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# Political Consciousness and Participation in the Defense of LGBTQ+ Rights at Work

Leôni Mongin Boasquevisque <sup>a</sup>

Marcia Prezotti Palassi<sup>a</sup>

Alfredo Rodrigues Leite da Silva<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo, Vitória, Brasil

## Abstract

This article aims to understand the psychopolitical aspects of the participation of call center workers, trade unionists, and leaderships within collectives in collective actions to defend LGBTQ+ rights at work. The research adopts the conceptual framework of political consciousness developed in the field of political psychology by Sandoval and Silva (2016). Data were produced qualitatively in two stages: interaction with research participants to present the topic and determine their willingness to address its most sensitive aspects; provision of different online questionnaires with qualitative focus for research participants: 14 call center workers, 2 trade unionists, and 6 LGBTQ+ leaderships within collectives. Content analysis of the statements showed heterogenous political consciousness among research participants, in differences involving their political engagement or lack thereof. By discussing these aspects, we filled the gap of works in the field of organizational studies, human resource management, and labor relations, which use theoretical contributions from the psychopolitical approach to address the (de)mobilization of different subjects in the defense of LGBTQ+ rights at work in these fields of knowledge. For the workers, trade unionists, leaderships within collectives and society, these theoretical contributions enabled observing that the coordination between unions and collectives tends to promote the raising of a critical political

consciousness, fostering joint actions in the fight for LGBTQ+ rights at work.

**Keywords:** political consciousness; participation; defense of LGBTQ+ rights; gender; labor; organizational studies.

## Introduction

There are studies that address relations involving the LGBTQ+ population at work, from a point of view of discrimination or inclusion policies, but these are still few (Köllen, 2016; Rumens, 2017; Paniza, 2020; De Castro, Da Silva & Siqueira, 2021). In addition, the existing studies are divided between those that address LGBTQ+ persons as a whole and those that address specific groups, situating others in the background, for example, by focusing on the experience of gay and cisgender men and making the reality of lesbian, trans and bisexual women invisible (Irigaray & Freitas, 2011; Paniza, 2020; De Castro, Da Silva & Siqueira, 2021).

Considering international publications, in greater numbers, several authors point out the reduced number of studies on the role of trade unions in the fight against this discrimination (Pulcher, Guerci & Köllen, 2019; Ferreira et al., 2018; Colgan & Mckearney, 2012; Boris, 2010). Within this scarcity, there are even fewer studies that consider a specific aspect of the matter: political consciousness in the participation of workers and unions in Brazil in collective actions to defend their rights as LGBTQ+ individuals.

This was evident in a literature review carried out in September 2022 in the Scientific Periodicals Electronic Library (Spell) and Scientific Electronic Library – (Scielo) repositories. These were chosen because they comprise the main journals, classified by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), in the area of Administration in Brazil, which includes the area of Organizational Studies. In these two repositories we used the term “political consciousness” in conjunction with the term “LGBTQ+” or with one of the terms “lesbian,” “gay,” “bisexual,” “travesti,” “transsexual,” “transgender,” and “queer”, in all search fields, and not a single article was found. Specifically in relation to union action — as pointed out by Pulcher, Guerci and Köllen (2019), Ferreira et al. (2018), Colgan and Mckearney (2012) and Boris (2010) —, there is a notable lack of in-depth works on this action linked to LGBTQ+ interests.

However, this discussion is necessary because it tends to contribute to changes in the practice of relations with diversity in society and to theoretical abstractions about paths to these changes. It broadens paths aimed at theoretical understanding on the subject, focusing on the practice of combating discrimination at work, through mobilization, at the institutional level, for public and private companies, collectives and unions, and at the level of individual political participation, of people. A purpose that is relevant to the development of any society.

In order to fill this gap, this article discusses the following research question: how is the configuration of the psychopolitical aspects of the participation of call center workers, trade unionists and leaderships within collectives in collective actions to defend LGBTQ+ rights at work? The objective is to understand the psychopolitical aspects of the participation of call center workers, trade unionists, and leaderships within collectives in collective actions to defend LGBTQ+ rights at work.

The sense of participation adopted here is not limited to taking part in something, but also having part or being part of something (Bordenave, 2013). The psychopolitical aspects of such participation are evident in the conceptual framework of political consciousness for understanding participation in collective actions developed by Sandoval (2001) and Sandoval and Silva (2016). The choice of framework is warranted by the capability it provides to understand the reasons that lead to individual and collective action, through the combination of different dimensions of identity construction linked to the political participation phenomenon, being an approach that enables addressing the complexity of the collective action phenomenon (Oliveira, Palassi & Paula, 2021; Hur, 2021).

In this approach, the individual's decision to act individually or collectively depends on their political consciousness in different contexts (Sandoval, 2001). In turn, participation consists in creating and enjoying conditions to influence decisions that affect the individual in a process in which two or more parties influence decision-making (Pateman, 1992). The conceptual framework enables understanding the dimensions of political consciousness that mobilize participation in situations of participatory engagement, and what demobilizes it, if there is absence or minimization of participation, which will be presented after the literature review. These dimensions are constructed socially, in the coexistence of subjects, in a process delimited by the ideological context in which people live (Rosa, 2015). This does not mean simply being passive in relation to the ideology prevailing in society; quite the contrary, it can serve as a reference for the resistance of a social group.

When dealing with the participation of LGBTQ+ persons, this acronym is adopted to refer to different expressions of sexual orientation and gender identity (Gonçalves, 2018): lesbians, gays, bisexuals, travestis, transsexuals and transgenders, the letter Q is associated with the word queer, a term used to cover various forms of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression that eschew the traditional heteronormative logic and the sign + represents other letters and variations. That is, this article focuses on participation related to the defense of human rights, irreducible and non-negotiable, involving the guarantee of the right to gender expression as part of people's identity (Leite, 2016). The purpose is to expand the voice of those who are not aligned with the hegemony and oppression of Brazilian society's heteronormativity (Caproni Neto & Saraiva, 2018) and are situated in a process of denial of rights and opportunities in Brazilian organizations (Souza & Pereira, 2013).

LGBTQ+ workers have their own identity and are responsible for it (Leite, 2016). In turn, as shown by Anderson-Nathe et al. (2018), LGBTQ+ collectives support people, which includes workers, in their definitions of genders diverging from the predominant heteronormativity so they are accepted in society. According to the authors, it is important to have coordination between organizations that defend LGBTQ+ rights and other organizations that have this matter in their agenda, and some coordination between these groups and the unions responsible for defending the rights of LGBTQ+ people was expected, as they represent them in labor relations. However, we found no studies showing evidence that these coordinations are being established — quite the contrary. There is evidence in Brazil indicating the unions' omission as to this agenda (Ferreira et al., 2018). This reinforces the importance of discussing this role of unions and proposing to them a new posture on LGBTQ+ demands. Perhaps, thus, it will be possible to establish criticisms and paths to

achieve advances already achieved in other countries such as the United Kingdom (Colgan & Mckearney, 2012) and Italy (Pulcher, Guerci & Köllen, 2019).

This article contributes to this purpose by bringing together call center workers, trade unionists, and leaderships within collectives to show that the coordinations between unions and LGBTQ+ collectives are non-existent in the context researched. The contributions of this article focus on organizational studies, human resource management, and labor relations, by expanding the understanding of (de)mobilization in collective actions to meet LGBTQ+ demands at work in the telemarketing and telecommunication sectors.

Based on what was empirically evidenced and on the theoretical-empirical contrasting, this article enables: workers participating in this research to question why they do not participate or do not mobilize in collective actions aimed at LGBTQ+ demands at work, despite recognizing the need for such; trade unionists to question why they do not effectively address these demands; and LGBTQ+ collectives to determine their role — omitted — in providing support to the two previous groups so as to make these questionings and approach these collectives in their actions.

To provide these contributions, the empirical data were treated through Content Analysis and produced qualitatively in a stage of interaction with key research participants, to present the theme and determine their willingness to address its most sensitive aspects, followed by another stage of application of online questionnaires. To order this analysis and its contributions, the present discussion is organized as follows: the next section describes the conceptual framework of political consciousness adopted and its applications in organizational studies; the next section deals with participation in the defense of LGBTQ+ rights at work; then we present the methodological aspects of the production and analysis of empirical data; subsequently, the results of empirical research are presented; and the article ends with its final considerations highlighting contributions to the expansion of mobilization against discrimination against LGBTQ+ people.

## **Conceptual framework of political consciousness**

Political consciousness is a psychosocial concept associated to the meanings attributed by individuals to the daily interactions and events of their lives (Sandoval, 1994). It refers to “a set of interrelated social psychological dimensions of meanings and information that enable individuals to make decisions about the best course of action in specific political contexts and situations,” which is constituted by identity aspects, cultural aspects and a set of beliefs internalized by the individual and by the politicized perception of the context in which they are situated (Sandoval, 2001, p. 185).

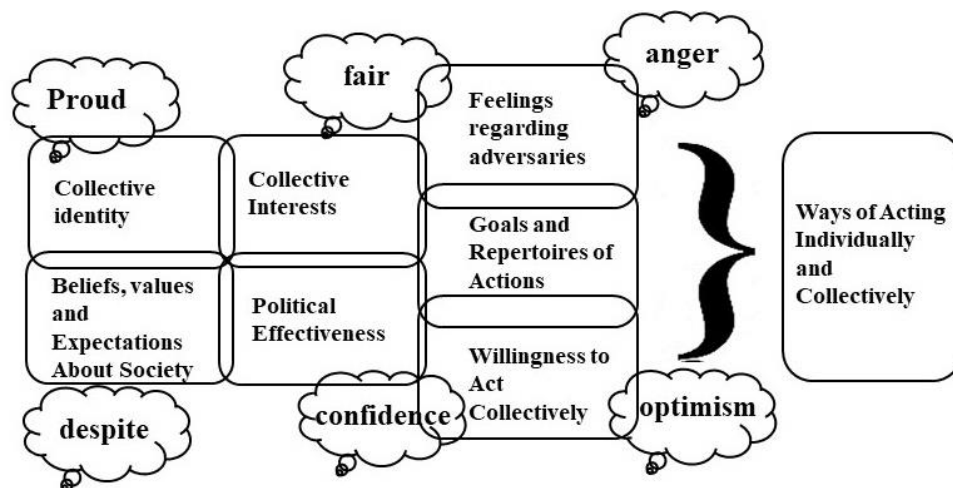
With regard to the sphere of consciousness, the psychosocial component of political consciousness is evident. However, the political dimension refers to a relation of consciousness as to the political praxis and its dimensions, which “are built through the social experiences of the subjects, with the ideological context of the time being its main circumscriber” (Rosa, 2015, p. 391). That is, political consciousness and praxis are related and lead to different configurations of the dimensions of political participation, in a process in which the parties influence decision-making (Pateman, 1992) and participation refers, at the same time, to “being part, taking part or having part” of something (Bordenave, 2013, p. 22).

