

## Far Removed From Heteronormativity: Marriage and Same-Sex Couples in a Spanish TV News Program (2011–2020)

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The news media have acted as a key tool for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and other people to achieve new rights but, traditionally, have also acted as drivers of heteronormativity. Studies of same-sex marriage news coverage have centered on studying the journalistic treatment of social and political debates about its legalization. Fifteen years after such marriages were legalized in Spain, this work aims to examine whether same-sex couples appear in TV news that cover the institution of marriage by performing a content analysis of the news broadcast by Spain's public television broadcaster (Televisión Española or TVE) between 2011 and 2020. The results reveal that such coverage barely makes same-sex couples visible for two reasons: They have never been heard from as sources, and they are sometimes explicitly excluded by the employed discourse, which favors a heteronormative approach.

*Keywords: heteronormativity, marriage, same-sex marriage, same-sex civil unions, journalism, television, affective-sexual diversity, family diversity, LGBTQIA+, visibility, sexuality, gender, communication*

Spanish National Statistics Institute (INE) data reveal that 57,480 same-sex weddings have taken place since same-sex marriage was legalized in Spain in 2005. According to the INE, until the end of 2020, most of these marriages (32,170) were between two men, with fewer marriages (25,310) between two women. When the law was passed, the legacy media, such as *El País*, *ABC*, and *El Mundo* newspapers (Martínez, 2015; Ramos-Arroyo & Díaz-Campo, 2019), amply covered the whole process, which involved political discussions. Same-sex marriage has been a reality in Spain for more than 15 years. It sporadically remains a theme of media interest. Nonetheless, it is worth studying to what extent this new matrimonial reality has reshaped the image and meaning that the institution of marriage receives in the mass media.

This study examines TV news stories to discover whether same-sex couples also form part of the media's representation of the institution of marriage when this becomes an object of general attention without being delimited to same-sex marriage. Legacy media have been extremely relevant in maintaining

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the hegemony of heteronormativity by excluding any experiences that could question it. Nevertheless, media discourse must also face the journalists' ambition to accurately reflect the reality they cover. This work analyzes how this tension between two opposing logics can be overcome.

### **Journalism and Heteronormativity**

The heteronormativity concept focuses critically on a socially well-rooted and validated coercive discourse that arises with heterosexuality as the only "normal" model of conduct (Ventura, 2016). Although the experience of heterosexuality as a dominant code may be more or less conscious, the normalization process that favors its hegemony is a space of violence in modern Western societies for cisgender and transgender people with different sexual orientations (Yep, 2003). The heteronormative code lies in heterosexism, which can be defined as a principle of a vision and division of the social world that is the basis of the exclusive promotion of heterosexuality with the almost total exclusion of homosexuality (Tin, 2012). Thus, as a discriminatory ideology of sexualities, heterosexism lies behind the mainstay that sustains violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and other (LGBTQIA+) people (Martínez, 2016).

The coercive power of heteronormative discourse results from its capacity to occupy the public space as a representational standard (Madžarević, 2018). Hence, heteronormativity depends on the creation, the maintenance, and, thus, the perpetuation of many forms of normativity both locally and globally (Yep, 2017). In news media communications, several strategies are adopted by means of which settings favoring heterosexuality are employed so that journalistic discourse about, for instance, LGBTQIA+ people's rights does not challenge any hegemonic notions of sexuality and gender. According to Liebler, Schwartz, and Harper (2009), some of the noteworthy resources that are most usually employed include making the decision about which sources are integrated into news coverage. They normally correspond to those voices that defend acceptable points of view for the heterosexual audience.

Some studies have recently shown how the heteronormative code permeates journalistic discourse across different coverage types, for example, political (Trimble, Raphael, Sampert, Wagner, & Gerrits, 2015) and sports journalism (Cassidy, 2019), or when attacks against LGBTQIA+ people are covered (Hancock & Haldeman, 2017). The heteronormative approach has also been observed in the coverage of topics on which certain social debates exist, such as surrogacy pregnancy processes (Ventura, 2014) or same-sex partners raising children (Riggs, 2006).

