUADROS, 2018), have received widespread coverage in the reticular dynamic of cyberspace. The phenomenon of hate speech that has spread through comments on Facebook posts, in the meantime, has played a central role in infringing upon and violating the fundamental rights of victims of this practice, such as the LGBT community, the subject of this analysis.

Hate speech and adherence to the properties of networks

According to Brugger (2007, p. 118), hate speech is "words that offend, intimidate or harass people because of their race, color, ethnicity, nationality, gender or religion, or

that might instigate violence, hatred or discrimination against these people". Sarmento (2006, p. 54-55) defines the phenomenon as "manifestations of hatred, scorn or intolerance against certain groups, motivated by prejudice linked to ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation and other factors". In turn, Meyer-Pflug (2009, p. 97) describes this practice as the manifestation of "ideas that incite racial, social or religious discrimination towards certain groups, mostly minorities. Rios (2007) particularly focuses on hate speech directed at the LGBT population, claiming that it constitutes an effect of a heteronormative nature that establishes a differentiation between subjects and creates a hierarchical system in which LGBT people are categorized as "abnormal". Likewise, this construction constitutes a mechanism that has been used for centuries to ensure that such groups remain outside of common law and continue to be considered as exceptions.

Abominable crime, shameful love, depravity, infamous practice, disgraceful passion, a sin against nature, the vice of Sodom. According to Borrillo (2010, p. 13), these are just some of the numerous offences directed at those who do not conform to the unique socially acceptable standard: heterosexuality. To this author, this difference between homo and hetero is intended to "order a regime of sexualities in which heterosexual behaviors are the only ones that deserve to be classified as the social model and set the standard for any other form of sexuality" (BORRILLO, 2010, p. 16). As a result of this behavior, homophobia and hate speech against the LGBT population have become the "guardians" of both sexual (homo/hetero) and gender (male/female) boundaries.

The Brazilian Constitution of 1988, which in turn is supported by the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ensures that citizens and the media have the right to free thought, speech and information. These precepts serve as a parameter for the voicing of opinions, thoughts and political stances in public spaces. With the atomization of social media, however, which includes Facebook, users in cyberspace share opinions on their personal profiles that have the potential to reach an entire community instantly. These opinions can agree or disagree with an idea. One of the main obstacles emerges when the opinions posted wound the human dignity of the social group to which the post refers. The same Constitution that ensures freedom of speech also guarantees the dignity of historically weaker groups that are prone to discrimination and prejudice, such as the LGBT community.

Facebook allows communicative expression mediated by algorithms, but without direct restraints, which means a margin regarding the ambiguity between freedom of expression and hate speech. Paradoxically, social media have come to constitute a potentially hostile locus for journalistic debate, especially with regard to social minorities such as the LGBT community. According to institutional information from Facebook itself, 2.5 million posts were deleted following complaints in the first quarter of 2018 alone. This number rose to 3.3 million in the last three months of the year (FACEBOOK, 2019).

Modalities of hate speech in news publications

To enable the aforementioned reflections, comments on nine news stories published on the comment's platform of the Facebook pages of the three most popular cybermedia in Campo Grande, capital of Mato Grosso do Sul State, with a combined total of over 1.2 million followers, were considered empirically. These news outlets are Campo Grande News, Correio do Estado and Midiamax. For this purpose, the Content Analysis (CA) methodology proposed by Bardin (2009) was used. A quantitative approach was initially used towards interactions, followed by a subsequent qualitative assessment of the comments on the news publications in question on Facebook. In this second case, the research was conducted using categories identified during the pre-analysis based on the bibliography.

In practice, three stories were selected from each outlet that were published between 9 July 2016 and 28 August 2018, addressing issues related to the LGBT community, as shown in Table 1. To select the stories, Facebook's own search mechanism was used. For methodological reasons, the terms that were researched using Facebook's search engine were: "LGBT(s)", "lesbian(s)", "gay(s)", "bisexual(s)", "transvestites(s)", "transsexual(s)", "transgender(s)", "homosexual(s)", "homosexuality", "homophobia" and "LGBTphobia".