In dealing with these dimensions, Sandoval (2001) provided a conceptual framework that dialogues with different approaches. It acknowledges the influence of the work on collective action by Gamson (1992) for the field of political psychology, by assuming predominantly a framework of political consciousness consisting of three dimensions: collective identity, feeling of injustice and political effectiveness. However, Gamson (1992) assigns greater relevance to political effectiveness. This emphasis on political effectiveness and the recognition of only three dimensions leads to a reductionist simplification in the understanding of collective action. By criticizing these limitations, Sandoval (2001) enabled the field to advance in the analysis of collective actions by proposing a conceptual framework of political consciousness that includes other dimensions considered influential on collective action, expanding the understanding of the complexity of the phenomenon (Hur, 2021).

It is a conceptual, non-linear framework that coordinates a set of seven psychosociological dimensions, enabling the identification of different configurations of political consciousness in a dialectical process of situations experienced in daily life (Sandoval & Silva, 2016). This conceptual framework of political consciousness dialogues with the critical-dialectical epistemology of Paulo Freire and the Latin American social psychology of Ignacio Martín-Baró, also relying on authors who contributed to the worldview of the individual in their social life, by approaching consciousness and consciousness-raising based on George Mead's pragmatism and the Chicago School's symbolic interactionism (Coriolano & Sandoval, 2021).

In addition to these influences, regarding the understanding of participation in collective actions, Sandoval's (2001) conceptual framework is inspired by Touraine's (1966) conception of worker consciousness and the three dimensions of this consciousness: identity, opposition and totality. To these dimensions, Sandoval (2001) added the predisposition for intervention, as it is associated with participation, aiming to achieve personal or class interests, proposing the following dimensions: a) goals and actions of the social movement; b) antagonistic and adversarial interests; c) collective identity; d) willingness to act collectively; e) political effectiveness; f) societal beliefs, values and expectations; g) feelings of justice and injustice.

However, the framework proposed by the author was reformulated in the study of Sandoval and Silva (2016), questioning the redundancy of the dimension of feelings of justice and injustice, considering that such feelings can appear in the other dimensions, proposing their removal from the framework. In addition, the authors added the dimension collective interests inherent to solidarity actions and common interests shared by the group and changed the title of the dimension "goals and actions of the social movement" to "goals and repertoires of actions" to expand its use. Finally, they incorporated emotions, as they play a key role in shaping political consciousness, since emotions mark the experiences and memory of individuals by leading to emotional feelings. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of political consciousness resulting from the authors' contributions, which was adopted in this study.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework of Political Consciousness.

Source: Sandoval and Silva (2016).

The emotions mentioned in Figure 1 are only illustrations, as the conceptual framework is not limited to them, and the other elements presented in the figure are the dimensions of the conceptual framework of political consciousness proposed by Sandoval and Silva (2016):

**Collective identity:** it is a process, the interaction and intercommunication between the network of relationships of social actors, who are grouped because they share common cognitions. Collective identity leads individuals to sympathize with some social category by pledging their loyalty (Sandoval & Silva, 2016). It arises from a psychological convergence of interests and feelings between people, generating the ideology of a social movement or group (Palassi, 2011). The feelings, common interests and bonds established between the individuals, through the sense of belonging to the group, arouse feelings of cohesion. As a result, the individuals organize collectively to achieve desired goals and changes (Palassi, Martins & Paula, 2016).

**Beliefs, values and expectations about society:** refers to the meaning that individuals attribute to the world around them and to the social organization. They orient their actions within a context produced in society. Individuals, in this context, build and transform the social world. Meanings are products of this lived experience (Palassi, Martins & Paes de Paula, 2016). According to Sandoval (2001), based on Heller (1972), spontaneity is the main characteristic of the assimilation of societal beliefs and values, which does not necessarily involve a reflection, it is simultaneous with the social and daily activities that produce them. This assimilation is carried out not rationally, but based on daily life and requires ruptures to generate reflections (Sandoval & Silva, 2016).

**Collective interests:** it deals with common interests (material and symbolic) shared by members of the group to which they belong (in-group), while the group opposes the interests of those outside the group or from other groups (out-group) (Palassi, 2011). Sandoval and Silva (2016) explain this dimension by using propositions by Dominic and Hogg (1998) when indicating requirements for collective participation: feeling of belonging to a group; identification of interests contrary to the group of belonging; and the identification of external groups (out-group), whose interests may be rejected and/or opposed.

Political effectiveness refers to an individual's feeling about their ability to intervene politically. Sandoval (2001) uses the Attribution Theory of Hewstone (1989), whose interpretation of the individual about causes of the events in which they are involved can be of three types: transcendent, caused by divine or natural historical forces out of the human capacity to intervene; resulting from the person themselves, when the individual attributes to themselves and their capacities, social conflicts and their solutions; and resulting from the action of certain social groups or actors, believing that group or individual actions generate social anguish (Sandoval & Silva, 2016).

Feelings regarding adversaries: refer to the rupture (or not) of reciprocity between contribution and effectuation of justice, between obligations and rewards (Sandoval, 2001). The maintenance of social norms and contracts (implicit or explicit) generates the feeling of social justice and its inverse generates the feeling of injustice (Moore, 1978). Sandoval and Silva (2016) explain that in these situations, the attribution of emotional feelings to a fact, person or group compulsorily generates the attribution of the opposite emotional feeling to the social actor who lives this dynamics.

Willingness to act collectively: refers to the predisposition to participate in collective actions and intervene in the milieus occupied (Sandoval, 2001). The author is based on Klandermans (1984) who propose three aspects conditioning collective participation: cost/benefit ratio inherent to the positive and negative stimuli that the person receives from their group when participating; material costs and losses resulting from participation; and perceived risks in participation and engagement in collective actions (Sandoval & Silva, 2016).

Goals and repertoires of actions (Sandoval & Silva, 2016): refer to the participants' perception about the coherence between the objectives of the movement, its strategies of action, feelings of injustice, political effectiveness and interests. This dimension exhibits the individual's willingness to participate in groups or movements.

The authors show that the set of these dimensions constitute a strength of the conceptual framework, which is to enable the proposition of a path to understand culture as a fundamental element of daily life, dissociating from symbolic interactionism close to functionalism, adopting a critical and social pragmatic perspective in which, in addition to theoretical concerns, there is a need to contribute to the organization of social movements, communities, collectives, etc. and to meet people's demands.

The proposal disregarded individualistic practices aimed at adapting people to social demands, prevalent in Latin American social psychology until the 1970s (Sandoval, 2001). The model based criticism on scientific neutrality, as well as the defense of the need to situate people in socio-historical contexts and provided a means for the social psychology of and in Latin America to contribute to the development of communities, seeking to foster social changes and meet the demands of the population.

However, as it was applied in social psychology, the original framework of Sandoval (2001) was criticized for how it treats the view of rational subjects, that is, the rationality of subjects through the dimensions of political consciousness to decide whether to opt for individual or collective actions in a given context (Costa, 2014). According to Costa (2014), rationality as the basis for the politicization of social relations and consciousness, on the one hand, contributes to establishing a path of political struggle in a historical consciousness, in the capacity of self-

consciousness to understand our condition as oppressed in social relations, developing gradual levels of consciousness and creating a positive identity of the subjects in a social category or group. Yet, on the other hand, rationality controls the contingency of the constitution of political subjects, by relating to consciousness, intentionality and reflexivity.

Based on this understanding, the author criticizes studies on political consciousness and argues that researchers change their perspectives on the constitution of political subjects, proposing that it occurs through identification processes and not through politicization, through a positive identity, emphasizing that the subject is from the beginning divided, with a character at the same time differential (increases the complexity of the political space by identifying distinct positions) and equivalential (simplifies the political space by considering different positions as equivalents) in a discursive chain. In order to establish this proposition, Costa (2014) is founded on the Theory of Plural and Radical Democracy of Laclau and Mouffe (1985), aiming to favor the perception of antagonism.

The introduction of emotions in the analysis of political consciousness carried out by Sandoval and Silva (2016), in the original model of Sandoval (2001), had the purpose of responding to this criticism, but it is a gap still partially open, as emotions are only part of what goes beyond rationality, constituting a weakness of the framework. Another aspect that deserves attention is the complexity of the joint use of all its dimensions, involving an immense amount of information, which has led to the production of publications on specific dimensions of the framework, isolatedly, failing to discuss political consciousness, so as to deal only with one of its dimensions.

Despite recognizing these limitations, we assumed the preference for applying the framework as a whole and with the inclusion of emotions, as this is the concept of political consciousness enabling an approach to the production of consciousness of LGBTQ+ workers, focusing on the understanding of psychopolitical aspects of participation in collectives, unions, among other mobilizations addressed here. Based on this understanding, we leverage a strength of the model, focusing both on theorizations about the phenomena investigated, as well as on the production of changes in the practices related to them, by providing elements for the consciousness and reflection of practitioners on collective decision-making processes.

In organizational studies, these dimensions were also adopted as a whole because they constitute the concept of political consciousness, contributing to expand knowledge about different phenomena involving organizations (Oliveira, Palassy & Paula, 2021). The focus on political consciousness and participation enabled us to explore the manifestation of these aspects by relating the aforementioned dimensions with characteristics that mark the differences between organizational contexts. By using this conceptual framework, studies have shown that differences in organizational contexts lead to distinctions in terms of political consciousness and participation.

In Brazilian organizational studies, these distinctions were evidenced in the political consciousness and participation of workers of a sanitation company in collective actions against privatization (Oliveira, Palassy & Paula, 2021), in privatization processes (Palassi, 2011), of representatives of civil society in the municipal council (Dau, Palassi & Silva, 2019) and in the participatory budget council (Souza, Palassi & Silva, 2015), in civil defense centers in the management of natural disasters (Lugon & Palassi, 2012), of students of the business administration program of a university in coordinations with the organization of society (Palassi, Martins & Paula,



2016) and with the Junior Enterprise movement (Palassi, Martinelli & Paula, 2020), among infinite options. In the areas of Labor Economics and Social Psychology, the book *Consciência Social e Relações de Trabalho* [Social Consciousness and Labor Relations] (Alves, 2014), which uses the conceptual framework of political consciousness, reveals the dilemmas faced by workers throughout the Brazilian industrialization process, showing contradictions and advances in the relation between capital, labor, and consciousness.

