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***Travestis* and Transsexuals in the *Fantástico* Special Report: Male Prison Units are not the “Show of Life”**

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Abstract

In March of 2020, the Sunday program *Fantástico* aired a special report with the doctor Drauzio Varella on *travestis* and trans women who have spent years in male prison units in Brazil. This study aims to analyze how these people face prejudice, abandonment, violence, and solitude, conversing with intersectionality by highlighting social markers of difference and with turning points, marking the moment in which something begins to change significantly in the subject's life story and trajectory. The *corpus* of this study is constituted of the analysis of texts, images, and videos, with a focus on interpretative and intersectional analyses and on identifying turning points. The strata of life stories discussed here reveal the expression of identities, prejudices, and the discriminations suffered, and so favor the discussion of social privileges and inequalities based on gender and sexual orientation. The expression of these identities oscillates between the circumscribed, artificial world of the prison, which in some way favors an open experience of modes of being and living, and a demonstration of the suffering inflicted by the discrimination of the surrounding society, with its impossibilities of inclusion and its dictates on who can and cannot be accepted.

Keywords: *travestis* and trans women; *Fantástico* special report; male prison units; intersectionality; turning points.

Introduction

In March of 2020, the Sunday program *Fantástico*, from *Rede Globo*, aired a special report with the doctor Drauzio Varella on *travestis* and trans women who have spent years in male prison units in Brazil (*Fantástico*, 2020a). The way Drauzio conducted the interviews generated empathy among the Brazilian public, but also many criticisms, primarily on social media (*Fantástico*, 2020b). Reports on the life that *travestis* and trans women lead in Brazilian prisons are rare, and it is even rarer for them to be aired on one of the oldest programs of *Rede Globo*. On one hand, this is highly welcome, since it shows that these topics are entering into Brazilian homes; on the other hand, it shows how much Brazilian society still revolves around a heteronormative structure, and hence serious problems such as male chauvinism and transphobia are still not addressed with due attention.

In light of the special report, a number of questions arise, such as: who are they? What do they have to say? How do they lead their lives within male prison units? How do they face prejudice, abandonment, violence, and solitude? What do they expect for the future, after serving their sentence? As an attempt to answer these many questions that the topic in general and the report in question give rise to, this study aims to analyze how *travestis* people and trans women, confined in male prison units, face prejudice, abandonment, violence, and solitude. Beyond that, this research converses with intersectionality, by highlighting social markers of difference (Akotirene, 2019; Collins, 2016; Ribeiro, 2020), and turning points, marking the moment at which something begins to change significantly in the person's life story and trajectory (Hughes, 2005; Riessman, 2002).

The special report aired by *Fantástico* has a connection with the themes of gender and gender identity, sexuality, the labor market, and the *travestis* and trans population, which are important topics that need to be discussed by Brazilian academia and society. This study aims to contribute to those discussions, with special emphasis on administration, since gender identity and sexuality have become recent research themes in the area, integrating the studies on diversity in the labor market and building a research agenda that is more inclusive of the LGBT+ population (Carrieri, Souza, & Aguiar, 2014; Pizzi, Pereira, & Rodrigues, 2018). Despite the advancement in the area of administration, the literature on *travestis* and trans people in organizations is limited throughout the world, showing that this population, besides being ignored, is also under-represented in research on LGBT+ people (Bell, Özbilgin, Beauregard, & Sürgevil, 2011; Bidarte, Fleck, & Disconzi, 2021; McFadden, 2015; Paniza, 2020). However, in areas such as education, public health, and psychology, the discussions are already more advanced; in addition, there is national intellectual, scientific, and academic production by Brazilian *travestis* and trans women themselves, with it being possible to cite, for example, Amara Moira Rodvalho (2016, 2017), Amanda Palha (2019), Jaqueline Gomes de Jesus (2012, 2014), Keila Simpson (2015), Letícia Carolina Nascimento (2021), and Sara Wagner York, Megg Rayara Gomes Oliveira, and Bruna Benevides (2020).

This article is structured in five sections, besides this introduction. The second section presents the theoretical framework, making observations about the context in which the study is

embedded. The third section discusses the methodology used. The fourth section presents the analysis and discussion of the data collected, making initial observations, contextualizing in time the special report and its repercussions, and, later, presenting the protagonists of the special report, seeking elements to answer the questions raised. Finally, the fifth section features the concluding remarks, seeking common threads among the stories of the protagonists of the special report.

Theoretical framework

In Brazil, being who one is, expressing one's gender identity and sexuality publically, can have a high price: one's life. Despite the apparent acceptance, this coexists with repulsion toward sexual differences and different forms of gender expression, making it the most dangerous country in the world to be LGBT+. The abbreviation LGBT+ was chosen for this text, from among the various possibilities, as it is a short version of LGBTQIA+, which means lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual or transgender, queer, intersexual, asexual, and more. LGBT+ people continue to be beaten, assaulted, and murdered in daylight, as the tragic statistics confirm. The risk of a trans person being murdered is 14 times greater than that of a gay person. For that population, the numbers are frightening: approximately 118 murders per year – on average, one murder every 32 hours; along with an average of 11 aggressions per day in 2019 (National Association of *Travestis* and Transsexuals of Brazil [Antra], 2020a). This puts Brazil in the position of most genocidal state, leading the global ranking of murders of trans people, since 2008. The reality, however, may be even worse, since there is an absence of official data, with a high rate of underreporting of deaths of *travestis* and transsexuals. More than half of the homicides of trans people recorded in the world occurred in Brazil – more than 800 cases, according to data from the Transgender Europe network (2016).

Homicides of *travestis* and trans people occur in various ways and contexts in Brazil. In 2019, the state of São Paulo was the one that most murdered the trans population, totaling 21 homicides – a 50% increase in cases in relation to the previous year; and the Southeast region presented a 10.8% increase in the number of murders – from 28 to 30. What is the profile of the victims? The data for 2019 reveal that 59.2% were aged between 15 and 29; 67% were in prostitution; 82% were black or brown; and 97.7% were transsexual women. Of these homicides, 43% were committed by firearms; 28% by knives; and 15% by beating, asphyxia, and/or strangulation. In 80% of the homicide cases, there was refined cruelty, such as an excessive and brutal use of violence and a combination of more than one method; 52% of the deaths were by beating combined with other methods, such as gunshots, drowning, torture, and sexual violence. Of the homicide cases, in only 8% were the suspects identified and 64% occurred in the street, revealing that the murderers do not usually have a direct social or affective relationship with the victims (Antra, 2020a).

According to Santos, York, Silva, and Pinheiro (2019, p. 113), cases of homicides of *travestis* and trans people “occur daily and almost never create buzz in the media or even social, perhaps national uproar – except the odd case, such as that of the *travesti* Dandara,” and they add that

you don't see a reverberation of that indignation in the population in an effective and continuous way; the indignation is ephemeral, incapable of promoting social change to the point of preventing a new *travesti* from being brutally murdered and having their death filmed and shared on the internet. (Santos et al., 2019, p. 113)

In fact, the previously presented data on the homicide cases indicate the inseparable discussion between racism and transphobia. What public policies are adopted to protect the life of the transsexual and black population? And to combat sexual and gender violence? For that, it is essential to adopt an intersectional view (Akotirene, 2019; Collins, 2016; Ribeiro, 2020) of the *travesti* and trans population.

Intersectionality has been a form of debate that further integrates the oppression conditions of minoritized groups, seeking to escape the segmentation or hierarchization of differences. According to Ribeiro (2020), the positions occupied by groups in relation to race, gender, class, and sexuality intertwine and determine specific forms of oppression and experience of those questions. There is no hierarchy or pure sum of oppressions because they cannot be considered separately, since they are of an interlinked nature. The construct of dichotomous difference through opposition is a central epistemic axis in oppression systems. If people are characterized in that way, that is, white versus black, male versus female, these conditions only gain relevance and meaning in their relationships of difference with their opposites (Collins, 2016). Intersectionality, on the other hand, suggests, for example, that race brings discussions of class and gender, or other possible combinations, providing they are on a level of analytical equality, although “the adrocentrism of modern science has ascribed to females the social place of women, described as castrated males, stereotyped as weak, compulsive mothers, along with blacks characterized as non-human, monkeys caged by epistemic racism” (Akotirene, 2019, p. 23).