Table 1 – Quantitative characterization of the research corpus

Headline	Date	Cybermedia	Reactions	Comments	Characterization as hate speech
Carnival of fun has a lot of kissing, but also a dose of self-censorship	27/02/2017	*Campo Grande News*	968	483	24%
First gay couple to tell a story in the B Side Section will be a lucky charm for anyone who wants to get married	09/06/2016	*Campo Grande News*	507	122	31,9%
At the LGBT march, youths are in the majority, despite pressure from their parents	01/10/2017	*Campo Grande News*	922	404	11,8%
World's oldest turtle is homosexual and gas been dating for 26 years	24/10/2017	*Correio do Estado*	977	236	44%

Headline	Date	Cybermedia	Reactions	Comments	Characterization as hate speech
Contest to elect the best-looking gays in MS will be held this Saturday	21/09/2017	*Correio do Estado*	609	207	15%
LGBT parade carries the colors of the rainbow to downtown Campo Grande	26/11/2016	*Correio do Estado*	714	111	45%
On opening night at the theater, Tammy Miranda wears only briefs and does a lot of kissing on stage	30/05/2017	*Midiamax*	320	100	52%
Nine-year-old boy kills himself after telling classmates that he was gay	28/08/2018	*Midiamax*	1216	58	29%
Fifth diversity parade this Saturday highlights struggle against homophobia	30/09/2017	*Midiamax*	203	63	34%

Source: Prepared by the authors (2019).

The study identified 1.784 comments posted on the nine stories identified in the CA. In all, 477 comments were classified as hate speech, corresponding to 27% of all the interactions that were analyzed.

Categories of hate speech against the LGBT population

Following the quantitative analysis, nine categories of hate speech were systematized from the mediations that emerged between the theoretical framework and the pre-analysis of the empirical data, as foreseen in the CA. The categories are explained below:

a. **Victimization**: act or effect or becoming or making oneself a victim (MORATO, 2017). Speech of this nature tends to demonstrate a certain level of intragroup drama, with external members coming to be seen as villains. The strategy consists of building arguments that portray the in-group as a victim and consequently indicates the "privilege" of the outside group. For instance, when the criminalization of LGBTphobia is discussed, one of the most frequently

used arguments is that everyone suffers violence in Brazil on a daily basis. This viewpoint leads to the inference that many more heterosexual people die than homosexual people and therefore there is no need for a legal framework to aid and protect the LGBT community. When the topic is discussed, the need for a law to criminalize LGBTphobia is interpreted as a privilege for the minority group (MORATO, 2017, p. 41).

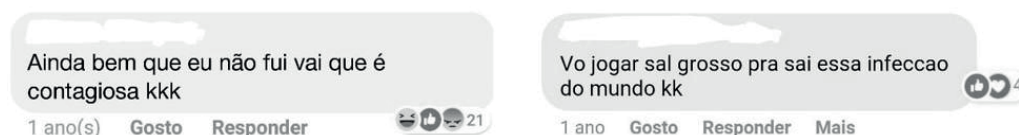**Figure 1 –** Examples of the "Victimization" category observed in comments classified as hate speech[6]
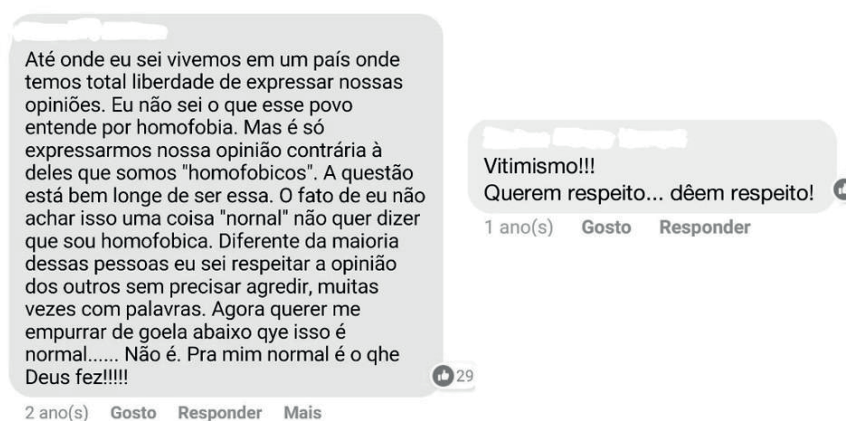
Source: comments taken from Facebook for research purposes.

b. **Pathologizing:** Act or effect of transforming a phenomenon into an illness or anomaly. This category encompasses all the behavioral pathologizing regarding the biological. Prior to in-depth studies on gender, the idea that homosexuality might constitute some kind of mental disorder emerged in the late nineteenth century. The premise gained strength at the American Psychiatric Association, which classified homosexuality as a "disorder", and at the World Health Organization (WHO), which included it in the 1977 International Classification of Diseases as a mental illness. Thirteen years later, the WHO reviewed diseases at a General Assembly and removed the classification as well as the "ism"; this suffix in medicine indicates a disease. The Federal Psychology Council of Brazil ceased treating sexual orientation as a disease in 1985.