But only revealing these distinctions and their relationships with different organizational contexts represents less relevance in terms of theoretical impacts for organizational and practical studies for the people, institutions and society involved. By adopting the conceptual framework of political consciousness, the authors have provided relevant theoretical and practical contributions, taking advantage of its potential to address the reasons for individual and collective action or omission, in a political participation related to an identity production that permeates an organization and goes beyond it.

When these studies use the conceptual framework of political consciousness, they leverage its potential to theorize about this phenomenon based on specific aspects of the organizational contexts investigated and discuss paths for changes in practices involving (non-) participation in these contexts. The final purpose is to contribute to the mobilization through political participation, but this requires broadening the understanding of this phenomenon in different organizational contexts, in its interrelations with social demands, by theorists and practitioners. Among these demands, we have the defense of LGBTQ+ rights, addressed here.

Previous organizational studies ignored this demand in researching political consciousness and political participation involving organizations. This gap indicates that they left aside an extremely relevant subject in contemporary times: participation in the defense of LGBTQ+ rights at work. This study recognizes the relevance and absence of this discussion and articulates the dimensions of the conceptual framework of political consciousness to address this matter.

## **Participation in the defense of LGBTQ+ rights at work**

The rights of LGBTQ+ persons are built and legitimized based on a particularity of individuals and social groups, marked by specific characteristics of sexual expression and gender performance, classified under the definition of human, sexual and reproductive rights within the context of the identity of this population (Leite, 2016). Although the debate on the subject in Brazil has been deficient for many years, it gained strength mainly from 2010, for example: same-sex marriage was guaranteed in 2013 (Guerra, 2013); the use of the social name by Travestis and Transsexuals in 2015 and the facilitated change of the name in the civil registry was achieved in 2018 (Brazilian Supreme Court – STF); and in 2019 the STF decided for the criminalization of LGBTphobia, equating this crime to racism (Stf, 2019). These achievements contribute, in part, toward LGBTQ+ people approaching the conditions offered to heterosexual couples at work: inclusion of the spouse in the business health plan; granting of death pension or maternity/paternity leave; guarantee of being addressed by the social name they identify with; and legal support to appeal in situations of prejudice, which occur in the daily labor routine (Souza & Pereira, 2013).

In contrast to these recent achievements, Brazilian organizations are still structured according to the logic of the hegemonic and dominant masculinity, whose social relations are

governed by an expression of dominant male behaviors, oppressing those that do not fit this standard (Caproni Neto & Saraiva, 2018). Persons who are not heterosexual and cisgender, whose gender identity and/or sexuality differ from a heteronormative-sexist logic, suffer prejudice at work, have less or no job opportunities, lower wages or lower-paid occupations, in addition to a reduced number of indications for professional training or professional development (Souza & Pereira, 2013). Effects of such prejudice affect gays, lesbians and bisexuals differently, as their gender performance consists with or differs from what is expected of their birth sex (Caproni Neto & Bicalho, 2012; Irigaray & Freitas, 2011), being more severe with travestis, transsexuals and transgender persons who are constantly led to informal jobs or to prostitution (Caproni Neto & Saraiva, 2014).

The Brazilian context proves unfavorable for this community, similarly to what occurs in other countries. Canada has recognized same-sex marriages since 2003, legalizing them since 2005. However, according to Waite and Denier (2015), this country pays lower wages for homosexual men and women, compared to heterosexuals. In addition, according to the authors, prejudice leads gay men to be a minority in traditionally masculine activities, such as construction and industry.

In the United States, the studies of Baker and Lucas (2017) show mechanisms in labor relations that threaten the dignity of LGBTQ+ workers, such as disrespectful or unpleasant communication, invasion of privacy and exposure of sexuality, as a means of coercing workers, and may be combined with threats to their career. Moreover, the country lacks legislation that objectively protects trans persons from discrimination in the workplace, even though there is a very high percentage of these individuals suffering abuse in the workplace, sometimes justified by religious beliefs and views (Cobb & Mckenzie-Harris, 2019).

Both in the United States and in Brazil, unions are responsible for dealing with these issues and defending the collective interests of LGBTQ+ workers. However, in the education sector in Brazil, for example, Ferreira et al. (2018) show that most unions of this category do not even mention the subjects of sexual diversity, even with the National Confederation of Education Workers (CNTE) indicating that there are several departments in Brazil linked to it that deal with diversity and gender.

Examples of union actions favorable to the LGBTQ+ population in Brazil are few and specific, such as: the work of the São Paulo Bank Workers Union to ensure that the extension of benefits to the spouses of workers are equally enjoyed by homosexual partners in 2009 (SPBANCÁRIOS, 2012); the creation of national reference groups in the Federation of Unions of Technical-Administrative Workers in Public Higher Education Institutions in Brazil (Fasubra, 2018); participation in the LGBTQ+ parade by part of the Telemarketing Workers Union (Sinratel, 2017); or the development of information material on LGBTQ+ rights at work to support workers, organizations and unions in the implementation and claim of LGBTQ+ workers' rights and advisory so victims of discrimination can defend themselves (Silva, 2019).

In the international context, the union representation of LGBTQ+ workers varies according to political and cultural issues. In the United Kingdom, research shows that groups have organized LGBTQ+ structures in unions since the late 1980s and, since the 1990s, networks of LGBTQ+ employees within organizations began to work in partnership with unions, with strong practice of including these individuals (Colgan; Mckearney, 2012). In Italy, unions join LGBTQ+ associations,

creating mechanisms to punish discriminatory behavior, with agreements linked to labor-intensive sectors, where workers with low contractual power are more easily replaceable, such as in the metal-mechanical sector, large-scale retail and call center (Pulcher, Guerci & Köllen, 2019).

This international context is covered in a greater number of studies, compared to the Brazilian context; however, still, this scientific production on the role of unions in combating LGBTphobia is considered scarce by different authors (Pulcher, Guerci & Köllen, 2019; Ferreira et al., 2018; Colgan & Mckearney, 2012; Boris, 2010).

While union work is little studied, there are also few studies addressing the relation between unions and LGBTQ+ collectives. Commonly, studies approach these subjects separately and, as for the latter topic, they recognize that LGBTQ+ workers can rely on the support of social movements that streamline political relations, promoting transformation-oriented group action guided by common values, seeking to end the marginalization of social groups (Jesus, 2012).

It is recognized that collectives associated with the LGBTQ+ social movement have historically organized high-visibility actions, seeking the naturalization of these persons in everyday relations (Machado & Prado, 2005; Anderson-Nathe et al., 2018). The Gay Pride Parades held in several countries constitute an example of that (Silva, 2008). Silva (2008) uses the conceptual framework of political consciousness to analyze the parades held in Brazil, Spain and Portugal. The following are other examples of such actions: provision of psychological care, medical care, and legal support services; organization of events; professional training courses and leisure activities (Machado & Prado, 2005; Daniliauskas, 2016); development of proposals for laws and public policies aimed at equal rights for LGBTQ+ persons or activities for discussing the subject in workplace or union settings (Machado & Prado, 2005).

Social movements act in a context in which homophobia and violence, for example, constitute elements that subjectively bring meaning to each individual in their experiences, making them choose ways to react, collectively or individually (Ortolano, 2013). In this struggle, Ortolano (2013, p. 5) points to some antagonistic agents, “[...] religious fundamentalists, such as Silas Malafaia; political authorities, such as Jair Bolsonaro; schools, when they represent spaces of homophobic violence, bullying, etc.” From these struggles of subjects with antagonists, involving external pressures to which they are subjected, and from internal struggles of individuals with themselves, political consciousness arises and is (re)constructed (Ortolano, 2013). Despite differences in the struggle and experience of each category of individuals integrated into the LGBTQ+ acronym, people share adversaries, feelings of (in)justice, desire for visibility and achievement of common rights. They are united by a painful collective memory and the present study proposes that the production of this memory has implications for the creation and strengthening of a collective LGBTQ+ identity and political consciousness.

To trace evidence of this process, this study focuses on direct or indirect participation in social and union movements as forms of expression, collective action and struggle for the effectuation of rights of certain groups, whose participation supposes the action of social actors who produce their identities (Anderson-Nathe et al., 2018), and do so based on their own values, interests and aspirations (Teixeira, 1997). Participation is considered here to be organized through institutionalized or non-institutionalized participation mechanisms (Palassi, Martins & Paula, 2016). In this conception, the actions of unions can be considered institutionalized participatory

mechanisms, since their existence is provided for in legislation and is a means by which companies and the public administration can relate to workers. On the other hand, LGBTQ+ collectives would be non-institutionalized mechanisms of participation, as they resemble social movements, whose formatting does not necessarily follow formal standards.

To understand this dynamics of participation of LGBTQ+ workers, involving both collectives and unions, the production of data was based on a methodology that sought to respect the fears of LGBTQ+ people participating in the research — fears that are part of the research, as presented below.

## Methodological aspects

In an exploratory-descriptive manner (Sá-Silva, Almeida & Guidani, 2009) this study was based on qualitative methods (Creswell, 2007). The research approached subjects participating in two private call center service companies located in the metropolitan area of Espírito Santo – Brazil (Companies A and B), the Telecommunication Workers Union of Espírito Santo – SINTTEL-ES, and the members of collectives Gold (Grupo Orgulho, Liberdade e Dignidade), DRC (Diversidade, Resiliência e Cultura), LIVRES (Liberdade, Vida e Respeito – Espírito Santo), and the Espírito Santo LGBT Forum of the cities of Vila Velha and Serra.

All research subjects were chosen through indications that fall within the Snowball technique, that is, through indications of key informants (or seeds), a technique suitable for penetrating a hidden population (Heckathorn, 1997; Vinuto, 2014). By understanding that the subjects not only inform, but have the ability to interfere and actively participate in the research by producing data with the researcher, we will use the expression “key participants” to refer to these individuals. It is understood that the LGBTQ+ population is characterized as hidden because sexual diversity and gender expression are personal characteristics, not always revealed in public relations and workplaces, and can be associated with social stigmas.

Table 1 presents a summary of the objectives and actions of the collectives addressed, through information obtained from consultations on the websites of the collectives and contacts with members, evidencing the coherence in choosing the collectives to deal with the topic in question, as they stand out in the defense of LGBTQ+ rights. The criterion for selecting the subjects in these organizations was adherence to the research, after inviting the key participants.