In our society, there is a heterosexual matrix, as a hegemonic discursive model, which acts compulsorily, requiring coherence between sex and gender, dictating identities and distinguishing between “normal” and “abnormal” existences. Thus, heterosexuality is imposed as a norm and masculinity as an attribution of superiority. Heterosexuality as a powerful force ends up considering the other forces of sexuality as abnormal, deviant, and inferior (Butler, 2003; Rich, 1980; Sedgwick, 2007). Thus, *travestis* and trans people are excluded, abandoned, marginalized, and seen as abnormal, because they express their gender identities outside the hetero-cis-normative standards, subverting the established order, rattling the compulsory coherence, crossing boundaries of sex and gender.

This text uses the Antra (2020a, p. 11) definitions regarding transgender identities. The term “transsexual women,” according to that document, refers to “people who were identified as belonging to the male gender at birth, but who identify as belonging to the female gender and claim to be women,” and “*travestis*” as being

people who were identified as belonging to the male gender at birth, but who identify as belonging to the female gender and engage in female gender expression, but do not claim to be women in the way that being a woman is construed in our society. (Antra, 2020a, p. 11)

It is important to highlight that we agree with the affirmations of Simpson (2015, p. 10), according to which “*travestis* do not wish to be identified as *travestis* women. Rather, they demand respect for their lives and individualities, as well as living in the female gender, along with the right to have their gender identities respected within that female universe”; and also with the

affirmations of York et al. (2020, p. 9), that “there is no single form of being a *travesti*. [There are] various *travestilidades* and possibilities for being a *travesti*. No one is equal to the other (the experience of gender expression may or may not be constitutive),” and so we cannot generalize.

Travestis and trans people constitute a group in a situation of social vulnerability, being the target of numerous human rights violations in many countries. In Brazil, most of this population lives in conditions of misery and family and social exclusion, without access to healthcare, education, the labor market, professional qualifications, or public policies, among others (Antra, 2020a; Rodovalho, 2017; York et al., 2020).

In healthcare, for example, they face numerous challenges accessing the Unified Health System (SUS), such as the pathologization of transsexuality, an inadequate reception, and the absence of qualified professionals to guarantee specific services, such as the transexualizing process (Monteiro & Brigeiro, 2019; Rocon, Rodrigues, Zamboni, & Pedrini, 2016). The National Policy for Full LGBT+ Healthcare was established in 2009 by the Ministry of Health, seeing the need for healthcare for *travestis* and trans people. In 2006, the right to use their social name was included in the Bill of Rights for Healthcare Users. The transexualizing process was established in 2008 and, subsequently, extended by Decree n. 2,803, of November 19th of 2013, which extended to trans men and *travestis* the rights already approved for trans women. The transexualizing process gives access to hormone treatment, body and genital modification surgeries, and monitoring by health professionals. It occurs via the Basic Health Service (UBS), and the most sought after procedures have been hormonization, breast implants, genital surgery in *travestis* and trans women, and mastectomies and hysterectomies in trans men. Phalloplasties are still experimental in Brazil (Antra, 2020a).

Inclusion in the labor market and the possibilities of professional growth and a career are among the major difficulties faced by trans people and *travestis*. The heterosexist environment promotes a hostile organizational climate for LGBT+ people. Studies show that formal/direct discriminatory practices (such as in job offers, interviews, promotions, performance assessments, and termination of job contacts) or informal/indirect ones (such as malicious jokes, disrespect, exclusion, harassment, hostile actions or gestures, and staring) are evident and common in organizations (Carrieri et al., 2014; Pizzi et al., 2018). Although it is more subtle, informal discrimination can have as big an effect on the individual as formal discrimination.

As in Brazil, organizational discrimination against *travestis* and trans people has been identified in various parts of the world, such as in Canada (Waite, 2020), Colombia (Posso & La Furcia, 2016), Spain (Devís-Devís et al., 2017), the United States (Dispenza, Watson, Chung, & Brack, 2012; Lombardi, Wilchins, Esq, & Malouf, 2001), Guatemala (Miller et al., 2019), Italy (Botti & D'Ippoliti, 2017), the United Kingdom (Beauregard, Arevshatian, Booth, & Whittle, 2016), and Switzerland (Linander, Goicolea, Alm, Hammarström, & Harryson, 2019), to mention a few of the countries.

There are organizations developing diversity policies and practices that seek to recruit LGBT+ people; however, they have yet to fully materialize (Carrieri et al., 2014). There is a movement of organizations that seek various talents, which contributes to giving employment opportunity to people who form part of historically excluded groups. By investing in diversity, the organizations promote social inclusion and listen to these people's voices (Freitas & Rodrigues, forthcoming).

In 2012, the Brazilian Association of Transgender People (ABRAT) was founded by Maite Schneider, Laerte Coutinho, Márcia Rocha, and Letícia Lanz. This project sought to mitigate the problem of access to education by the trans population. With the growth of the initiative, it became clear that the barrier to the inclusion of this population was not only educational. In the following year, in 2013, TransEmpregos was therefore created, with the mission of working with companies to guarantee access to employment for *travestis* and trans people, enabling them to be considered by human resources departments without suffering discrimination and prejudice in selection and inclusion processes. TransEmpregos is the biggest and oldest project focused on the employability of this population, providing free services all around Brazil. Currently, TransEmpregos has several partnerships and engages in activities with companies that want to make social changes, building projects and actions in order for those changes to occur. According to the *2021 Data Report*, TransEmpregos (2021) had 21,477 users, 1,434 partner companies, 4,204 job opportunities posted, and almost 800 professionals employed – an 11% variation in relation to the previous year. In relation to the profile of those people, they were predominantly trans men (42.2%), black (48.7%) or white (47.7%), had completed high school (58.8%) or higher education (35.1%), and were hired in São Paulo (55.1%).

Other advances are also observed in the Brazilian political arena. Data published by Antra (2020b) reveal that the number of *travestis* and trans parliamentarians is rising in the country: in 2014, none of the seven candidates was elected; however, in 2016, of the 89 candidates, eight people were elected, rising in 2020 to 30 people elected from a total of 294 candidatures. Regarding the data relating to the 2020 elections, Antra reveals that, of the people elected, two were trans men and 28 were *travestis* and trans women – a 275% increase in relation to 2016. With respect to the distribution in the different regions of Brazil, 23 of them were elected in the Southeast, two in the Northeast, one in the North, and four in the South; in addition, 41% of them were black or brown.

The first object of the political movements of *travestis* and trans people is the precarization and vulnerability of the life conditions of most of this population (Nascimento, 2021; Palha, 2019). Recently, *travestis* and trans parliamentarians from all over Brazil, together with various organized social movements, launched the Transpolitical National Front (2021). This unification resulted in a manifesto containing 10 main objectives, including implementing legislative and government actions, promoting the fundamental rights of the LGBT+ population, and guaranteeing the full exercise of political mandates and activities defending vulnerablized groups. Besides the construction of a political transformation in Brazil, this initiative represents a possibility for prevention and education to deal with discrimination, prejudice, and violence resulting from sexual orientation or gender identity.

Transphobia is a term used to refer to discriminations and/or prejudices suffered by trans people or *travestis* due to their gender identities (Antra, 2020a; Jesus, 2012; Rodovalho, 2017; York et al., 2020). In general, it begins in the family environment, from the moment in which people assume their condition, when they come out of the “closet” (Sedgwick, 2007), to become victims of physical, psychological, and symbolic violence, including being expelled from their homes. Family ties are thus broken and, generally, school ones as well. Brazilian *travestis* and trans people are expelled from home at 13 years old, on average, which helps to explain why the life expectancy of trans people is so low: only 35 years (Antunes, 2013; Rodovalho, 2017), while that of the cisgender

population is 75 years (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics [IBGE], 2013). Regarding that reality, York et al. (2020, p. 4) are emphatic in affirming that “as *travestis*, we go to sleep as children and (rarely) as adolescents.”

It is estimated that around 0.02% of *travestis* and trans people are at university, 72% have not completed high school, and 56% not even elementary school, according to data from the Beyond the Rainbow/AfroReggae Project made available by Antra (2020a). However, the most worrying thing is that 90% of them find themselves on the streets, in prostitution, used as the main source of income in search of the minimum to survive/live on (Antra, 2020a). Living from prostitution, on the streets, means further exposing themselves to situations of vulnerability, suffering physical, psychological, and symbolic violence that often results in death. In addition, drug (ab)use is the consequence of daily coexistence with stressful factors, such as violence, hunger, prostitution, and a lack of job opportunities and access to housing and healthcare. They seek in toxic substances relief from all these risk factors (Antra, 2020a; Rodovalho, 2017; Santos et al., 2019; York et al., 2020). In addition, it is path that ultimately leads many of them to prison. Prison is an example of a total institution (Goffman, 1974), or also of a disciplinary institution (Foucault, 1996), meant to protect society from individuals labelled as intentionally threatening and it contributes to the affirmation and maintenance of the marginality of *travestis* and trans people.