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6   As far as I'm concerned, we live in a country where we are totally free to express our opinions. I don't know what these people mean when they talk about homophobia. But we only have to give an opinion that disagrees with theirs and we're "homophobic". This is far from the truth. The fact that I don't find this "normal" doesn't mean I'm homophobic. Unlike most of these people, I can respect other people's opinions without having to offend, often with words. But now they want me to swallow the idea that this is normal… It isn't. to me, normal is what God did. 2 year(s).
    Victims! You want respect, give respect! 1 year(s).

Figure 2 – Examples of the "Pathologizing" category observed in the comments classified as hate speech[7]

> Ainda bem que eu não fui vai que é contagiosa kkk
> 1 ano(s)   Gosto   Responder   21

> Vo jogar sal grosso pra sai essa infeccao do mundo kk   4
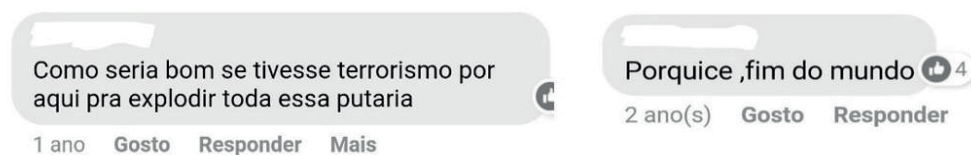> 1 ano   Gosto   Responder   Mais

Source: Comments taken from Facebook for research purposes.

c. **Sickened by the existence of or upset by the attitudes of LGBT people:** Although all the categories present offshoots of LGBTphobia, this category encompasses the largest proportion of comments considered homophobic. In etymological terms, the word is composed of two distinct terms: homo, the prefix of homosexual; and the Greek *phobos*, which means "fear", "aversion" or "phobia". In other words, LGBTphobia means the aversion, repugnance, fear, hatred or prejudice that some people or groups harbor against homosexuals, lesbians, bisexuals and transsexuals. If the other categories use distinct factors to devalue or condemn homosexual practices, this category uses only pure hatred, disgust and abomination against the LGBT population. Comments such as "disgusted", "how horrible" and "that's gross", or figures representing vomit were classified into this category of hate speech.

Figure 3 – Examples of the "Sickened" category observed in the comments classified as hate speech[8]

> Como seria bom se tivesse terrorismo por aqui pra explodir toda essa putaria
> 1 ano   Gosto   Responder   Mais

> Porquice ,fim do mundo   4
> 2 ano(s)   Gosto   Responder

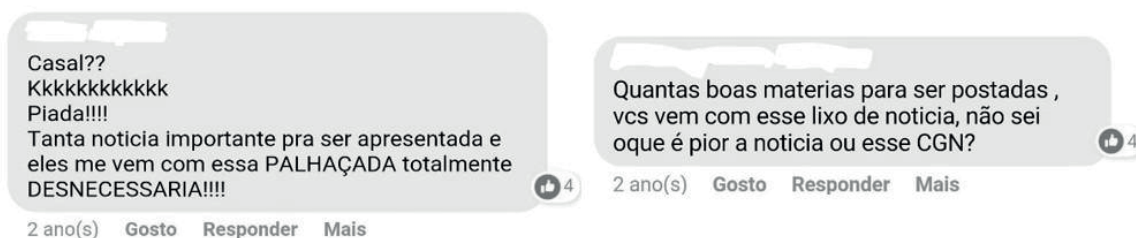Source: Comments taken from Facebook for research purposes.

d. **Discrediting the journalistic content, media outlet or writer of the news:** The main purpose of this category is to weaken the credibility of the content or challenge the legitimacy of the news published on the fan page. Because these are issues related to a minority group in society, users who adhere to this argument generally see no reason to refer to content related to the LGBT population in a society that

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7   Thank God I didn't go. Who knows, it might be contagious. Ha, ha, ha!
    I'm going to throw some coarse salt on this infection to remove it from the world. Ha, ha!
8   How good it would be if we had some terrorism around here to blow all this depravity to smithereens.
    Pigs, what has the world come to?

is mostly heterosexual. Therefore, they take a stance against the topic in question, judge the political and ideological position of the news outlet and even go as far to offend the journalist that reported the news. In this category, comments were selected such as "awful piece of writing", "newspaper with no content", "the end of the line in journalism", and "commie reporter", along with other manifestations that attempt to downplay the newsworthiness of the information provided.