Table 1  
**Objectives and actions of the action Collectives**

Organizations	Objectives	Actions
Fórum LGBT ES	Combat deprivation of rights and foster LGBT citizenship, promoting a space for permanent dialogue between governmental and non-governmental entities of the state of Espírito Santo.	Partnership with state departments to foster LGBT citizenship. Public protests against LGBTphobia. Conducting and publicizing public events related to LGBT culture. Participation in LGBT parades and human rights conferences to promote public policies.
Fórum LGBTI da Serra	Defend the rights and citizenship of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transvesti, transsexual and intersex people from Serra/ES.	Partnership with municipal departments to foster LGBTI citizenship. Participation in human rights conferences to promote public policies. Open events such as the Praça da Diversidade [Diversity Square] and the LGBTI Cinema Club.
GOLD	Promote and defend Human Rights, contributing to a democracy without discrimination, providing information on health and citizenship to the most vulnerable populations.	HIV testing and counseling for the general population. Disclosure of information related to the Humanized Support Service for Victims of Human Rights Violations. Organization of donations for LGBT people in deprivation of liberty. Delivery of basic food baskets for socially vulnerable population.
DRC	Give evidence to the LGBTQ+ diversity of Guarapari.	Collection of clothes and basic food baskets for vulnerable population. Hold the Diversity Sarau and the Cine diversity film festival with local LGBT artists. Conduct public demonstrations on LGBT rights.
LIVRES	Promote consciousness and education about the LGBT agenda and fight for the rights of this community in the state of Espírito Santo	Deliveries of food baskets to vulnerable LGBT people. Participation in LGBT parades and human rights conferences to promote public policies. Dissemination of strategic information on social media (how to combat prejudice and how to regularize documentation of trans people, for example).

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The invitation was extended to all members who exercised leadership functions within the collectives, that is, people who took the lead in organizing projects or who were responsible for decision-making within the collectives DRC, Gold, Livres, LGBT Forum of Espírito Santo, of the municipalities of Vila Velha and Serra, but only six people participated in the survey.

Regarding the Sinttel-ES union, we initially attempted to contact a representative of affirmative policies or actions on behalf of the LGBTQ+ community; however, the Sinttel-ES Board informed us that there is no such representation within the union or any openly LGBTQ+ member as far as they know. Therefore, 8 members of the Board and the professional responsible for the union's website were invited to answer the survey, but only two subjects participated.

The choice to approach workers in the call center sector and of Companies A and B was due to accessibility, as one of the authors of the article worked in the sector and had contacts that enabled access to people in the sector in these companies. In addition, the relevance of this choice is evidenced by Souza Neto, Ramos and Dias (2018), when they indicate that the work carried out in the call center sector is characterized by the specificity of intense electronic surveillance, provided by the fact that it is carried out using means that facilitate this surveillance. The possibility of

intensifying electronic surveillance is part of the technological advance in society as a whole, which includes organizations, but in call center service it has already been consolidated in recent decades. However, as the authors revealed, it is permeated by people resisting such surveillance and managerial reactions. These reactions, together with LGBTQ+ people, have the potential to characterize the psychopolitical aspects of the workers' participation in mobilizations, investigated here. A list was compiled with a total of 50 people contacted individually, but only 14 agreed to participate in the research: 10 from company A and 4 from company B.

Therefore, 22 subjects participated in the survey: fourteen workers, ten from company A and four from company B; two trade unionists; and six people in leadership functions in LGBTQ+ collectives. The profile of these respondents and some characteristics of the organizations in which they work are presented throughout the analysis of the data, to facilitate the articulation of the argumentation. Throughout the analysis, the respondents were identified by means of a code, to allow the confidentiality of those who provided the information, this code is composed of a letter referring to the organization (A for company A, B for company B, S for the union, C for the collectives), another letter referring to the way the respondent presents himself within the LGBTQ+ community (H man-cisgender, M woman-cisgender, N non-binary), and a number assigned according to the arrival of their answers, as follows: AH1, AH2, BH1, BH2, BN1, BN2...

Data production in conjunction with these subjects was performed in two stages. In the first stage, we had an initial interaction with the key participants of the research to present the theme and determine their willingness to approach its most sensitive aspects, when they requested the use of a questionnaire, which guaranteed anonymity and that they could complete online. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all interactions were virtual, through online messaging applications and social networks, as the participants were unable to participate in person in the survey. Initially, we believed that the ideal was that the first interaction was face-to-face, to ensure closer contact with the subjects, as the coldness of the on-line relationship could impair the production of data. There is no way to know how much this may have influenced the subjects' decision to conduct the next stage through the use of an anonymous online questionnaire, but their decision limited the possibility of researchers interacting directly with them during data collection in the second stage. The fact is that in the first stage it was evident a certain fear of them to expose themselves openly on the subject in question, which, in itself, was a fact to be analyzed.

Thus, in the second stage of the survey, different anonymous and online questionnaires with a qualitative approach (Cimas, 2009) were made available to all research participants, focusing on the most sensitive aspects of the topic addressed. It should be noted that, at the time of the survey, there was a certain commotion among company A workers due to the dismissal of an employee who had been actively cooperating with the union. This may explain, in part, the respondents' choice for a data production method that ensures enhanced anonymity and no personal contact. Another factor that may have led to this choice is that the survey was carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic, reinforcing the consistency in choosing a method without personal contact.

The field survey was carried out between May and June 2020. Due to the demands of those research participants who participated in the first stage of data production, in the second stage the three interview roadmaps developed still in the planning stage of the field research — one for the workers, another for collectives' workers, and another for union representatives — were transformed into three questionnaires sent to participants. Each of the three questionnaires was

used by one of the three groups of research participants for which it was adjusted: union members; leaderships within collectives; and company workers. To make the questionnaires available, we used Google's online platform – Google Forms and the WhatsApp application, as desired by the participants.

The questions in the questionnaires were prepared based on the seven dimensions of the conceptual framework of political consciousness (Sandoval & Silva, 2016). The answers were submitted to content analysis (Bardin, 1979), in which the seven dimensions of political consciousness were used as macro categories of analysis, for the organization and synthesis of the themes through recurrent reading of the text. During the reading, within these seven macro categories composed of the seven dimensions, themes related to the proposed objective were grouped, which enabled the identification of additional categories of analysis, subdividing each of the seven dimensions. Each of these categories is presented in Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5. As observed in the figures, by using them the interpreted data were grouped, synthesizing the central ideas and producing, as inferences, the titles and characteristics of the configurations of political consciousness. Each figure was produced through the analysis of the manifestations of the group of respondents identified in the title of the figure.

Based on this analysis, we identified the configurations of political consciousness of the research participants. These configurations are a symbolic representation to facilitate the understanding of the (de)mobilization of research subjects in the defense of LGBTQ+ interests at work, as will be discussed below.

## **Heterogeneity in the political consciousness of workers, unionists and leaderships within collectives**

To contextualize the analysis, initially we will characterize the research participants and the loci in which they are situated. Company A operates mainly in the Southeastern and Northeastern regions of Brazil. It is an outsourced provider of call center and telemarketing service. Only one participant has lower educational level than complete or ongoing higher education. In addition, half of the group is aged between 18 and 24 years and the other half is aged between 25 and 39 years, suggesting that most of them are at the beginning of their professional life. Mostly, they declared having a left-wing political position and considered their activity in the company as temporary, as they do not see themselves in it in the future.

Company B is a call center business with headquarters in the states of Espírito Santo, Goiás, Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo. The headquarters in ES operates exclusively with services of sale and representation of telephony, pay television and internet of a large operator in Brazil. Of the participants in this company, two declared to be cisgender male, one identifying as bisexual (BH1), one homosexual (BH2), two people claimed to be non-binary, one identifying as gay (BN1), and another as pansexual (BN2). Only BH1 is in the age group of 25–39 years, the others are aged 18–24 years.

The union has been active since the 1970s in the state representing active and inactive workers of telecommunications, call centers, telemarketing, radio calls companies, and others. The participants are: a person who claimed to be a heterosexual male over 60 years of age, holding a

undergraduate degree (SH1); and another person who identified as a heterosexual female aged between 40 and 59 years, holding a post-graduate degree (SM1).

Of the group of participants composed of people who exercise leadership functions within collectives, one person claimed to be non-binary and pansexual and five identified as cisgender homosexual men. The age group of all is between 18 and 24 years of age, education is complete or ongoing Higher Education, and all declare as having a left-wing political position.

Although these demographic data show a certain homogeneity among the participants, in the dimensions of the conceptual framework of political consciousness (Sandoval & Silva, 2016) they present varied divergences, in addition to convergences. They enabled identifying six configurations of political consciousness synthesized as follows: in the groups of workers, we identified four configurations synthesized as **passive temporary worker**, **satisfied temporary workers**, **pessimistic faithful worker**, and **company defender**; in the group of Sinttel-ES unionists, we identified a configuration characterized as **traditional institutionalist militants**; in the group of leaderships within collectives, we identified a configuration characterized as **LGBTQ+ collectivist militant**. Building these syntheses — addressed in the next topic — was enabled by the analysis of each of dimension of the framework, presented below, considering the differences between the groups.

Among the groups of workers, the analysis of the dimension **collective identity** in relation to the LGBTQ+ community showed three configurations of identity: a) a sense of belonging to the LGBTQ+ community in a cohesion associated only to the expression of their sexuality, revealing the category “Unjustified belonging”; b) a sense of belonging to the LGBTQ+ community in a cohesion associated with the sharing of feelings and recognition, revealing the category “Cohesion of feelings”; and c) a sense of belonging to the LGBTQ+ community in a cohesion weakened by the existence of other nuances, such as race and the lack of acceptance by a certain category, for example, bisexuality and asymmetry to gender standards, revealing the category “Divided interests.”

The first configuration was evidenced through a group of workers who relate their belonging to the LGBTQ+ community exclusively to the way they exercise and express sexuality, as if it were something given from its expression in society. The second configuration involves a group of workers for whom cohesion arises from being recognized as part of a group that shares feelings about LGBTQ+, as illustrated by AM2 in one of their statements: *“I am accepted and recognized within the LGBTQ+ movements”*. (AM2, 2020) The third configuration was evidenced in a group of workers that highlights multiple inclusions in minorities as a factor that weakens the cohesion of belonging to a single and united LGBTQ+ community, as illustrated by the statement of AH1 (2020): *“I do not believe much in an LGBTQIA unity, I believe that there are fractions of it. In my case, being black comes before being gay, so there are several issues in this locus that I occupy that are not included in the LGBTQIA community.”*

These social constructions distinguish the workers from the leaderships and unionists. The leaderships within collectives, regarding the dimension **collective identity** in relation to the LGBTQ+ community, showed only one configuration: a sense of belonging to the LGBTQ+ community in a cohesion produced when one is part of a community by sharing pains, ideals, convictions and cultural expressions, participating in the fight against prejudice, and fighting to obtain rights. According to them, the participants' feeling of belonging is reinforced by the sharing of ideals and



convictions, such as: ethics; respect for human rights and democracy; equality; and solidarity grouped in the category "Feeling of community." Here, identity productions (Anderson-Nathe et al., 2018) occur in a process to which these aspects converge (Teixeira, 1997), in which collective action does not exist in the void; it is articulated in these ideals and convictions in the collectives.