Institutions in general tend toward closure, as they provide their participants with the use of their time in specific interests. The so-called total institutions are more closed than others and have visible barriers to the external world and to the rest of society, such as high walls, surveillance systems, and security equipment, to prevent those inside from leaving or at least doing so without permission (Goffman, 1974). Among the five types of total institutions, according to the author, there are those organized to protect society from intentional dangers, from violence, and among their characteristics is the fact that the wellbeing of the people isolated there does not constitute an immediate concern. In this type we can include prisons, penitentiaries, prisoner camps, and concentration camps. In everyday life we participate in many institutions for various and different needs, such as living, working, and having fun. Total institutions break down these boundaries between different spheres of life, as people tend to carry them out in the same environment, with timetables and rigid organization, shared with the same individuals (Goffman, 1974). The lives of trans people discussed in this article are subordinated to one type of total institution, the prison, with the blurring of boundaries between the different spheres of the existence of those convicted.

According to Foucault (1996), the disciplinary power, or the surveillance in disciplinary institutions, such as prisons, is based on individualized taming, despite having uniformizing effects. It uses simple instruments, such as the hierarchical view and normalizing sanction. The discipline is exerted through visibility devices, which enable recognition of the obligation of what should be done and make clear the effects of the power over those it applies to. The combination of different views in a hierarchy, in its structure, forms of potent surveillance mechanism in the overall functioning and application of power. The architecture also reveals the surveillance, especially if associated with more subtle and modern methods, such as the use of electronic technologies. The installations are built so as to monitor the exterior, to be seen as imposing, important in their function of protecting society, and, at the same time, they create an internal and articulated control, which enables seeing without being seen and, thus, control over those housed within and their behavior (Foucault, 1996).

The normalizing sanction is an instrument of validation of discipline, of its demands and obligations, as well as serving to assess non-compliance. Repression works through the application of micropenalties for deviations from the norm, such as: (a) in time – lateness, absence, interruptions; (b) in activities – negligence, lack of attention and care; (c) in the way of being – disobedience, rudeness, indiscipline; (d) in discourses – insolence, cynicism; (e) of the body – lack of hygiene, gestures; and (f) of sexuality – lewdness, indecency, deviance. The resulting punishments occur in a more or less accentuated and frequent way, such as physical punishments, humiliations, deprivations, etc. Punishment, in disciplinary power, operates in five main ways: (a) relating to singular acts and behaviors in a set, which is at the same time a space for comparison and differentiation between individuals and for the establishment of rules to be followed; (b) differentiating between the individuals in relation to that set of rules; (c) measuring and hierarchizing individuals based on that set of rules and its metrics; (d) transforming that hierarchization of the individuals into compliance; and (e) outlining a limit that is considered normal or abnormal, tolerable or not, within that environment (Foucault, 1996).

One result of the normalizing sanctions is stigma, a concept related to the work of Goffman (2008). Stigma is associated with characteristics of individuals that prevent them from obtaining full social acceptance. In social relationships, individuals considered as different, strange, or not belonging to recognized groups are categorized as undesirable and excluded. When they come to be seen as diminished people, there is stigma, a personal marker, considered a defect, a disadvantage, and even a weakness. The attribution of stigma occurs in relationships, it refers to a depreciative characteristic, and it also serves to confirm the normality of other individuals or groups. For the author, stigma is a specific relationship between a personal attribute and its stereotype, with there being three predominant types of stigma: (a) due to bodily deformities; (b) due to faults related to the personal character; and (c) due to distinctive characteristics of race, ethnicity, and religion. People with a different sexual orientation from the norm are implicated in the second type, as deviants who engage in “unnatural” sexual practices (Goffman, 2008, p. 14).

It is hard to find precise data, percentages, or absolute numbers, of trans people and *travestis* in Brazilian prisons. In a technical document of the Ministry for Women, the Family, and Human Rights (2020) on the national diagnosis of penal treatment of LGBT+ people in prisons in Brazil, of the total 1,448 prison units in the country, only 499 (34%) answered a questionnaire and some were also visited. Important data derive from that survey: of the total penal establishments, 106 state they had separate cells or wings for LGBT+ people, particularly in the states of São Paulo, Pernambuco, and Goiás, which had the highest numbers. In the respondent institutions, the LGBT+ population in male units is represented by 1,333 gays, 572 bisexuals, 455 *travestis*, and 163 trans people. In female prison units, there are 1,356 lesbians, 866 bisexuals, and only three trans people. It was reported that 40% of the LGBT+ population does not receive regular visits from relatives and friends. The same study showed that trans and *travestis* inmates are primarily in prison for theft (38.5%), drug trafficking (34.6%), burglary/robbery (15.4%), homicide (7.7%), and criminal association (3.8%).

The Joint Resolution of the National Council for Criminal and Penitentiary Policy (CNPCCP) and the National Council for Combatting Discrimination (CNCD) establishes that transsexual men and women are sent to female prison units, guaranteeing isonomic treatment with the other women who find themselves deprived of their freedom. *Travestis* and transsexual people have the right to

be addressed by their social name, with the use of female or male underwear being allowed, as well as keeping their hair and other secondary characteristics, according with their gender identity (Joint Resolution n. 1, 2014). In Brazil, there are already exclusive pavilions for these populations, which serve as spaces with less insecurity within the prison context. However, what is seen in practice is that many *travestis* and trans people are still sent to male prison units, as shown by the data from the research conducted by the Ministry for Women, the Family, and Human Rights (2020) and the cases discussed here, based on the special report of Drauzio Varella, aired by *Fantástico*.

Methodology

The *corpus* of this study is constituted of the use and analysis of texts, images, and videos (Loizos, 2002). The main visual material used is the special report on *travestis* and trans prisoners, aired by the Sunday program *Fantástico*, from *Rede Globo*, on March 1st of 2020 (*Fantástico*, 2020a). The special report was used to extract texts, that is, to convert contexts recorded in audio into written texts, and also to extract representative images using screenshots.

The report lasts 13 minutes and 38 seconds and tells the story of four main characters: Thaís Pereira de Lima, Suzi de Oliveira Santos, Lolla Ferreira Lima, and Xana (*Fantástico*, 2020a). Two points should be highlighted: first, in the report, the name of one of the interviewees contains a spelling mistake, being presented as “Susy”; however, she writes her name as “Suzi,” the form we use in this text; second, to cite the interviewee Xana in this study it was necessary to search the internet, since her name is not mentioned in the report.

Other documents were analyzed, such as journalistic reports and clarification notes, as well as complementary visual materials, such as videos containing the clarification notes published by *Fantástico* (*Fantástico*, 2020b, 2020c) and by Drauzio Varella (2020a, 2020b), subsequent to the report. Considering the objective and the *corpus* of this study, a qualitative approach was adopted, with a focus on interpretative (Bauer & Gaskell, 2002), intersectional (Akotirene, 2019; Collins, 2016; Ribeiro, 2020), and critical analyses of the media in relation to the modes of production and propagation of these contents, reflecting on narratives, representations, frameworks, scenarios, and their relationships with the construction of the social reality (Diniz, 2012; Ichikawa & Carrieri, 2014; Moraes, 2012; Silva & Soares, 2013).

Beyond that, with a view to deepening the presentation of the trajectory of the protagonists, turning points in life were used as methodological analysis resources (Hughes, 2005; Riessman, 2002). These points are characterized by negotiation processes the person engages in, being permeated by dilemmas and conflicts. Also, they mark the moment in which something begins to change significantly in the person’s life story and trajectory, enabling a special look at those “turning points,” whether positive or negative.

The life studies strata discussed here reveal the expression of identities and the prejudices and discriminations suffered, and so favor a discussion of social privileges and inequalities based on gender and sexuality. The expression of these identities oscillates between a circumscribed, artificial world of the prison, which to an extent favors openly living the modes of being and living, and on the other hand it shows the suffering inflicted by the discrimination of the surrounding society, with its impossibilities of inclusion and its dictates about who can or cannot be accepted.

Contextualizing the special report and its repercussions in time

On March 1st of 2020, the Sunday program *Fantástico*, from *Rede Globo*, aired a special report with the doctor Drauzio Varella on *travestis* and trans women serving sentences among men inmates. The special report was recorded in four male Brazilian penitentiaries, over five months. Two of them are in the state of São Paulo: the Pinheiros II Provisional Detention Center, in the state capital, and José Parada Neto, in Guarulhos. The other two are in the state of Pernambuco: Igarassu, in the Metropolitan Region of Recife; and Tacaimbó, close to Caruaru. Besides showing the life of *travestis* and trans women in the penitentiaries, the report also depicted aspects related to prejudice, abandonment, work, violence, and solitude (*Fantástico*, 2020a).