Figure 4 – Examples of the "Discrediting the journalistic content" category observed in the comments classified as hate speech[9]

Source: Comments taken from Facebook for research purposes.

e. **Insults or offense against human dignity:** This category essentially differs from the "Sickened by the existence of or upset by the attitudes of LGBT people" category with regard to the purpose of the comment. Comments in this category are solely intended to offend people's dignity. The manifestations of hatred are not only against the attitudes and behavior of the LGBT group, but against people. In other words, they are an attack on identity and human beings as a whole. The hate speech in question includes comments like "scum" and "freaks".

Figure 5 – Examples of the "Insults" category observed in comments classified as hate speech[10]
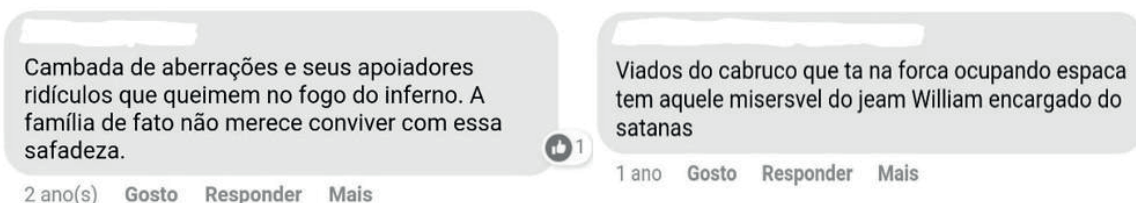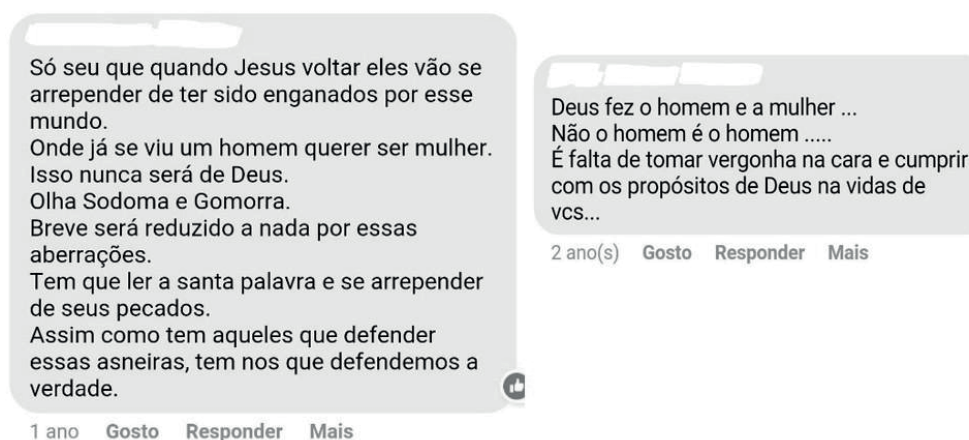

Source: Comments taken from Facebook for research purposes.

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9   A couple?? What a joke!!! So much important news to report and they come out with this totally UNNECESSARY NONSENSE!!!!
So many good stories to post and you come out with this garbage and call it news. I don't know. What is worse, the news or this CGN outlet?

10 Bunch of freaks and their ridiculous supporters. Let them burn in hell. A decent family doesn't deserve to have to live with this filth.
Bunch of fags with their heads in the noose, taking up space alongside that miserable git Jeam William, Satan's bedfellow.

f. **Imposing morality and personal religious beliefs:** This category evaluates the news stories from a religious and moral viewpoint according to the personal principles of the internet user. Even though Brazil constitutes a secular state, 86,8% of the Brazilian people are followers of the precepts and liturgies of Christianity, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). In view of these figures and the Christian morality of an orthodox nature that has historically condemned homosexual practices, several manifestations of hate speech were observed, justifying prejudice by quoting biblical verses and stories regarding the condemnation of homosexuality, such as Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis: Chapters 18-19). Together with religious ideals, personal morality is also one of the motivators of hate speech. These rules serve to guide each individual, to guide their actions and their judgments regarding what is moral or immoral, right or wrong, good or bad. Comments such as "a couple is a man and a woman", "inversion of values", "family is father and mother" were identified, establishing personal morality as a parameter to be followed.