However, as among the workers, disagreements were found among the people in leadership position about whether or not to highlight the lack of racial, class and gender segmentations, making it difficult for marginalized groups to be visible within the very collectives. However, according to the interpretation of the data grouped in the category "Struggle and conquest of rights," the leaderships within collectives think these differences are not enough to weaken the cohesion of the LGBTQ+ community, they disagree about whether or not it is necessary to emphasize such aspects, without indicating a rupture due to them, as occurred in one of the groups of workers. These differences are part of the relations involving participation in collective actions, not being something surprising or novel in the studies (Sandoval, 2001). What is surprising is that, when some leaderships don't deny the importance of these differences — perceived by a portion of the workers —, they do not realize the loss of the potential for articulation of these people in their collectives.

Finally, among the unionists, the analysis of the dimension **collective identity** in relation to the LGBTQ+ community showed no configuration. The **collective identity** of this group was not shown to be related to the LGBTQ+ community, but to the community of workers, within the following configuration: a sense of belonging to the community of workers in a cohesion associated with the common struggle for the preservation and expansion of labor rights and guarantees, in representing workers in relation to their employers and defending their more general rights, within the category "Traditional representatives." Asked about the sharing of ideals and convictions with LGBTQ+ workers, the unionists highlighted the distance from this community, as shown in the SM1 (2020) statements "*In the Executive Board [...] everyone is peaceful, with democratic positions, without radical and homophobic people [...] who participate in the activities with the Liberated Board have never witnessed acts of racism or homophobia*" and by SH1 (2020) statements "*No. Because we have no one of this segment on the Board, we cannot clearly identify these ideas and convictions*".

There is evident lack of engagement of the union with the LGBTQ+ community, which is convergent with the findings of Ferreira et al. (2018) who identified this same phenomenon in the National Confederation of Education Workers. Although there are no manifestations in favor of discrimination against LGBTQ+ people, there were also no initiatives of struggle aimed at specific demands of this community, showing a void in union practices on these demands. Therefore, in the **collective identity** dimension, the political consciousness of LGBTQ+ did not present itself in practice in unions with a favorable condition for an identity production focused on LGBTQ+ diversity at work (Boris, 2010).

Obviously, when it comes to labor rights and worker representation, the union would have an advantageous position to support LGBTQ+, but this potential is wasted by a distancing between the **collective identity** produced in the union and that of LGBTQ+ workers. On the other hand, the daily struggles of workers within companies, involved in their different configurations of **collective identity**, are convergent with the **collective identity** of the leaderships within collectives; only part of the latter does not assign due importance to identity aspects of minorities coexisting with those of the LGBTQ+ community, which directly affects one of the groups of workers. In summary, it is worth questioning the potential wasted by unions in their distancing from LGBTQ+ people and by

some leaderships within collectives, through their insensitivity to the other faces of the pain and discrimination in which the LGBTQ+ community is also situated.

This heterogeneity between workers, leaderships within collectives and unionists that marks the **collective identity** is something present in other dimensions. It is repeated in the next dimension of the framework, **the beliefs, values and expectations about society** (Sandoval & Silva, 2016). Based on this dimension, it was possible to reveal that all respondents demonstrated the expectation of a society that condemns and does not accept LGBTQ+ people based on religious discourse, a false belief that being LGBTQ+ is harmful to health or with the justification that this is a result of the upbringing. The interpretation in this sense was grouped in the category "Fear of conservatism." as illustrated by the statement of CN1 (2020) *"[...] Brazilian society still has a retrograde aspect of its colonial past, which persecutes 'non-standard' sexualities, expressions and identities"*. In addition, for the workers of companies A and B, there is mostly a positive expectation in relation to the companies in which they work, showing acceptance and openness to publicly communicate their LGBTQ+ identity; however, a part of them also note that this opening did not eliminate the existence of jokes and prejudiced comments by representatives or employees of the company, a prejudice that is manifested in the daily work, as pointed out by Souza and Pereira (2013). Here, the interpretation of the data was grouped into the category "Ambiguous hybridity," which can be illustrated by comparing the answers of BN2 (2020), who emphasizes *"I feel that the company is open for me to come out as LGBTQ+"* while BH1 (2020) points out that *"The company and its representatives use or endorse LGBTphobic jokes or comments, even if indirectly."*

Therefore, the respondents indicate that companies A and B differ from the understanding of Caproni Neto and Saraiva (2018), that Brazilian organizations oppress those who do not fit the male hegemonic model. At the same time, we observed hybridity between a movement of acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community and another movement of maintenance of prejudice toward this community. This was something different from what was observed by Caproni Neto and Saraiva (2018), but with part of the aspects pointed out by them still constituting heteronormative oppression.

For example, the authors criticize the difficulty LGBTQ+ persons have to get jobs beyond informality and prostitution. This was evident in the investigation when workers noted the difficulty in accessing employment, illustrated by BN2 (2020) when stating that *"Travestis, for example, have almost no access to good working conditions"*.

However, while the workers reported this ambiguous hybridity between oppression and openness to LGBTQ+ people, only elements of the heteronormative oppression imposed by the organizations — pointed out by the authors — were reported by the leaderships in collectives and by the trade unionists, with consensus on the deficiency in meeting basic LGBTQ+ interests, as addressed in the next dimension of the conceptual framework, **collective interests** (Sandoval & Silva, 2016).

Among the **collective interests** shared by LGBTQ+ workers, but which are partially or entirely denied at work, respondents indicated: being able to include their spouse in health insurance plans, life insurance, company parties, among other opportunities offered by companies; being able to talk openly about their sexuality and family; and being able to be against prejudiced people. It is worth noting the empathy as to demands related to trans and non-binary people, a minority in the group

of workers, but highly represented in their responses by indicating: being able to use the social name and being able to access the restroom consistent with their gender. The interests were grouped into the category “Empathetic Interests.” Thus, the workers' statements are convergent with several studies that pointed out these aspects (Souza & Pereira, 2013; Caproni Neto & Bicalho, 2012; Neto & Saraiva, 2014; Menezes et al., 2018), as observed in the statement of AM2 (2020) *“The trans population has great difficulties in accessing and entering the labor market, requiring many advances in this aspect.”*

This detail shows relations in which there is convergence of **collective interests** and, simultaneously, absence of such convergence. On the one hand, there is a convergence of “Empathetic Interests” between workers and leaderships within collectives. On the other hand, unionists differ from the other two groups in detailing the demands that would not have been met, as the interpretation of the unionists' responses was grouped only in the category of “Labor Interests,” which suggested that the demands of any worker would be the same, regardless of whether or not they were from the LGBTQ+ community, such as: salary increase, stability of rights already achieved, ergonomics, etc. Only two interests consistent with the other respondents, grouped as “Empathetic Interests,” were presented by the unionists: use of the social name and guarantees related to same-gender relationships equal to heterosexual ones. SM1 illustrates this position by highlighting that the union's focus on the fight for LGBTQ+ rights *“[...] Variable payment programs, rights and guarantees for partners in stable relationships, use of the social name [...]”* (SM1, 2020).

The union's lack of emphasis on more specific LGBTQ+ agendas indicates a limited work as to the interests of these people, as found in research on the subject (Ferreira et al., 2018). However, despite the aforementioned findings, in this study, unionists argue that they are effectively aligned with the **collective interests** of LGBTQ+ workers and deny this limited work. Nevertheless, most workers confirm a certain distance between LGBTQ+ interests and the work of unions, including when they present, in most of their statements, interests different from those expressed by the unionists.

This heterogeneity between the groups when analyzing **collective interests** provides an opportunity for reflection on the union's lack of self-criticism regarding its position in relation to the interests of the LGBTQ+ community. The divergence in relation to these interests seems to be ignored by the unionists and, therefore, constitutes something conducive to being reproduced. One way to overcome this lack of self-criticism and prevent this reproduction involves discussing the next dimension, **political effectiveness** (Sandoval & Silva, 2016), from a perspective that recognizes the role of social actors as political agents effective in attacking the LGBTQ+ community. It is about the identification of common enemies, who attack both unionists and the LGBTQ+ community, but with attacks on different bases, according to the attackers' reading of the victims, unionists, workers or LGBTQ+ individuals. It is these differences in attacks that lead unionists to realize the differences between the interests of other workers and the interests of LGBTQ+ workers, adjusting their agendas so they can deal together with common enemies.

The notion of a common enemy presented here is based on the observation that the differences between the groups of subjects were not repeated in the analysis of the dimension **political effectiveness**. This analysis shows that workers, leaderships within collectives and unionists, in general, do not attribute the origin of social distress to natural factors, to divine factors,

or to the LGBTQ+ community. This interpretation is situated in the category “Collective responsibility,” as the respondents recognize a locus of causality to which they attribute the origin of social distress, the prejudice experienced, to certain contrary groups (religious people and politicians, for example) and believe that actions, both group and individual actions, can influence and combat the problem. This is the identification of agents antagonistic to the LGBTQ+ struggle (Ortolano, 2013), creating a possible collective interest in relation the three groups in the recognition of the **political effectiveness** of their members' actions in resistance to these antagonistic agents. However, this possibility does not materialize in **political effectiveness**, in place of mobilization there is a certain anomie that disorients this mobilization, as was evident in the joint analysis of two dimensions of the conceptual framework, the **feelings regarding adversaries** and the **willingness to act collectively** (Sandoval & Silva, 2016).

The recognition of the existence of antagonistic agents is directly related to the dimension of **feelings regarding adversaries**. According to all respondents, the main adversaries, who also fall as agents antagonistic to LGBTQ+ people (Ortolano, 2013), the interpretation of the data enabled the grouping of responses in the category “Conservative antagonists,” which groups: evangelical churches; conservative political parties; the at the time President Jair Bolsonaro (no party); deputy Marco Feliciano (PSC – SP); the at the time Minister of Women, Family and Human Rights, Damara Alves; and the at the time former Senator Magno Malta (PR – ES). By pointing out these agents and recognizing their **political effectiveness**, the expectation was to show the respondents' articulations to mobilize in opposition to them, but this was not confirmed in the analysis of the dimension **willingness to act collectively** — quite the contrary. Virtually all workers indicated that they had no interest in collective action (category “Collective Action”). Most do not participate in activities in civil society organizations such as residents' associations, political parties, NGOs or unions and have no interest in doing so (category “Individual Action”). Among those who are members of the union, most reported that the membership was automatic, when they were hired (category “Union action”).