After airing on the national network, the special report generated a lot of empathy among the Brazilian public, but also much criticism, especially on social media (*Fantástico*, 2020b). There were two reasons for that. The first was because it did not mention the crimes committed by the *travestis* and trans inmates interviewed – with the exception of one of them – as that was not the objective of the report. And the second reason was the hug given by Drauzio to one of the interviewees, with that demonstration of affection being widely commented on by the public. Drauzio's name was mentioned several times on the Twitter social network after the report aired, rising to the top of the trending topics in Brazil, as reported by the newspaper *Correio Braziliense* (Paes, 2020).

Amidst so many comments, three days later, on March 4th, Drauzio Varella decided to make a statement. He recorded a video on the set of the *Fantástico* program about the major national repercussion of the special report, referring above all to the inmate Suzi, and explaining the choice of his protagonists (*Fantástico*, 2020b). However, the primarily negative comments did not stop, and even increased.

On Sunday, March 8th, supposed court documents circulated on the internet revealing the crime committed by one of the inmates interviewed, which altered the receptivity of a major part of the public in relation to the case presented. The judgement at the court of the internet began for her and for Drauzio Varella. Drauzio quickly received a series of criticisms on his social media, questioning whether he knew of the crime committed by the detainee when he decided to tell her story. Regarding the criticisms, on the same day Drauzio made a post on his official Instagram account, which received thousands of likes, stating that his duty as a doctor surpassed any other judgements, which can be read in full below:

For more than 30 years, I've gone to prisons, where I treat the health of detainees. Everywhere I practice Medicine, whether at my clinic or at the prisons, I don't ask what my patients may have done wrong. I follow this conduct so that my personal judgement does not prevent me from fulfilling the oath I made when I became of doctor. In my television work, I follow the same principles. In the case of the report aired by *Fantástico* last week (1/3), I didn't ask anything with regard to the crimes committed by the interviewees. I'm a doctor, not a judge. (Varella, 2020a)

Aware of the situation, the *Fantástico* program published a comment on the special report, clarifying its objective. The anchors of the program reproduced Drauzio Varella's post, stating that

Fantástico fully supports it (*Fantástico*, 2020c). On March 10th, a video was published on Drauzio Varella's YouTube channel (Varella, 2020b). In it, the doctor converses directly with the people who follow him, commenting again on the repercussion of his participation in the report. He ends the video by stating that he has never been or never will be a political candidate, since many of the criticisms against him are due to fear of him running as a candidate for president of Brazil. The video exceeded two million views, with more than 153 likes and 32 thousand comments.

The special report begins with Drauzio going to meet the *travestis* and trans inmates at the Pinheiros II Provisional Detention Center, in São Paulo. His first comments mention his work as a voluntary doctor in Brazilian penitentiaries, over three decades, and his first visits with the transsexual detainees. His years of experience and the stories of the detainees, employees, and of the penitentiaries themselves are portrayed in a trilogy of books, under the titles *Estação Carandiru* (1999), *Carcereiros* (2012), and *Prisioneiras* (2017). In the special report, Drauzio recalls when he made visits at the Casa de Detenção de São Paulo until the riot and slaughter of 111 detainees, by the Military Police in Pavilion 9, which occurred in October of 1992. The penitentiary was popularly known as Carandiru as it was located in the neighborhood of the same name in the city, and at the time it was considered the biggest prison in Latin America. The initial comments about Drauzio Varella's lengthy experience in penitentiaries prepare the ground for presenting the protagonists of the special report. What are they? What do they have to say? What is the life they lead in the prisons like? How do they face the prejudice, abandonment, violence, and solitude? We present them below.

Thaís Pereira de Lima

Thaís is a *travesti*, aged 29, and is a prisoner at Igarassu penitentiary, in the Metropolitan Region of Recife, in Pernambuco. Before being interviewed by Drauzio, there are recordings of Thaís doing her make-up in front of the mirror, listening to music, while she talks to other detainees (Figures 1a and 1b). In the cell she is in it is possible to observe make-up, decorations, a television, and a fan. In the interview, Thaís appears in make-up, with her nails painted, wearing a yellow t-shirt, jeans, and some accessories, such as earrings, a necklace, a bracelet, and rings, as well as having tattoos on her arms. She is black-skinned, slim, and her hair is long and straight, loose, with a small bun on top of her head (Figure 1c).

Thaís recounts that, as a teenager, when she was 15, she had to leave home to “*try living life outside*,” explaining that meant prostitution. On the streets, looking for opportunities to survive/live, Thaís was marked by negative experiences, obstacles, or “*monsters*” in her life. Prostitution was left as the last way out for her not to go hungry or lack another basic need. From that moment, other risky and illicit behaviors emerged as consequences, such as toxic substance (ab)use and drug trafficking – the latter as another form of obtaining income. Hence, prison was a result of those actions. Observing her speech, her calm way of expressing herself, a strong message is perceived: “*Hunger, drugs, all of that led me to one thing: prison (some seconds of silence). Prison (with sad expressions)*,” says Thaís.

In scenes of the special report, Thaís is at a religious service in the penitentiary. This religious assistance is foreseen by law (Art. 24 of Law n. 7,210, of July 11th of 1984), ensuring the availability of an appropriate place for religious services, as well as books of religious instruction. Also, it is

possible to observe some people wearing a white t-shirt, with a heart painted with the colors of the rainbow – representing the flag of the LGBT+ movement – and a written message (Figure 1d).

Drauzio comments on Igarassu penitentiary, a pioneer in the creation of an exclusive pavilion for the LGBT+ population in the closed regime, implemented in 2015. In the report, there is mention of the humanized treatment of the *travestis* and trans women confined there, who can wear the clothing of their preference and can circulate throughout the whole penitentiary. According to the Administration of the Penitentiary, the pavilion has more than 20 *travestis* and trans women.

Thaís states that she felt more sheltered and respected within a penitentiary institution than on the streets. Here we perceive how ferocious and aggressive transphobia is in society. Thaís is imprisoned for a crime, but the greatest imprisonment she suffers is the social kind. We can observe her female personification, which is clear through its expression in her appearance, through clothing, make-up, long hair, and accessories; as she sees herself as female, she wants those around her to see her as such.

Holding the flag of the transgender movement and pride, Thaís hugs Drauzio. The flag is a visual symbol representative of the trans population. It is a source of pride for Thaís to hold it and show it (Figure 1e). At the end of the meeting, Thaís and other detainees give Drauzio a group hug, as a way of showing love and affection; that hug also shows respect, care, and protection.



Figure 1.Thaís Pereira de Lima

Note: Images organized by the authors.

Source: *Fantástico* (2020a)

Ending the interview, Thaís says that she got the opportunity to work in the penitentiary, something she sought and was denied by society, because of who she was. In her words: “*When I arrived here, at Igarassu prison, it completely changed by life. How come? The opportunity of lots of things that even out there I didn’t have.*” Then, Drauzio asks for an example and Thaís answers: “*Work.*” She mentions the difficulty of inclusion in the labor market in visible roles and of interaction with the public, saying that: “*It’s rare for you to see a trans person working in a shopping mall, at a forum.*”

Regarding her work at the penitentiary, Thaís explains: *“I teach baking, three times a week. I have about eighty students.”* The interview shows Thaís getting ready for work, to teach her class. Her work clothes – a uniform and shoes – are in a bucket, under her bed. In the class, she teaches her students to make an orange cake (Figure 1f). At the end of the class, there is applause. And with the applause, Thaís’ story in the report comes to an end. Society does not want Thaís to commit other crimes, but it does not offer job opportunities either so that she can live in dignity. She needs to be a prisoner to have a job opportunity beyond the imaginary “place” of the trans woman on the street, or in prostitution. It seems less shocking to see a trans woman prostituting herself, or in criminality, than in spaces of education, in dignified and formal jobs. Living in a penitentiary is scary; however, there Thaís has found what she lacked on the streets: some respect, the right to be who she is, a job opportunity.

Suzi de Oliveira Santos

Suzi is a *travesti*, aged 30, and imprisoned at the Pinheiros II Provisional Detention Center, in São Paulo. Suzi is presented lightly made up, wearing red prescription glasses, a white t-shirt, beige pants, and pink sandals. She has a slim appearance and black skin, and her hair is curly, shoulder length, and tied in a pony tail (Figure 2a).