Figure 6 – Examples of the "Imposing morality and personal religious beliefs" category observed in comments classified as hate speech[11]
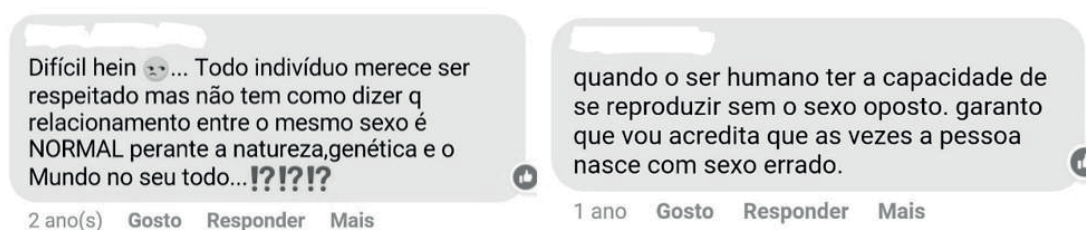

Source: Comments taken from Facebook for research purposes.

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11 I only know that when Jesus returns, they are going to regret being deceived by this world. Where have you seen a man wanting to be a woman? This will never be God's will. Look at Sodom and Gomorrah. It will soon be reduced to nothing by these freaks. You need to read the Holy Scripture and repent for your sins. Just like there are those who defend this garbage, there are those of us who defend the truth.

God made man and woman, not man and man. You people need to buck your ideas up and get to grips with how God wants you to live your lives.

g. **Biological approach:** This type of hate speech was classified in the comments in which a biological view prevails or which refers to biological factors. The issue of the impossibility of reproduction through homosexual relationships in both the human species and the animal kingdom was one of the arguments most frequently used in an attempt to condemn homosexuality. Another widely observed phenomenon in the comments was the claim that homosexual practices are unnatural and defy the principles that govern the laws of nature.

Figure 7 – Examples of the "Biological approach" category observed in the comments classified as hate speech[12]

Difícil hein 😕... Todo indivíduo merece ser respeitado mas não tem como dizer q relacionamento entre o mesmo sexo é NORMAL perante a natureza,genética e o Mundo no seu todo...!?!?!?

2 ano(s)   Gosto   Responder   Mais

quando o ser humano ter a capacidade de se reproduzir sem o sexo oposto. garanto que vou acredita que as vezes a pessoa nasce com sexo errado.

1 ano   Gosto   Responder   Mais

Source: Comments taken from Facebook for research purposes.

h. **Appeal to the supposed influence of behavior and thinking of children and adolescents:** The category of hate speech in question appeals to the argument that children are susceptible and prone to developing homosexual tendencies if they are exposed to an environment with LGBT people. Discrimination is veiled and based on the principle that children are pure and should not be corrupted during their process of becoming people. Therefore, LGBT movements and homosexual practices in public are discouraged using the justification that children should see this "filth" because they will develop practices that can be attributed to homosexuality.

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12 It's not easy, is it? Everyone deserves to be respected but you're not allowed to say that a same-sex relationship is NORMAL in the eyes of nature, genetics and the world in general?!?!?!

When human beings are able to reproduce without the opposite sex, I guarantee I'll believe that a person can sometimes be born with the wrong sex.