In a list of 15 collectives active in the LGBTQ+ cause in the state, only AM2 indicated participating in the activities of two of them. Most of the workers indicated they did not even know them. It is clear that the importance of the collective LGBTQ+ movements, pointed out in Brazil in the study of Machado and Prado (2005) and abroad by Anderson-Nathe et al. (2018), is not known by the workers. They do not combat LGBTphobia in groups, although some report small everyday attitudes, falling into the category of “Individual Action” to claim rights affirming their identity at work (Boris, 2010), such as speaking openly and debating the topic, expressing their contrariety to prejudice, and in the way they dress, as illustrated by the statements of AH5 (2020) “(...) *I do not remain silent when I hear or see prejudice at work and I do everything possible to change that*” (AH5), and BN2 (2020) “*I think that dressing the way I dress and presenting myself outside the ideal of male or female is already a demonstration*”.

In a different way, the leaderships within collectives indicated participation of the “Collective Action” type in the fight against LGBTphobia. They participate in more than one collective or forum and show they know many more. Despite this difference in group mobilization, workers and leaderships within collectives presented common opinions about the costs that LGBTQ+ people must assume when participating in collective actions: there is emotional and physical exhaustion, the time to be invested, the violence suffered, retaliation or financial cost.

Both groups identify the costs of participation and the potential gains for LGBTQ+ people in terms of learning, obtaining rights and maintaining social bonds, such as friendship or recognition from others. However, only the leaderships within collectives indicated effectively participating and assuming the costs of participation. Most of those in the group of workers indicated that they did not participate and did not assume the costs of participation. These same potential gains, through collective action, are identified by the unionists, indicating consensus among the three groups of research participants in this aspect. The gains resulting from collective action have already been pointed out in previous studies, which attributed them to collective movements (Machado & Prado, 2005). Here, the potential to obtain these gains is recognized even by those who do not know gains of this type already provided by LGBTQ+ collectives.

Despite recognition of the potential for these gains, unionists did not report assuming the participation nor the costs of a participation that leads to specific potential gains for LGBTQ+ people; their union participation was directed to gains for workers in general, something convergent with previous studies that indicate the inconsistency between union work and the interests of LGBTQ+ people (Ferreira et al., 2018). That is, in common, the participants recognize that the contributions of collective actions, such as those made by collectives, are effective. This has already been shown by other studies in Brazil (Machado & Prado, 2005) and abroad (Anderson-Nathe et al., 2018), but without due emphasis on the costs associated with the achievements. These studies also do not show what leads certain groups to anomie in which they do not participate in collective actions despite recognizing their positive impacts on the LGBTQ+ movement. In the case of the unionists, as already mentioned, even when they engage in collective actions the focus is not on the LGBTQ+ movement, but on labor issues in general, and in the case of workers not even this occurs.

This configuration of the omission in collective actions in favor of LGBTQ+ people is reinforced in the analysis of the last dimension of the conceptual framework of political consciousness adopted, the **goals and repertoires of actions** (Sandoval & Silva, 2016). In this analysis, the repertoire of collective actions in favor of the LGBTQ+ community is widely recognized, with many examples and manifestations grouped in the category “collective (un)knowledge.” But with regard to the union, most workers indicated that they were unaware of “Union action” carried out in the fight for the rights of LGBTQ+ people at work, where workers and union should act collectively, as it is part of both their daily routines. The manifestations that show this analysis are grouped into the category “union (un)knowledge.” Even though the unionists present a high level of “Collective Action” and “Union Action,” an omission was found between when they answered about the repertoire of actions carried out in favor of the LGBTQ+ community and mentioned a single action: a demand in the collective agreement that called for the inclusion of homosexual spouses in a health insurance plan, showing what the name of the category “collective (un)knowledge” suggests. That is, this study is in line with previous studies that found the lack of practical actions by Brazilian unions in favor of the demands of the LGBTQ+ community (FERREIRA et al., 2018). The importance of these actions is not ignored, all research participants consider necessary to have collective movements and unions conducting actions to claim rights and combat LGBTphobia. Just as the participants do not ignore two absences: a) of these actions by the union; b) of collective participation by workers.

The analysis as a whole of the dimensions of the conceptual framework of political consciousness adopted indicated the recognition of the importance of collective action for LGBTQ+

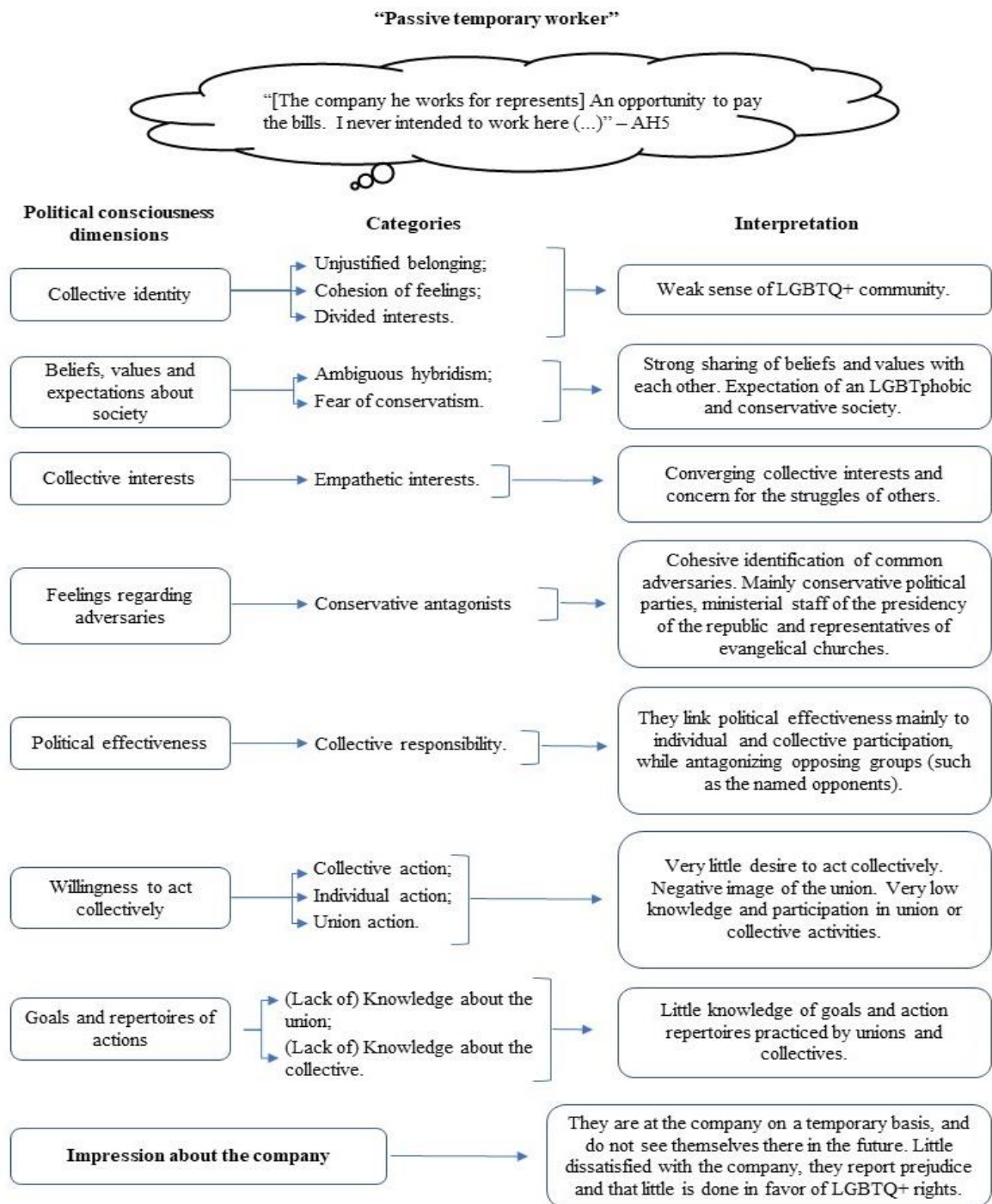
movements and the fact that this recognition occurs in conjunction with little effective participation of unions in relation to the interests of LGBTQ+ people and the collective non-participation of workers. It is not possible to state that the reason for non-participation of workers refers only to the mentioned costs of LGBTQ+ people to participate. There is a diverse set of relations, of which these costs are only part. The dimensions of the conceptual framework of political consciousness analyzed here showed other elements related to the choice to participate or not in a movement (Sandoval & Silva, 2016), which go far beyond a rational calculation of the ratio between costs and benefits involved in a choice for participation.

The interrelation between these elements show different configurations of political consciousness in the LGBTQ+ mobilization in the relations between workers, leaderships within collectives and unionists. In articulating together elements of different dimensions, these configurations treat, below, in an intertwined manner, the dimensions presented here from a relatively isolated perspective, only for the purpose of organizing the argumentation. Through this intertwining, these configurations enable us to understand a social production that explains, in part, the choice to participate or not in an LGBTQ+ movement.

## **Configurations of political consciousness in the LGBTQ+ mobilization**

The intertwined analysis of the seven dimensions of the conceptual framework of political consciousness (Sandoval & Silva, 2016) enabled us to trace the manifestation of five basic configurations of this consciousness: four configurations idealized within the heterogeneity expressed by the workers; one idealized in the homogeneity expressed by the unionists; and one idealized in the homogeneity expressed by the leaderships within collectives. Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5 summarize the production of research data to show the interrelation of these six configurations in the intertwining of the seven dimensions of political consciousness.

The first configuration, presented in Figure 2, includes workers who have predominant political consciousness of little interest both in union action and in acting with the collectives. These workers do not express in words other reasons that make them belong to the LGBTQ+ community, other than the way they exercise their sexuality, openly manifesting it at work, making it evident they are an LGBTQ+ person, even as a form of struggle. That is enough for them to claim to feel belonging to the community. Even without participation in collective actions in the community, they share the same beliefs, values and have a well-defined and negative image of part of society due to discrimination against LGBTQ+ people, a discrimination already shown in other studies (Irigaray & Freitas, 2011; Souza & Pereira, 2013; Waite & Denier, 2015; Baker & Lucas, 2017; Caproni Neto & Saraiva, 2018; Cobb & Mckenzie-Harris, 2019). Although not a trans or non-binary person, there is evident consciousness of the demands of these people, but very little engagement in the activities of collectives that act for the LGBTQ+ cause. There is interpretation that the work in the call center company is temporary, a professional passage.