As a result of media discourse favoring a culturally heteronormative perspective, themes that affect LGBTQIA+ people may be ignored, become diluted, or be presented as something completely different from what they actually mean (Hancock & Haldeman, 2017). A heterosexist ideology has often favored the mass media acting as a mechanism to socially exclude not only LGB people by poorly or inadequately representing this population in journalistic discourse (Şahin, 2021) but also trans people. The fact that the mass media have ignored nonnormative sexualities for so long as a strategy with which to sustain the gender system (Gross, 1991) has made their realities silent (Albertini, 2012) and invisible and has basically perpetuated this group's general marginalization (De Jong, 2006). This is why the biased journalistic treatment of LGBTQIA+ people using heterosexist principles can be considered as manifesting symbolic violence

(Bourdieu, 2001) or media violence (Martínez, 2016). Denying or disguising the existence of same-sex couples is a clear example of this (Gross, 1991) as the mass media have frequently done by adopting euphemistic strategies (Carratalá, 2011).

### **Progress and Resistance in Informative Discourse**

The media discourse on nonnormative sexualities and gender identities has improved in recent years. This is due to a gradual shift from an imperfect representational stage to another with in-depth, normalized representation (Ventura, 2019) and to the extent that there is no longer talk of deviants, loners, and losers but images of normal couples and their children because discourse about sexual orientation is understood as having shifted to center on family orientation (Moritz, 2007). However, as Gross (2001) points out, visibility is rarely pure and is never simple. LGBTQIA+ people still face many challenges as to how the mass media represent their lives.

One of the main challenges that are still far from being overcome is the hypervisualization of gay men as opposed to the rest of the identities found in LGBTQIA+ communities (Canet, 2018). Several works indicate that, for instance, lesbian women have generally received much less visibility in the mass media than gay men (Gibson, 2006; Gross, 2001; Kerrigan, 2020; Smith, 2020), even in gay- and lesbian-oriented media (Bond, 2015). This has occurred in informative contexts, such as the first reports that the CBS network wrote on this matter (Gibson, 2006) and in entertainment production (GLAAD, 2021; Observatory of Diversity in the Audiovisual Media, 2020).

A second challenge that LGBTQIA+ people face in relation to their journalistic visibility is being relegated to news in which they must necessarily play the leading role. This implies visibility, but one that is segregated from the rest of society (Gross, 2001). The coverage of nonnormative sexualities still responds mostly to the news values linked with what is extraordinary or unexpected as a result of reading about them according to a heteronormative pattern (Lukmantoro, 2016). In the 1990s, Robert Bray, the head of communication of the U.S. association National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, reacted to this practice when complaining to the *New York Times* that he did not wish to see more articles about gays but to see gay men covered at all levels (Gross, 2001). Progress has been made with this line, and today LGBTQIA+ people are not confined to news about themselves (Aarons & Murphy, 2000; Gross, 2001; Moritz, 2007). However, recent studies maintain that it is still hard to find gay or lesbian couples in coverage that is not specifically about LGBTQIA+ people (Canet, 2018; Drushel, 2017), and these communities are even invisible in the news items that directly affect them (Hancock & Haldeman, 2017). Hence it is necessary to consider the family (LGB parenting), gender (cis and trans), and affective-sexual (lesbian, gay, bisexual identity) diversity variables during news production in order to balance the media representation of these social groups (Canet, 2018).

### **Same-Sex Marriage and the Mass Media**

Coverage of the legalization of marriage between people of the same sex is an excellent example of how journalism has contributed to making LGBTQIA+ communities' claims visible. Cisgender journalists have been revealed as key figures in public debate about same-sex marriage based on the choices they

make about style, tone, and even whom they decide to interview (Anahita, 2006). The media coverage's positive impact on the progress made with LGBTQIA+ people's rights was noted in the political sphere and society on the whole. Platero-Méndez (2009) stated that in Spain, the claims for same-sex marriage that appeared in the mass media actually favored the gradual inclusion of sexual minorities' rights in the political agenda as a result of a strategy adopted by LGBTQIA+ communities since the 1990s to approach the mass media (Calvo, 2007).