Figure 8 – Examples of the "Influence of behavior and thinking of children and adolescents" category observed in comments classified as hate speech[13]
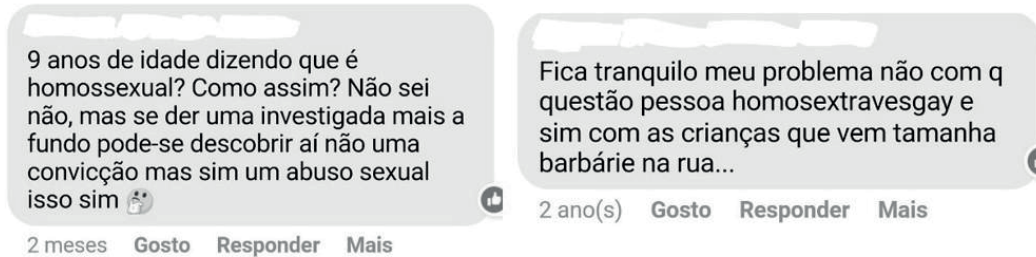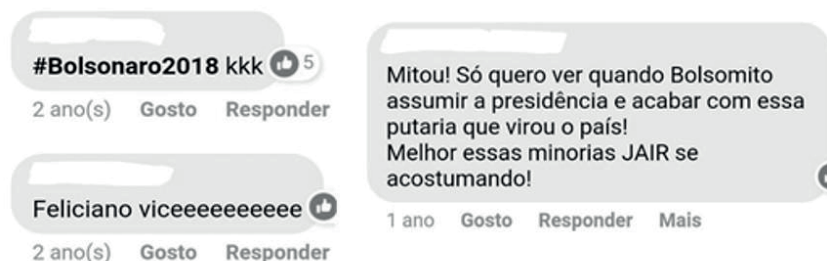

Source: Comments taken from Facebook for research purposes.

i. **Opinion aided by quoting authorities:** Of all the categories, this is the most controversial explanation. These comments mention supposedly reliable sources, who may be "experts" on the subject. They might include a statement made by some political or religious leader, celebrity or scholar, referring to the possibility of categorizing comments within the context in which they were said (since the statements themselves, taken out of context, sometimes do not directly address issues related to hate). It is noted that the intention behind these comments is to use a rhetorical strategy to convince others. In the cases analyzed, the authoritative quotes in the comments were from politicians who have historically opposed homosexual practices and the rights of the LGBT population, whether in churches or in the seats of the executive and legislative branches. The intention of the quotations is precisely to manifest discrimination, steering away from direct authorship and attributing an opinion to certain authorities by mentioning their names.

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13 A nine-year-old saying he's homosexual? Give me a break. I don't know, but if you take a closer look, you'll find that this isn't a conviction but a sign of sexual abuse, you can be sure of it.

   Hold your horses. My problem isn't with the issue of homosextransvesgay people but with the children who have to see this filth in the streets.

Figure 9 – Examples of the "Quoting authorities" category observed in the comments classified as hate speech[14]

Source: Comments taken from Facebook for research purposes.

The final result achieved by categorizing the 477 comments classified in the study as manifestations of hate speech against the LGBT population is shown in Graph 1.

Graph 1 – Quantification of comments identified as hate speech in the news stories in question

Source: Prepared by the authors (2019).

As shown in the graph, "Sickened by the existence of or upset by the attitudes of LGBT people", with 144 occurrences, is the most frequent category of the 477 comments identified as hate speech. This is followed by the "Discrediting journalistic content", with

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14 Bolsonaro2018 ha ha ha.
   The myth has come true! I just want to see when Bolsonaro the Myth takes over the presidency and puts an end to this debauchery that the country has become! These minorities had better get used to it!

89 occurrences, which comes ahead of "Imposing morality and personal religious beliefs" (82 occurrences) and "Insults or offence against human dignity" (67 occurrences).

Some final reflections

Returning to the background hypothesis of the discussion, that the weakening of symbolic contracts historically instituted around journalistic authority (VOS; THOMAS, 2018) is supported by broader cultural patterns consolidated in contemporary society that erode the credibility of a wider range of modern social institutions, it can be seen that this argument was supported by broader contemporarily consolidated cultural values regarding the erosion of credibility of a wider range of modern social institutions. These include justice, formal schooling, science and democracy itself. In light of the hypothesis, the categorization of the empirical data obtained through this study enables a set of reflections.

In this respect, as outlined more clearly in the categorization, it comes as no surprise that the "Sickened by the existence of or upset by the attitudes of LGBT people" was identified in 30% of the 477 comments. It is a manifestation of the very mechanism of the constitution of social networks online. According to Soares *et al.* (2019, p. 5), this can lead to a fragmentation of the discussion and the formation of polarized groups, threatening the very constitution of the public sphere. To Morato (2017), the online environment, especially social networks, is presented as an attractive space and promoter of hate speech because "the feeling of anonymity and the distance between interlocutors [...] are potentialized in social networks, reinforcing the reproduction of LGBTphobia" (MORATO, 2017, p. 100). In other words, social network sites have become a hotspot for the spread of extremism and hate speech, especially due to the supposed anonymity of those who protect their identities behind false profiles or the volatility of networks that, in general, eventually allow posts to be deleted.