**Figure 2.** Company A Workers’ Political Consciousness Configuration and Views on the Company.

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Based on these aspects, the configuration that defines this worker was synthesized as a **passive temporary worker**, who identifies problems at work and in society, does little to solve them and is aware that they will soon no longer be in that job and dealing with the problems related to it

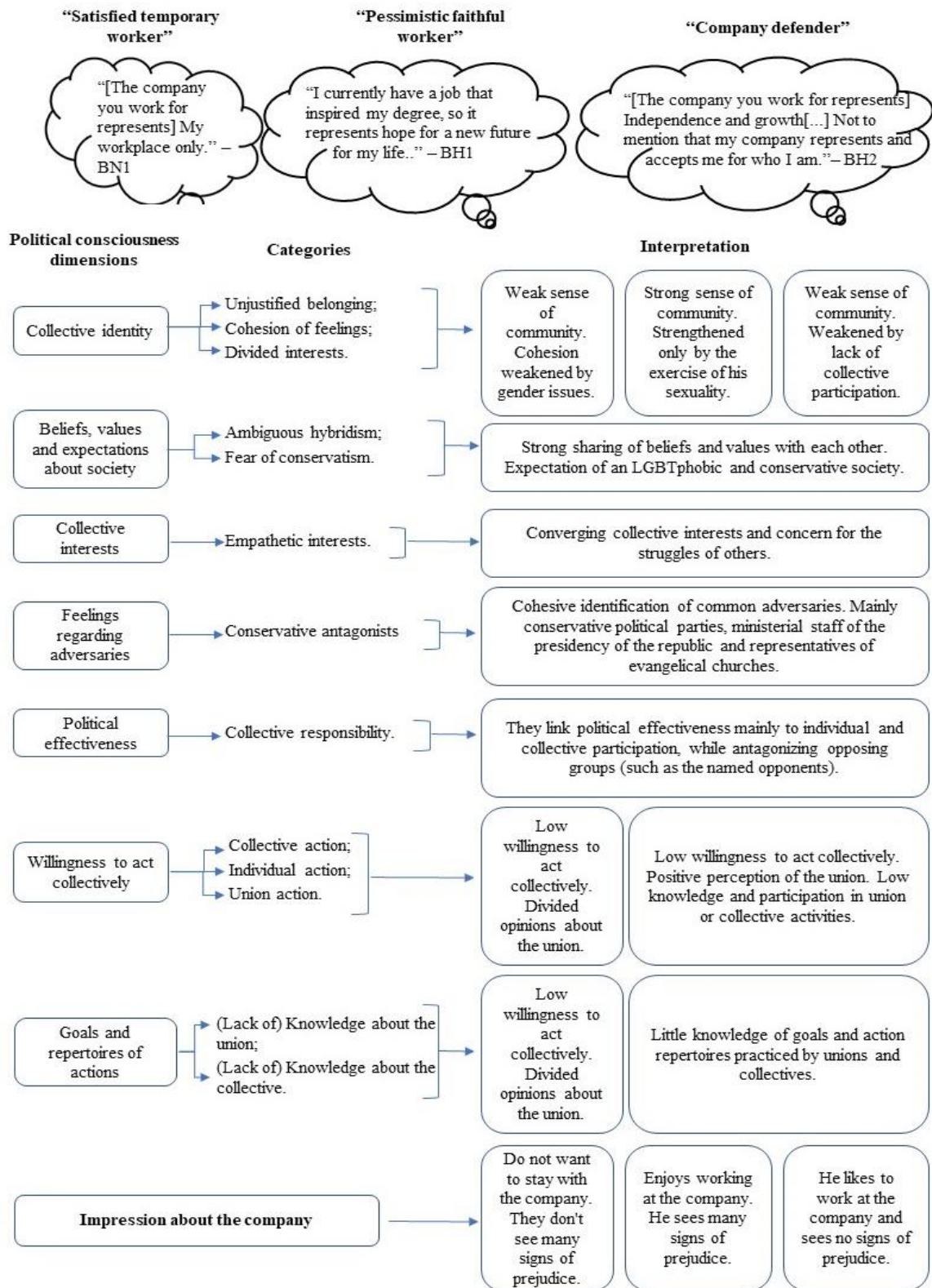
concerning LGBTQ+ people. Here, non-participation in movements focused on the work and the company is related to the consciousness that they do not belong to that job, that they are there temporarily; therefore, they restrict their struggle to individual manifestations, in which they openly express being an LGBTQ+ person. Passivity is not in not fighting, but in not seeking to do it collectively.

Figure 3 shows the second, third and fourth configurations attributed to Company B workers, according to the three data interpretation columns. The second configuration was synthesized as **satisfied temporary** worker. They do not feel a strong connection with the organization in which they work, considering it a temporary job. Even reporting prejudices experienced in daily life, they feel respected by the company, know little about LGBTQ+ collectives and their actions and do not participate in them, nor in the actions conducted by the union, despite demonstrating recognition as to the importance of the collective struggle, including the actions of the collectives, against LGBTphobia. This configuration is opposed, in part, to what was identified by Souza and Pereira (2013), because, as the authors showed, these workers recognize prejudice in daily life, but, unlike what was shown by the authors, according to them the company plays its role and respects them, something ambiguous and that refers to the term “satisfied” used to synthesize this configuration. Here, the option for non-participation is related to satisfaction, but it is not full satisfaction; workers recognize the problems in society for LGBTQ+ people and the importance of fighting against it, but at that moment, apparently, they feel satisfied enough not to collectively enter this fight.

In the third configuration, identified as **pessimistic faithful worker**, workers feel that the company recognizes their work as very important to it; this makes them want to remain in the company, although they report experiencing prejudice in the company. Here, we have a convergence with the typical organizational prejudice toward LGBTQ+ workers pointed out by Caproni Neto and Saraiva (2018). These **pessimistic faithful workers** are not satisfied with the prejudice they suffer, but their loyalty to the company is a prominent component in their non-participation in collective actions to fight this prejudice, despite their dissatisfaction with it.

The fourth and last configuration related to Company B workers was that of the **company defender**. These workers assess the company where they work as positive and feel defended and accepted by it. They are also optimistic about union action and action of collectives working for the LGBTQ+ cause. They are partially active, as they participate in union actions, but do not participate and do not have interest in collectives. Here, collective participation is effective, these are not manifestations of the majority of workers, but they have been traced and their relevance lies in a configuration that at first may seem ambiguous: workers who defend the company in which they work, but who participate in union actions because they recognize their relevance, and recognize the relevance of collectives in which they do not participate because they are afraid.

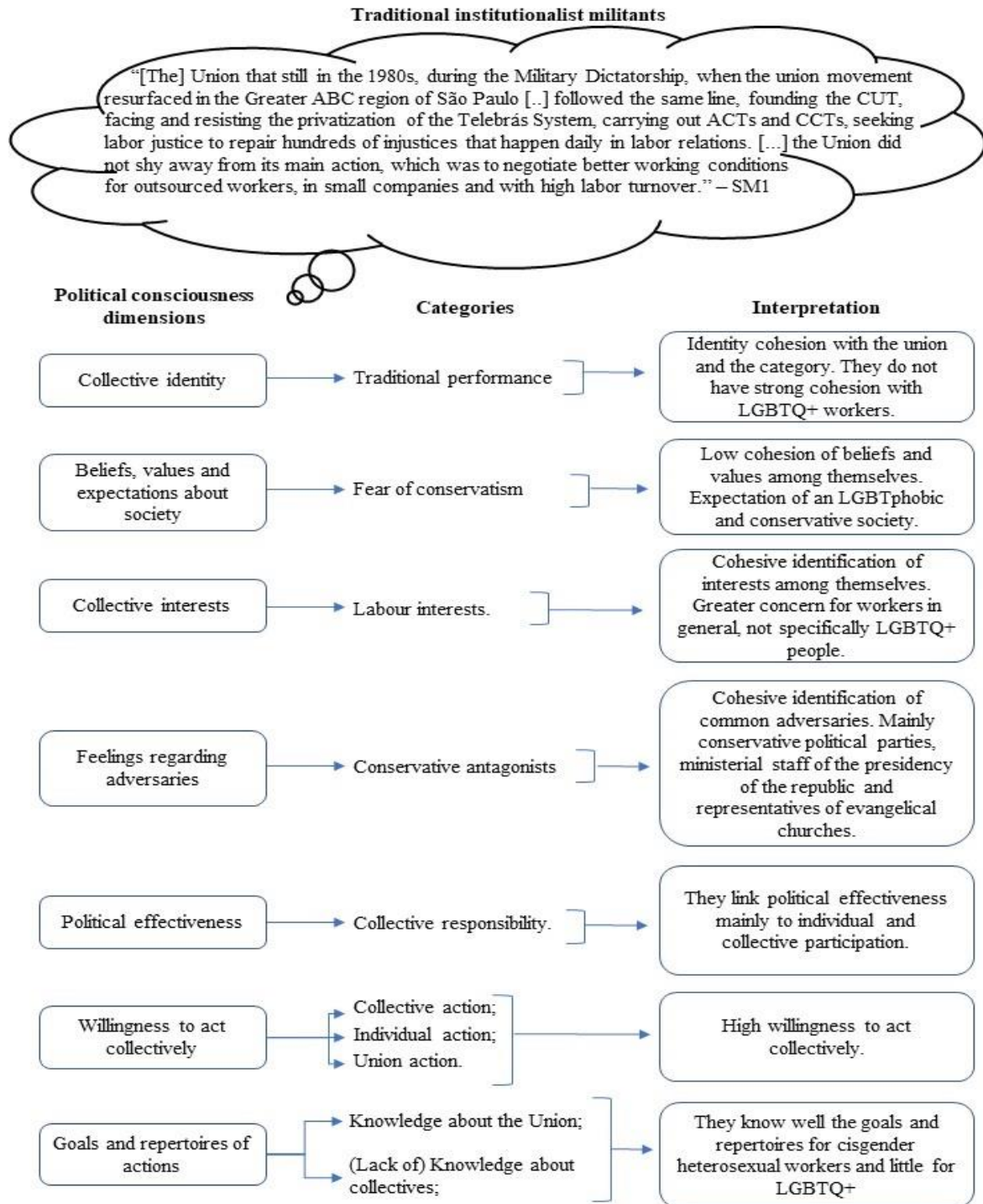




**Figure 3.** Company B Workers' Political Consciousness Configuration and Views on the Company

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Figure 4 shows a configuration related to the unionists of Sinttel-ES. In their answers, they noted historical issues related to the workers' struggle associated with the emergence of Sinttel, configuring their political consciousness as **traditional institutionalist militants**.