Suzi comments on the harsh routine at the penitentiary (Figure 2b). She says she has lived alone since her husband was transferred to another prison unit. She also reveals that she had tuberculosis and is HIV positive. In her perception, revealing that she has health problems has increased the prejudice in the prison unit. Asked by Drauzio if she has access to treatment and medicines, Suzi answers affirmatively (Figure 2c). Healthcare for individual prisoners is foreseen by law (Art. 14 of Law n. 7,210/1984) and is of a preventive and curative nature, including medical, pharmaceutical, and dental care.

The State is obliged to give care to imprisoned individuals (Art. 10 of Law n. 7,210/1984), including material care (Art. 12 of Law n. 7,210/1984). However, that is not what occurs in practice. In general, the individual’s family covers the costs of their personal hygiene items, which are handed in during visits. Suzi is alone. Who will take her personal hygiene items? Would she be dependent on donations from other prisoners? Suzi finds it hard to access those basic items to live with some dignity behind bars. For her, there was no other option: she had to prostitute herself. *“In jail you’re obliged to prostitute yourself for toothpaste, soap, a plate of food,”* Suzi comments. Drauzio asks: *“Is there any way for a travesti not to prostitute herself when they go to jail?”* Suzi answers: *“In the beginning no, because in the beginning we have no opportunities. There’s a lot of prejudice.”* Suzi ended up seeking in prostitution a way of survival. That is a serious situation, of the established law not being observed, and which results in the humiliation and degradation of people in prisons.

After four years in prison, Suzi began to work in a company within the penitentiary producing rubber components (Figure 2d), receiving the equivalent of 75% of a minimum wage monthly. Drauzio asks about her job and Suzi explains: *“Thanks to that job I’m not going to leave how I arrived, without any way of walking.”* It is in the company that Suzi’s interview occurs. There are no recordings in her cell.

One of the scenes that moved the Brazilian public and also one of the most commented on after the report was when Drauzio asked: *“How long has it been since you last had a visit at the jail?”*

“Eight years, seven years... quite long,” Suzi answers sadly, with a shaky voice and watery eyes. Some seconds of silence later, Drauzio says: “Solitude, isn’t it, my dear?” and Suzi adds: “Quite a lot (nodding her head). Quite a lot.” Moved after Suzi’s speech, Drauzio hugs her affectionately (Figure 2e). We invite a reflection on that specific moment of the special report – for that, try to listen carefully to the third repetition of the words “quite a lot,” which she says at the end of the interview.

Drauzio’s simple gesture became symbolic against the dehumanization and prejudice that the trans population suffers in Brazilian society. He was praised on social media for the gesture, for his sympathetic and sensitive attitude, as can be observed in the thousands of answers to the tweet published by *Fantástico* (2020d), reported by various newspapers and portals, such as *Correio Braziliense* (Paes, 2020) and *Uol* (Alves, 2020), for example.

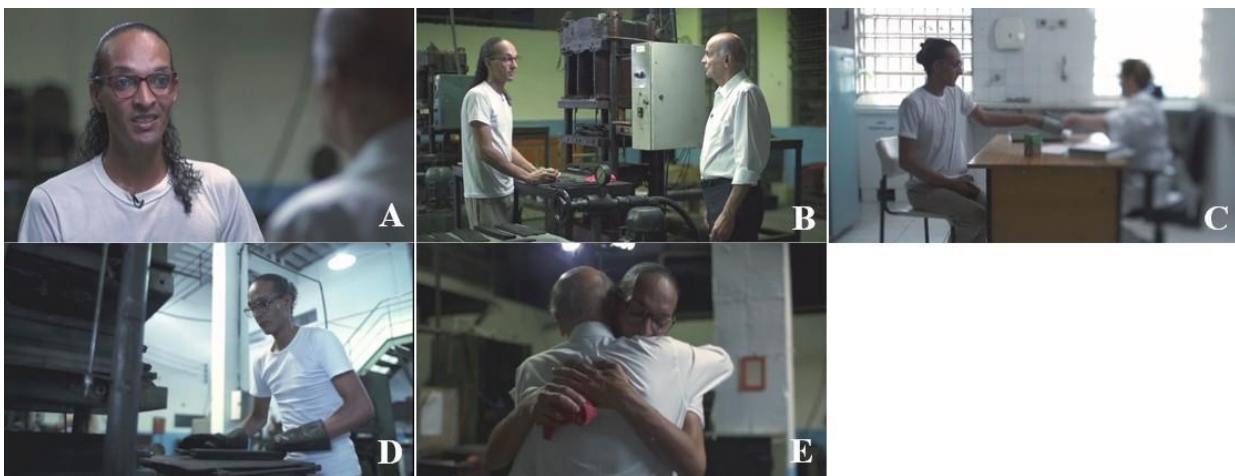


Figure 2. Suzi de Oliveira Santos

Note: Images organized by the authors.

Source: *Fantástico* (2020a)

With the repercussion of the special report, various people mobilized on social media to send letters of support to Suzi that attenuated her solitude. On March 2nd, answering countless requests, the Secretariat for Penitentiary Administration of the State of São Paulo (SEP/SP) published Suzi’s address on its account on the Twitter social network. According to *Folha de São Paulo* (2020), by March 6th, Suzi had received 234 letters, sixteen books, two bibles, make-up, chocolates, pens, and envelopes – some of them containing various letters from religious groups. That correspondence was sent from various Brazilian states.

However, almost a week later, on March 8th, judicial documents about the court case circulated on the internet revealing the crime committed by Suzi. The national repercussion was instantaneous, with various reactions, controversy, and outrage. There was uncritical behavior, primarily, on the internet: from a wave of love and emotion to a wave of hatred and social repulsion. The public’s emotional manifestations oscillated. Suzi was questioned, attacked, and harassed.

Various Brazilian politicians, including the President of the Republic (Bolsonaro, 2020), used their official social media accounts to express discontent, disapproval, and indignation, defending Suzi’s life imprisonment and spreading a campaign to boycott the station responsible for the report.

As a reflection, thousands of people showed they were in favor of the politicians' position, launching more attacks on Suzi and Drauzio. The transphobic behavior of a portion of Brazilian society, led by the conservative opinion of those politicians, with heterocentered and cisnormalized characteristics, showed intolerance, rejection, hatred, and discrimination. Social and structural transphobia dehumanizes *travestis* and trans women, especially those in prison, associating them with a violent, cruel, and cold profile that society has historically attributed to that population, and that merely feeds into the processes of their exclusion from social spaces (Antra, 2020a; Jesus, 2012; Rodovalho, 2017; York et al., 2020). Suzi's story was used to exemplify and reinforce such thinking.

After various reactions, controversy, and uproar on the internet, on March 9th, Suzi wrote a letter in her own hand, which can be read in full below:

I, Suzi Oliveira, "Rafael Tadeu," wish to say that in the interviews to *Fantástico* I wasn't asked anything about the police report. I know I made a huge mistake. At no point have I tried to come across as innocent and since that day I've been truly sorry and today I'm here paying for everything I did... I made a mistake and I'm paying every day – every hour and every minute here in this place... I've never had this opportunity before, now I do, to at least say sorry for my mistake in the past. (S. Santos, letter, 2020).

At Suzi's request, the document was published by her lawyer on a professional account on the Instagram social network (Flores, 2020), which, before being removed, accumulated more than eight thousand likes and more than one thousand comments. Again, social and structural transphobia is observed in the discourses and attitudes: there is denial of Suzi's gender identity, treating her in the masculine form and exposing her male name on record on social media (Antra, 2020a; Jesus, 2012; Rodovalho, 2017; York et al., 2020).

In Suzi's case, society is resisting detaching the person from the crime they committed. Suzi will always be an individual under suspicion, she will unlikely be seen with other eyes; she is stigmatized as a criminal (Goffman, 2008). That is disturbing for Suzi's present and future. She is imprisoned, paying for her crime, in a country where the law is not applied fairly and tends to favor whites, cisgender people, and the rich more, and to be more severe with blacks, transgender people, and the poor. The prison sentence and social "forgiveness" of the criminal individual are selective and unequal. Often, society (re)produces the exclusion of those who have already been excluded (Foucault, 1996).