In addition to anonymity, other factors contribute to the spread of hate speech against the LGBT population in comments on news published on social media networks. Facebook allows people or groups to reach new audiences, recruit new members and form communities - some of which are geared to spread hate speech. To Recuero (2014), social networks maintain some forms of communication in a potentially semi-private register and can legitimize hate speech, allowing it to resonate through agreement, support, likes or shares. In addition to the anonymity and audience provided by social networks such as Facebook, the aforementioned methods of network conversation, such as searchability, replicability, persistence and invisible audiences (boyd, 2007), also enhance the spreading effect of discrimination on social networks. Facebook, for example, has expanded to such an extent that by late 2017 it had attracted over 2.13 billion users worldwide.[15] In Brazil, this social network ranks first among the social media sites and is the most frequently visited site

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15 For further details, visit "Facebook reaches the age of 15 with 2.3 billion users" (G1). Available at: https://g1.globo.com/economia/tecnologia/noticia/2019/02/04/facebook-completa-15-anos-com-23-bilhoes-de-usuarios.ghtml. Accessed on: Aug. 15, 2020.

by Brazilian users of all social classes and education levels, according to the 2015 Brazilian Media Survey, ranking first with 83% of users - including for news consumption.

This situation portrays a phenomenon underlined in contemporary fragility - or the detachment of formal instances from everyday life (HELLER, 1972, SOUZA MARTINS, 2010) - of constitutional normative parameters arising from the historical tensions of different generations of citizenship rights (SOARES, 2009). These include the so-called human rights ratified by the normative declaration of 1948, which potentially intensifies the crises regarding the authority justice (replaced in the semantics of the comments analyzed by a kind of "outlawism") and of the democracy of the masses as a civilizing historical project. It is no coincidence that, in keeping with the background hypothesis that opened this article, Mato Grosso do Sul (the locus of the cybermedia in question) leads the unfortunate statistics of violence against homosexual or bisexual people at the national level, with 91 cases per 100 thousand inhabitants, more than double the national rate, according to data from 2017.

The categories of "biological approach" (20 occurrences) and "influence of behavior and thinking of children and adolescents" (17 occurrences) and "pathologizing" (7 occurrences), which are responsible for approximately 10% of the comments, in turn, are demonstrative of a broader dynamic of the crisis of authority of the sciences, which has also manifested in the recent phenomenon of dissemination on social networks known as fake papers (or scientific articles with falsified data) for very specific purposes, as can be seen in the case of the anti-vaccine movements.

Finally, it is fitting and necessary to analyze the prevalence of the categories "discrediting journalistic content" (89 occurrences) and "opinion aided by quoting authorities" (32 occurrences), modalities identified in a quarter (25%) of the comments constituting the research corpus. In this scenario, whether through direct criticism of journalism or via veiled questioning of journalistic authority through the alternative quoting of allegedly unauthorized voices as news sources, through the forms of interaction that are characteristic of social networks, the emergence of a new vector in the multifaceted ecosystem of media criticism was inevitably identified (COELHO, 2019) - if not through the originality of the phenomenon (the opinion of the commentators was almost always present in the news media in specific sections), then for its capillarity. However, contrary to what is identified as a potential democratic process in journalism by Canavilhas (2011) and Recuero (2007, 2014), this new dynamic is substantially sustained by a vertex based on the denial of otherness.

With specific regard to journalistic processes, therefore, it is necessary to refer once again to the dynamic of bipolarity of the *modus operandi* of social networks: on the one hand, the instrumentalization of the power of vigilance, the fragmentation of narratives and the formation of bubbles, to name a few aspects; on the other hand, potential ways of organizing public opinion. However, it should be highlighted that there is a tendency to place more emphasis on only one of the poles of the process; in other words, the abbreviation of the democratic potential of debates regarding the circulation of news on networks, the

reduction of complexity and the fragmentation of arguments stemming from the news and the dissolution of the historically instituted symbolic contracts concerning journalistic authority (VOS; THOMAS, 2018). The latter is in keeping with the dissolution of the authority of a wider range of social institutions that became fundamental in modern times.

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