**Figure 4.** Unionists' Political Consciousness Configuration

Source: elaborated by the authors

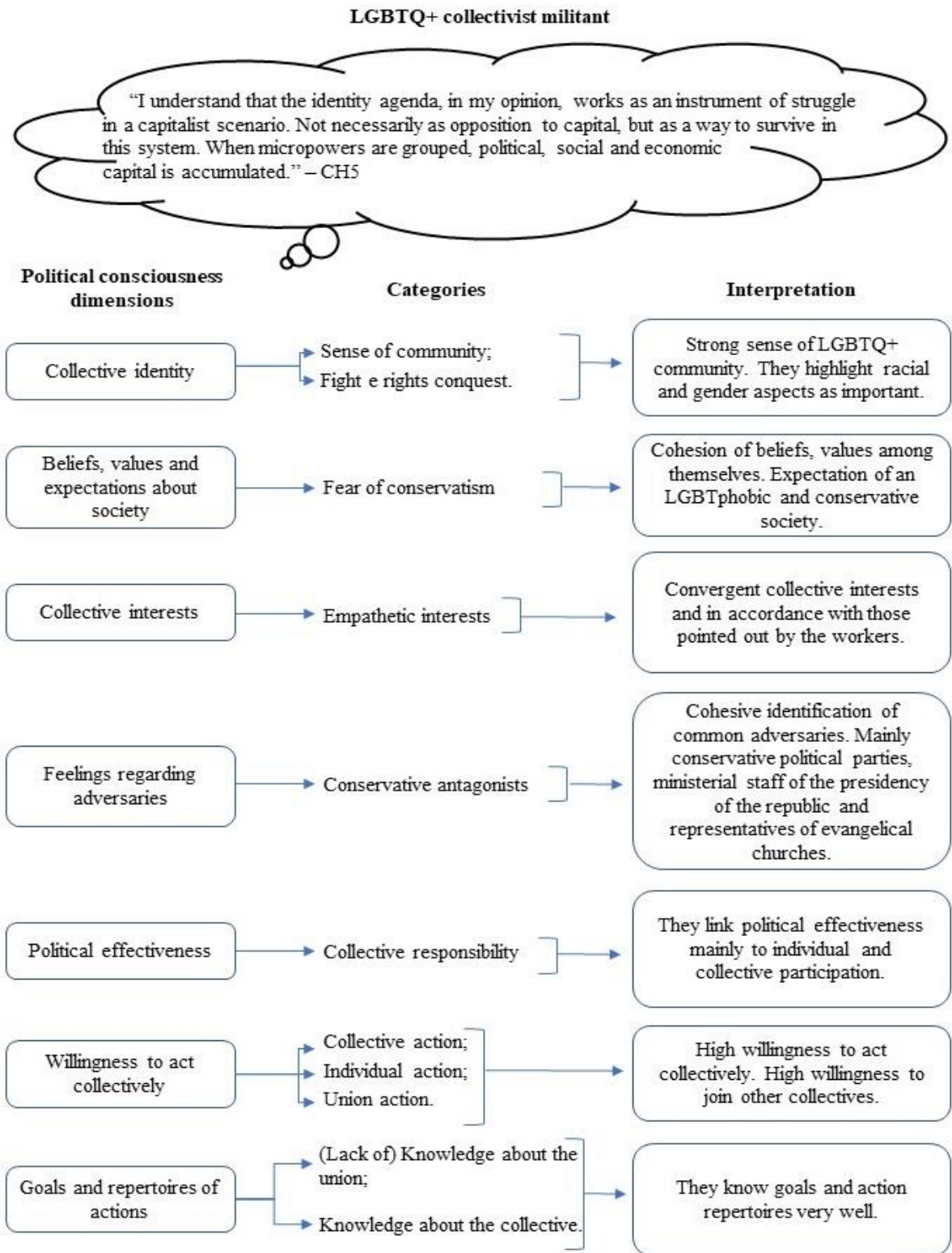
Both show to be supporters of LGBTQ+ rights, as well as the union, but without indicating in-depth knowledge on the subject in the Brazilian reality, nor effective actions by the union. However, when the subject is the union activity and the rights of the represented category, both show very high engagement and **willingness to act collectively**, in-depth knowledge of repertoires and goals, in addition to sharing several feelings and perceptions with the belonging group, attributing great importance to the struggle carried out. The mentioned actions always involve an official, institutional tone of action of the union and the way they approach the theme of rights exhibits erudite, formal vocabulary.

Both declared a left-wing political position. Here, we have a configuration converging with the distance between unionists and the demands of the LGBTQ+ practice in daily routine in Brazil, something pointed out by Ferreira et al. (2018) and which indicates the distance between the union context of Brazil and other countries, where unions engage more with these agendas, such as the United Kingdom (Colgan & Mckearney, 2012) and Italy (Pulcher, Guerri & Köllen, 2019). The decision not to participate in movements aligned with the interests of LGBTQ+ people, strangely, seems to stem from a certainty that this group is already covered as any worker, as if their demands were met as the demands of any worker are met. The specificities of this group, in practice, are ignored, as well as its struggle against the imposition of heteronormativity in Brazilian society; an imposition that is favored by this type of omission of unionists to develop.

Figure 5 deals with the group of people in leadership functions in collectives. It indicates a political consciousness configuration identified as **LGBTQ+ collectivist militant**, and also the importance of collectives in the LGBTQ+ cause and of the collective participation of its members, as highlighted by other studies on the subject (Machado & Prado, 2005; Jesus, 2012; Daniliauskas, 2016; Anderson-Nathe et al., 2018).

Most of the leaderships participating in the research participate in actions of two or more collectives, showing interest in increasing this number. These people have beliefs and values that differ from religious and Christian ideologies, a negative image of Brazilian society, and show cohesion, feelings and interests, such as freedom, community, hope and protagonism, as an LGBTQ+ community. They demonstrate high social and political knowledge about the topic addressed and goals and actions that can and are carried out. These aspects refer to mobilization for collective participation in the LGBTQ+ community.

This last configuration indicates maximal collective participation focused on the demands of LGBTQ+ people. However, the other five show different challenges to increase this participation among workers and unionists and overcome the distance of the unions in relation to these demands (Ferreira et al., 2018). Together, they enable the proposition that those situated in the last configuration can contribute to deal with these challenges and increase the participation of everyone in the LGBTQ+ cause, as they exhibit possible elements to lead others to this engagement.



**Figure 5.** Leaderships within Collectives’ Political Consciousness Configuration

Source: elaborated by the authors.

## Conclusions

Based on the understanding of the psychopolitical aspects of the participation of call center workers, trade unionists and leaderships within collectives in actions to defend LGBTQ+ rights at work, six configurations were synthesized, four of which permeate the participation of workers, one of unionists, and one of the leaderships within collectives that participated in the research. The six configurations are, respectively: **passive temporary worker; satisfied temporary worker; pessimistic faithful worker; company defender; traditional institutionalist militant; LGBTQ+ collectivist militant.**

Only the last configuration mentioned presents collective mobilization actions to defend the demands of LGBTQ+ people, although there is a context of discrimination against these people in the organizations, highlighted by several studies (Irigaray & Freitas, 2011; Souza & Pereira, 2013; Waite & Denier, 2015; Baker & Lucas, 2017; Caproni Neto & Saraiva, 2018; Cobb & Mckenzie-Harris, 2019).

It was evident that the workers are aware of the problems faced by LGBTQ+ people, of the social actors responsible for that, and of a notion of actions to be taken. They present a discourse valuing collective mobilization in the defense of rights and in the fight against prejudice, but they are not willing to act collectively to face this situation. They show satisfaction with the absence of explicit LGBTphobia in the companies in which they work, even if it exists in a concealed manner.

The leaderships within collectives show high **willingness to act collectively** for the LGBTQ+ cause. However, for this to expand, there may be greater coordination between collectives, workers and the union, so everyone knows and reflects on their **goals and repertoires of actions**, strengthening possibilities for participation. Thus, the unionists' little knowledge about the problems LGBTQ+ people face in daily work can be overcome so as to actually represent them.

Based on these findings, this article presents relevant theoretical contributions to the field of organizational studies, human resource management, and labor relations, enabling those interested in the topic to broaden their understanding of (de)mobilization in collective actions to defend LGBTQ+ rights. From the point of view of practice, it also enables: supporting the workers' reflection on their omissions and demotivations in participating in collective actions despite recognizing the need for such, so relevant LGBTQ+ labor demands are met; support the unionists' reflection on the reasons why unions do not effectively focus on these specific demands; support the collectives members reflections on the role of collectives in supporting the above reflections of the two previous groups, so they approach the collectives and their collective actions, enhancing mobilization.

A limitation found in providing these contributions was that, although there are LGBTQ+ people who declare to have a right-wing political positioning, in this work all participants declared to have left-wing political positioning. Therefore, we recommend further research with this population to complement the knowledge produced here. We also suggest further research with unions and collectives on collective actions that they can conduct jointly to enhance the fight to defend LGBTQ+ rights at work, considering the sense of low participation of workers of the companies studied.

This latter suggestion arose from the recognition that collectives in Brazil stand out in the role of defending LGBTQ+ demands, as shown by Machado and Prado (2005), Jesus (2012),

Daniliauskas (2016) and Anderson-Nathe et al. (2018), with cohesion in a logic of militancy based on these demands. In turn, unions in Brazil also seem to have a certain cohesion in a logic of militancy; however, they lack a closer approach to the effective and specific LGBTQ+ demands at work, which can be enhanced through interaction with collectives. Thus, Brazilian unions could play a role similar to that of unions in other countries, which effectively support specific demands of LGBTQ+ workers (Colgan & Mckearney, 2012; Pulcher, Guerci & Köllen, 2019).

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## Authorship

### Leôni Mongin Boasquevisque

Graduated in Administration from the Federal University of Espírito Santo (Ufes). Postgraduate student in the Master's in Business Administration at Ufes.

E-mail: leoni\_mongin@hotmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1894-4785>

### Marcia Prezotti Palassi

PhD in Social Psychology from the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC/SP), with a postdoctoral degree from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM), Spain. Full-time Professor at the Administration Department at the Federal University of Espírito Santo (Ufes).

E-mail: mprezotti@hotmail.com.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0751-6777>

### Alfredo Rodrigues Leite da Silva

Doctor in Administration from the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG). Professor at the Administration Department and at the Graduate Program in Administration at the Federal University of Espírito Santo (Ufes).

E-mail: alfredoufes@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5943-1185>

## Conflict of interests

The authors inform that there is no conflict of interest.

## Inclusive language

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

## Authors' contribution

**First author:** conception (leader), formal analysis (equal), methodology (equal), investigation (leader), validation (equal), writing - original draft (equal), writing - revision and editing (equal).

**Second author:** conception (leader), formal analysis (equal), methodology (equal), investigation (support), validation (equal), writing - original draft (equal), writing - revision and editing (equal).

**Third author:** formal analysis (support), methodology (support), validation (equal), writing - original draft (support), writing - revision and editing (equal)..

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## Data Availability

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