Lolla Ferreira Lima

Lolla is transsexual, 35 years old, and imprisoned at the José Parada Neto penitentiary, in Guarulhos, in the metropolitan region of São Paulo (Figure 3a). Before being interviewed by Drauzio, there are recordings of Lolla handling cosmetic products with other detainees during a vocational course in make-up, paying attention to the volunteer teacher's explanation and doing a coursemate's make-up while giving the interview (Figure 3b). Foreseen by law (Art. 19 of Law n. 7,210/1984), the vocational course that Lolla is doing may represent a new start in life. In her words: "*I'm doing this course because it's giving me a new start in life, isn't it? I hope when I get out of here, which isn't far off, I can make every day of class I had here with Ju (voluntary teacher) worth it.*"

In the interview, Lolla appears in make-up, wearing a white t-shirt and beige pants, and is slim and white-skinned. Her hair is in an undercut style (Figure 3c), which involves two different lengths, with longer hair on top and shaved or very short hair at the sides and back. In the cell, reading course notes with her legs crossed, it is possible to observe some tattoos on her right foot, besides those she has on both arms. There are few visible objects, and some cosmetics and possible materials from her vocational course in make-up can be observed.

Lolla mentions the prejudice suffered and non-acceptance of her sexuality by her family. She mentions, for example, her father, who does not accept her with her female name. She endeavors to fit her biological sex, trying to correspond to family expectations, so as to not face any more conflicts and not give her parents any more “displeasure.” Drauzio comments on the possibility of changing her name and gender and asks her about her interest. Lolla answers: *“I’m interested, of course I’m interested. I’ll feel happier, won’t I (smiling). I’m interested in getting a prosthetic, all that, but when my mother dies, my father, then I’ll do all that.”*

To modify her body, in pursuit of femininity, Lolla says that she resorted to using female hormones and that she saw her breasts growing. The use of those medications was interrupted when she was imprisoned, since they are not offered within the penitentiary. According to Joint Resolution n. 1 (Brazil, 2014), access to hormone treatment and healthcare are guaranteed for *travestis* people and transsexual men or women deprived of freedom. Lolla showed interest in that access, but she was denied the right to adapt her body to the gender she identifies with. Regarding her body and sexuality, Lolla comments: *“My body, yes, it seems like a man’s, but my spirit, my soul, I think it’s a woman’s, I feel like a woman.”* In one of the scenes it is possible to see Lolla washing her panties in a red color and, afterwards, extending them on the clothes line, in the sun, to dry. That typically feminine underwear is quite symbolic of Lolla, who instead of being embarrassed to use panties, feels proud to assume her identity, to affirm being a woman.

After presenting the most common crimes committed by Brazilian trans woman, Drauzio revealed the reason why Lolla was in prison: robbery. It is believed that this information was revealed merely as a point of contextualization, since of all the interviewees, Lolla was the only one whose reason for imprisonment was revealed to the public.

The special report records the moment when Lolla receives the document that allows her to serve her sentence in the open regime. Talking with the employee of the Penitentiary Administration, she shows surprise and happiness (Figure 3d). However, it is possible to note that Lolla is not entirely happy, like someone who will recover their freedom. She remains on the defensive, presenting contained happiness, timid, with signs of worry. Could it be because of the fear of living in society again? Could it be because of the fear, the prejudice, that society offers trans women? She would be free of the penitentiary, but continue imprisoned by society. Asked by that employee, Lolla answers that she would like her sister to be informed about the date of her release (Figure 3d).

In another image, the gate opens and Lolla leaves the penitentiary. Outside there is a new start (again) in her life, a new phase. Without make-up, wearing a white t-shirt, colorful Bermuda shorts, red sneakers, and carrying papers and a bag in her hands, Lolla meets her sister, who is waiting for her (Figure 3e). They hug and kiss. They go home together.

At her father's home, Lolla appears cleaning and organizing the temporary accommodation. Her father did not appear in the report. Reinserted into social coexistence, she says that she does not feel comfortable being who she is, to express herself as she would like, to assume her identity. In her words: *"I came here, didn't I? My aim is to stay here, at my father's house, for some time. Now I know I'm in the middle of society. There I had, let's say, a certain level of freedom."* Could Lolla be going back, forced by society, into the "closet"? How does she deal with staying or going back in the "closet" at that specific moment of her life? (Rodvalho, 2017; Sedgwick, 2007).

In that process of "adapting" or "hiding herself" to survive/live, Lolla assumes a male appearance, behavior, and clothing, once more, because of the experience of prejudice and fear of being a trans woman in Brazilian society. In this context, her decision to "hide herself" seems reasonable. We ought to wonder: why is Lolla not free to live her life? Why does she carry with her the baggage of transsexuality – the "heavy burden" of Brazilian society judging her all the time. Lolla may be free, in social coexistence, as long as she submits to social standards and norms, imposed by the male chauvinist and transphobic culture that insists on dictating what she is. Coming out of the "closet" (Sedgwick, 2007) may not be a safe act, but it is a political act, an act of resistance.



Figure 3. Lolla Ferreira Lima

Note: Images organized by the authors.

Source: *Fantástico* (2020a)

Lolla tries to get a job, but she finds many doors closed; she is led to the informal job market because of her intersections, and in it she finds a form of obtaining an income. In her words:

You feel, like, those people aren't welcoming you like they should, that is, you don't deserve to be getting out (of jail), you don't deserve a job opportunity, let's see if she wants to work, change her life, this and that. People no longer think like that, do they? The best thing is for you to work for yourself. I dress up as a clown to try it there... I sell water at the traffic lights.

In that process, the paint on her face has been changed. Using a clown costume, Lolla is selling bottles of water at traffic lights, on the streets of the city (Figure 3f). Other recordings show Lolla, seated, in the street, putting on make-up. Later, she appears among the cars offering water to the drivers. The last recording shows Lolla sitting in a chair, with a look reflecting tiredness, despondency, and sadness.

Lolla's case also generated sympathy among the Brazilian public. After the special report aired, on March 2nd, a profile on the Instagram social network was created by web users to locate Lolla, with the aim of helping her – the name of the account is @juntoscomalolla – and it has already accumulated more than fifteen thousand followers. Just two days after the campaign started, it was published that Lolla was found and will receive help. In fact, it is a nice example of love and solidarity. On March 19th, Bianca DellaFancy invited Lolla to a “Della Make” presentation on her YouTube channel. In that presentation, Bianca does Lolla's make-up while covering a wide range of subjects, such as her life story (childhood, discovering her sexuality, first experiences), drag make-up, difficulty finding employment, prejudice, forms of living on the streets, prostitution, physical and verbal aggressions suffered, hormone use, religion, prison, and life in the penitentiary (DellaFancy, 2020). It is a relaxed interview, despite covering sensitive topics. The video accumulated more than 280 thousand views, sixty thousand likes, and 5.3 thousand comments.

Xana

Xana is a *travesti*, aged almost 40, and is an inmate at the Tacaimbó penitentiary, in the interior of the state of Pernambuco (Figure 4a). It is important to highlight that, in order to cite her in this study, it was necessary to search the internet, since her name is not mentioned in the report, only the name of her husband, who appears at her side.

Before Xana is interviewed by Drauzio, there are recordings of a cell with clothing, objects, and a long white bridal dress, hanging on the door. Xana appears in light make-up, with her nails painted, wearing black prescription glasses, a white gown, jeans, white boots, earrings, and a ring. She has a big body shape and black skin. She is accompanied by her husband, Robson da Silva Lima, aged 30, who is also a detainee at the same penitentiary (Figures 4a, 4b, and 4c).

Xana comments on some personal questions. One of them is that her father, when he visits her at the penitentiary, brings male clothes. Xana feels mistreated with her father's insistent gesture. She also comments that she gives those clothes to her husband. Xana's report reveals the absence of family acceptance and the attempt to reinforce the association between her biological sex and gender. However, independently of the pain of receiving male clothes, she states that she will continue the same: a woman. Regarding that, she comments: *“You can put a suit on me, dress me like a little boy, I'll still feel like a woman all the same.”*

Xana reveals having assumed her gender identity late. In her words: *“I'm already almost 40, I'm coming out of the drawer really late, and I've suffered a lot because of that.”* Living in a cisheteronormative society forces *travestis* and transsexuals to fit the norm to survive, and Xana demonstrates that. Her life is marked by long years of sadness, prejudice, and violence. However, the decision to come out of the “drawer,” or the “closet” (Sedgwick, 2007), marks the emergence of a new phase in her life, enabling her to be who she is, to express herself as she would like, and to assume her identity.

It was in the penitentiary that Xana met her partner, Robson. She recounts that she was working in the healthcare sector of the prison unit when Robson arrived, very ill. Xana asked to care for Robson. From that moment, both started to feel affection toward each other, until they began a relationship. Xana comments that her first sexual experience was with Robson. In her words: *“He took me for the first time. It was my first time (laughing, looking at Robson, with expressions of joy and blushing).”* From that moment, Robson mentions having made the next promise to Xana: *“You’ll look after me and I’ll look after you for the rest of my life, while I’m alive I’ll take care of you.”*

While Robson complements Xana’s utterances, recordings are shown of the couple in a cell, touching and looking at each other affectionately (Figure 4c). Then, the couple kisses, in a simple brushing of lips. It is a nice, romantic, and quick scene. Their mouths are blurred, and that was on purpose, since the kiss could have controversial repercussions, shocking, making uncomfortable, or revolting the Brazilian public (Figure 4d). Despite the spaces conquered with resistance by the LGBT+ community, a kiss between people from this group is still presented as a taboo in society. The kiss between Xana and Robson is a natural act, which says a lot and shows the multiple forms of love.



Figure 4. Xana

Note: Images organized by the authors.

Source: *Fantástico* (2020a).

Questioned by Drauzio, Robson mentions his past relationship and being a father of four children. He also says that when he went to “live” with Xana, sharing the same cell, they began to build a relationship and live a life as a couple, with all the care and affection of a relationship outside the prison, observing the promise made to each other. After some years of relationship, Xana and Robson decided to get married. A civil union was held in 2019, at the Caruaru District Court, in Pernambuco. A little later, a religious union occurred in the patio of the prison unit, with a reception for the couple’s family members (Figure 4). It is possible to observe Xana holding a bouquet of red roses and wearing a long white dress, a veil, and wreath, and Robson wearing a shirt, white sneakers, and jeans (Figure 4e). The images of the union were provided by Gabriel Rodrigues, and the happiness stamped on the couples’ faces is visible.

Both the civil and the religious union highlight the importance of respecting the dignity and rights of people serving a sentence deprived of freedom, with these being acts that contribute to the resocialization process. Xana and Robson's union, besides being a unique and special moment in their lives, is also historic, since it was the first wedding of a trans woman detainee held at Tacaimbó Penitentiary.

Stories that intersect

The self-declaration of gender and color identity is an exercise of self-awareness, of self-discovery, and of completeness of the individual; it is also a guarantee of autonomy (Resadori & Rios, 2018; Rodovalho, 2017). In the special report there is no introduction of the protagonists. The only personal information disclosed is their social name and age. What do we know about their other social markers of difference, such as gender and color identity? The protagonists have the right to choose what they want to be called; it is them who spontaneously provide the information about themselves. Thus, it was not possible to identify other social markers of differences besides those that were mentioned by the protagonists themselves. Considering the sexual plurality and gender identity possibilities, we resorted to theoretical understandings to analyze and classify the protagonists as *travesti*, transsexual, or transgender, according to the Antra document (2020a); the same was done with relation to color, according to the classification system adopted by the IBGE (2011). It is understood that classifying them does not mean delimiting their gender or race identities, this being a theoretical and academic exercise.

It is important to highlight some criticisms about the mode of production and editing of the special report, as it conveys important messages (Diniz, 2012; Ichikawa & Carrieri, 2014; Moraes, 2012; Silva & Soares, 2013). The penitentiaries are shown as places of "inclusion," in which the protagonists mention feeling they are in a better situation than in outside society. The everyday reality is hidden, denied by the editing. Prisons are punitivist: they (re)produce suffering, violence, and sequelae and, often, kill. Prisons should not be viewed in a romantic way, as if they would "save the life" of those in there. *Travestis* and trans women have their rights violated all the time. Their gender identity is disrespected, they are assaulted, they are isolated by the other inmates, who avoid physical contact or coexistence with them, and, often, without alternatives, they carry out sex work in exchange for personal hygiene items and food.

Another point to be highlighted concerns the environment in which the interviews occurred, which was considered, planned. For example, in the interview with Bianca DellaFancy (2020), Lolla reveals that the cell in which she talked with Drauzio Varella was not hers. The idea conveyed to the public is one of "romanticism," "optimism," and that is worrying. It is known that penitentiaries are overcrowded, with cells and installations in awful conditions (dirty and lacking hygiene, ventilation, and illumination), but the public did not see any of that. The "make-up" used by the administration of each prison, or by the program's production, can be perceived. After all, they were receiving Drauzio Varella, a doctor widely known in Brazil and abroad, with a large team and cameras, to record a special report for *Rede Globo*.

The report tells the story of *travestis* and trans women, different in their contents, but equal in their contexts: prejudice, abandonment, violence, solitude. Four lives marked by social exclusion that has limited them to the margin, to the place that is possible and imaginable for *travestis* and

transsexuals. Four lives that, independently of the crime committed, had already been condemned for being who they are. Life stories that will not go down in History, that will not be written in the books. Made invisible, yet again.

However, their life stories say a lot about Brazilian society, marked by cisnormative, transphobic prejudices, rooted in a culture developed based on the pillars of male chauvinism and patriarchy; a society aggressive to the personification of the female. *Travestis* and trans women are victims of violence, which insistently tells them to “be men,” “become or go back to being men,” to affirm the sort of crime they commit by refusing the big prize: being a man.

Prejudice was the main element responsible for the reality of these *travestis* and trans women, which they were already introduced to in the family environment. The coercion of people to change and be tolerated, in order to “fit” what is expected of them, the common view, forms part of our social arena. That feeling, whether imagined or not, should not be present when the basis of relationships is respect. The absence of respect for particularities, essence, and, primarily, life, ultimately generates segregation, separation between those who deserve a social space and those who do not.

Those *travestis* and trans women found it difficult to get a job, to insert themselves and rise professionally in the workplace. Perhaps the employers were not interested in their qualifications and training, but rather in who was applying for the position. Left to their own luck, they sought alternatives to survive/live, with prostitution being the commonly found form of obtaining an income, as it is for most of that population. However, being on the streets means having contact with human hostility, with prejudice, with fear, with physical, psychological, symbolic, mortal violence (Antra, 2020a; Rodovalho, 2017; Santos et al., 2019; York et al., 2020); and they are survivors of the streets, which so often assault and kill *travestis* and trans people.

Condemned judicially and morally and living in male prison institutions (Foucault, 1996; Goffman, 1974), the protagonists demonstrate before our eyes how much society has got it wrong and still gets it wrong with them and so many others. They are women in men’s prisons, an evidently unconstitutional situation (Art. 5, paragraph XLVIII, of the Federal Constitution of 1988). They are deprived of judicial freedom by serving a sentence for criminal acts, but they are free of the stares, the judgements, and the moral condemnations that form part of the daily lives of *travestis* and trans people. They are in the imagined place delegated by society. And, in that place, they have become victims of abandonment, both parental and social. However, it is inside the prison units that the protagonists find some of the conditions to lead their lives as they should be in society. It is inside these units that they express who they are, they obtain job opportunities, and they receive training and remuneration. It is an opportunity that is fought for tooth and nail, which means the possibility of (re)beginning, of trying to walk on their own two feet after serving their sentence. However, none of them wanted to be there of course.

Of the protagonists, Thaís and Suzi carry out internal work in the penitentiaries, and Lolla is doing a vocational course; regarding Xana, nothing is mentioned. The Law of Penal Execution n. 7,210/1984 describes that the work of imprisoned individuals, as a social duty and condition of human dignity, will have an educative (art. 28) and professional (art. 34) purpose. The work carried out internally is remunerated, via a pre-determined table, and cannot be less than three-fourths of a minimum wage (art. 29), with a working day of six to eight hours daily, with a rest on Sundays and

holidays (art. 33). That work is a form of resocialization of imprisoned individuals, an instrument for reintegration into social coexistence. Prisons are conceived to be a disciplinary and transformative institution for individuals (Foucault, 1996; Goffman, 1974). In fact, the protagonists' time in prison constitutes a turning point in their lives (Hughes, 2005; Riessman, 2002).

The life stories and trajectories of Thaís, Suzi, Lolla, and Xana are presented as dynamic, mutable, reflections of a series of objective and subjective decisions, considering contextual questions, marked by difficulties, dilemmas, and (re)beginnings. Figure 5 seeks a graphical representation of their life story and trajectory based on their accounts in the report (*Fantástico*, 2020a), in which turning points are identified (Hughes, 2005; Riessman, 2002). Each solid vertical line has black circles, which represent turning points; in the lower part there is a representation of various future paths, in dotted lines. There is also a solid, but thin horizontal line, which identifies common turning points between the interviewees.

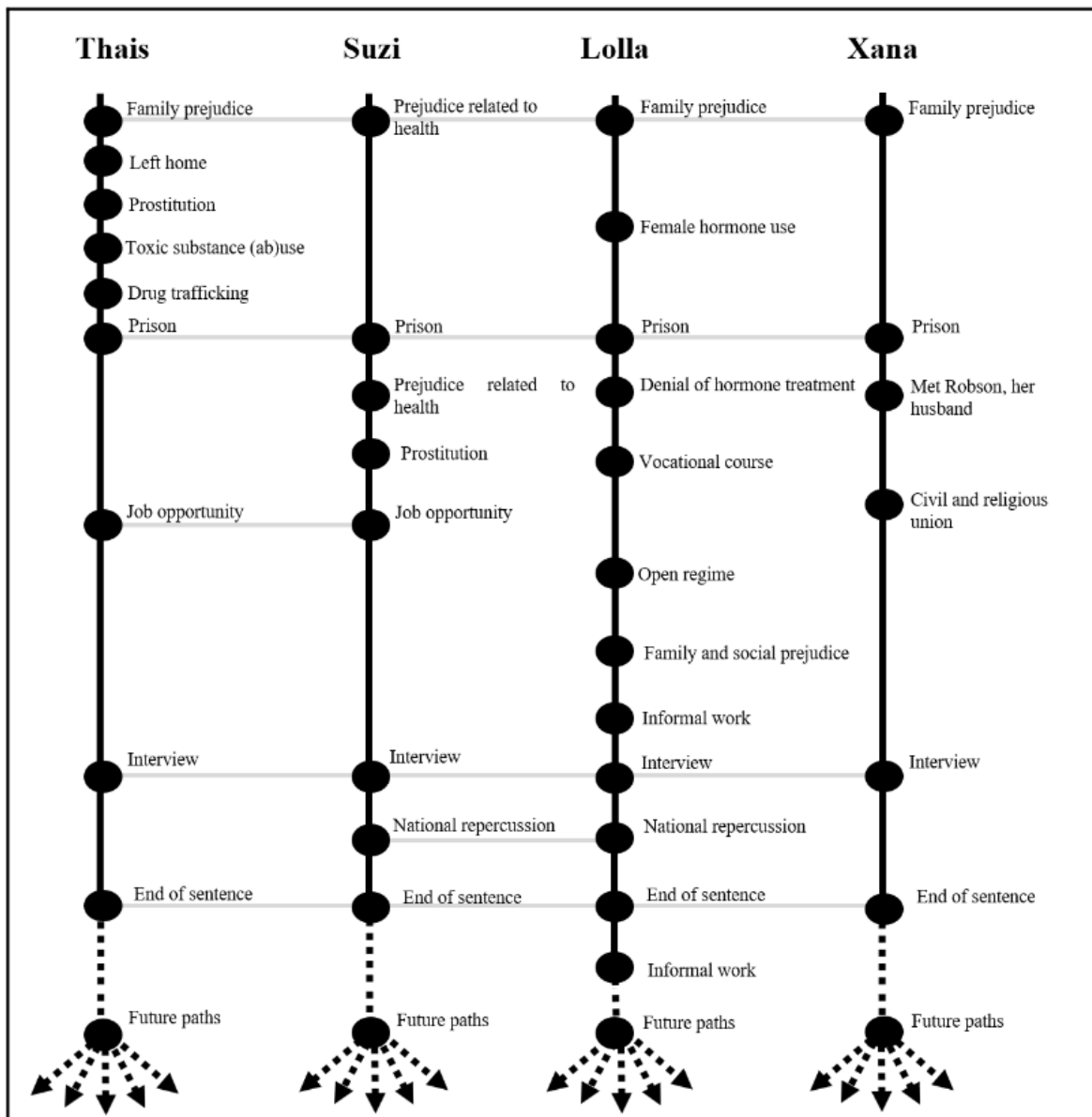


Figure 5. Graphical representation of the life trajectory of the protagonists with turning points

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on *Fantástico* (2020a).

#ForEveryoneToSee: Figure 5 is within a white rectangle written in black, where there appear four parallel vertical lines, with circles, corresponding to each protagonist of the special report. The first line to the left is that of Thaís, which has in the first circle a thinner solid horizontal line, in common with the other protagonists, referring to family prejudice. This first circle is followed by another four nearby (left home; prostitution; toxic substance (ab)use; drug trafficking). The next point is in common with the others and refers to prison, which involves another turning point, which is the job opportunity, with a continuous line until the next protagonist, as they have that aspect in common, followed by the cycle common to all, of the interview for the *Fantástico* special. The next point is the end of the sentence, common to all, even though some still remain in prison. The last circle, from which various dotted arrows derive, refers to the numerous possibilities of future paths. The second line is that of Suzi, in which the first circle is common to all and refers to prejudices regarding healthcare; the second turning point is also common, prison, followed by another two common to all, the interview, followed by the national repercussion circle, in common with the next protagonist Lolla; end of sentence, common to all, and future paths, with multiple arrows. The third line from left to right is that of Lolla, with the first circle representing family prejudice, common to all, followed by female hormone use; prison – which is also common to all; denial of hormone treatment; open regime; family and social prejudice; informal work. The interview, a point shared with all, national repercussion in common with Suzi, end of sentence, common to all, informal work, and future paths, in various directions, are her next markers. The last

line belongs to Xana, with common points of family prejudice and prison, followed by meeting her husband, Robson, the civil and religious union, the interview, and the end of the sentence, common to all protagonists, as well as future paths.

Resocialization is a battle faced by ex-prisoners, independently of the gender identity, since the moral judgement of society, which tends to be punitivist, opposes a new opportunity. For the protagonists of the special report that will be not different – and Lolla already shows us that. When they recover the right to begin again, there will be a new obstacle they will have to face: the new stigma generated by the title of ex-prisoners (Goffman, 2008). They are two weights to carry: that of being who they are, of seeking the minimum dignity to live as they identify; and that of moral judgement, of the social imagination, which insists on associating them with the “world” of criminality, marginality, prostitution, drugs (Antra, 2020a; Rodovalho, 2017; York et al., 2020). It is precisely on this point that one of Drauzio’s initial utterances is based: *“It is a pressure for trans women to be considered marginal all of the time.”*

At some point, their sentence, the closed regime, will end. What to expect of the future? Being outside the penitentiary represents a new (re)beginning in life, a new chance to live, freedom to be, to come and go. But it also means a new imprisonment, with various doses of abandonment, with a large amount of prejudice and with yet more baggage, that of having spent time in a prison institution. However, they refuse the possibility to live their lives as supporting actors; on the contrary, they assume the role of subjects, with their own wills and desires to conquer, to be respected.

Concluding remarks

We know that a study like this leaves questions to be answered. There is still much to discover about the life of the protagonists. There is also a lot to discover about the population of *travestis*, transsexual, and transgender people, since they constitute analysis categories widely ignored in the existing academic studies. Moreover, there is also a lot to reflect on about the functioning of Brazilian penitentiaries, with and without exclusive pavilions for the LGBT+ population. For that reason, future research is incentivized to complement and broaden the discussion started in this study.

Due to a lack of information and difficulties accessing the research subjects, as well as ethical questions and questions of respect for the public involved, we used the report as a device for the empirical discussion of the topic. The report obtained repercussions and generated numerous debates, which motivated us to analyze it in a more consistent and qualitative way. However, we perceive the limits of the pre-prepared data of the study, produced by other people and widely disclosed. It would be desirable for the research to provide direct opinions from *travestis* and trans women about family experiences, prejudices, lack of access, prostitution, discrimination in the labor market, and living in prisons, among so many topics mentioned in this study and other equally relevant ones. By more directly understanding the reality of these people, we think it is harder to fall into rhetorical and romanticized traps regarding their conditions, which serve the uncritical reproduction of knowledge about them, perhaps ideal for a “show of life.” At the same time, we do not wish to fall into the extreme opposite of the victimization of the subjects studied. Our intention was to treat the *travestis* and trans women in their potentialities, realities, inconsistencies, strengths, and weaknesses, in short, in a truthful way.

More than merely portraying the people presented here as examples of *travestis* and trans women in male prisons, we wish to associate the fight for their rights with the denouncement of the conditions they are subjected to in Brazilian prisons and in the labor market. Discriminated and without possibilities of sustenance, these people turn to prostitution and crime as alternatives for surviving/living. The vicious circle is established; new stigmas are produced, which prevent inclusion in the labor market and other forms of access. Administration, being close to the market and labor relations, needs to pay greater attention to diversity in general and to specific groups, such as *travestis* and trans women, and their inclusion and dignification in the labor market.

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Conflicts of interests

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Inclusive language

The authors use inclusive language that recognizes diversity, shows respect for all people, is sensitive to differences, and promotes equal opportunities.

Authors' contributions

First author: conceptualization (lead), data curation (equal), funding acquisition (equal), investigation (lead), methodology (lead), project administration (equal), resources (equal), supervision (lead), validation (equal), visualization (equal), writing – original draft (lead), writing – review and editing (lead).

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