The presence of LGBTQIA+ people in the mass media is, thus, key. After interviewing more than 5,000 people from U.S. TV audiences, Lee and Hicks (2011) concluded that more social support for same-sex marriage came from people used to watching TV. A similar relationship between watching TV programs and support for same-sex marriage has been underlined by Albertson (2018). Recent research (Díez & Dion, 2018) adds that reading news on the Internet every day promotes the recognition of such marriages, partly thanks to the fact that the online environment favored contact with gay and lesbian sources. The media background, therefore, impacts how the public perceives this matter. Johnson (2012) observed that if all the mass media dealt with same-sex marriage from an equality perspective, social opposition to this matter would significantly diminish.

The first information about same-sex weddings in the United States dates back to the early 1970s (Anahita, 2006)—it was not until 1975 when a gay couple attempted to obtain a license to marry in Boulder, Colorado, which attracted the media's attention nationwide (Moritz, 2007). Later in 1989, the *Brattleboro Reformer* newspaper broke the journalistic barrier by starting to publish news about gay and lesbian weddings. These first media items that attached public importance to same-sex couples gradually grew in the United States. Then in the fall of 2002, *The New York Times* started to publish about same-sex unions in its weddings/engagements section. This was considered a clear indicator that the audience of this newspaper was not scandalized by this reality (Moritz, 2007).

However, most of the journalistic coverage about same-sex marriage has been marked by characteristics linked with what is extraordinary and controversial, which tends to favor conservative stances. On the one hand, in the first journalistic coverage of the theme, as in the Boulder episode, the mass media particularly tended to favor the readings of this news as being deviant and ridiculous (Moritz, 2007). On the other hand, when the debate on same-sex marriage opened up, the media prioritized the coverage of the topic as a moral political issue rather than as a matter of civil rights. Hence, it was subject to the values of those participating in the debate, which favored the cultural heteronormative mold being reproduced (Harmsen, 2016).

Despite the editorial line of the different mass media possibly affecting the journalistic treatment of same-sex marriage, more recent longitudinal studies also point out that, over the years, the general tone of the coverage of this theme has improved, and more emphasis has been placed on its political aspect (Zheng & Chan, 2022). Nevertheless, other research works indicate that, with TV coverage as opposed to that of newspapers, the character of the former continues to be more negative (Colistra & Johnson, 2021).

Other studies have focused on analyzing the role that the mass media assign to LGB people when covering same-sex marriage. After examining 93 news items broadcast by three U.S. TV channels, Moscowitz (2010) observed that gays and lesbians tended to appear in the shots of the studied items but rarely acted as sources. Another research analyzed the way in which two reference newspapers, the liberal-type *New York Times* and the more conservative *Chicago Tribune*, covered same-sex marriages. Pan, Meng, and Zhou (2010) concluded that the former offered gays and lesbians more opportunities to talk about this matter. In their study regarding the visibility that LGB people receive in news about same-sex marriages, Hackl, Boyer, and Galupo (2013) observed that bisexual men and women practically do not appear in the coverage offered by *The New York Times*.

The journalistic coverage of making same-sex marriage legal in Spain has scarcely been studied. Research on this theme has only recently appeared and is linked with journalists' coverage from the conflict approach. The doctoral dissertation by Martínez (2015) analyzed how the two most widely read newspapers in Spain, *El País* and *El Mundo*, have dealt with the debate about legalizing such marriages from different points of view, and each one has aligned with a political stance. Two other recent studies have looked in-depth at this same matter: On the one hand, the study by Ramos-Arroyo and Díaz-Campo (2019) concluded that the fact that the Spanish parliament had legalized such weddings in 2005 came along with a vicious media struggle because the press reflected the bitter clash and political debates between the two opposing subcultures (one close to the Catholic religion and the other of a laicizing type). On the other hand, Guijarro-Ojeda and Ruiz-Cecilia (2019) studied the way in which the press addressed the Constitutional Court's announcement in 2012 to confirm the constitutionality of same-sex marriage. These authors maintain that the conservative dailies did not prioritize this announcement and denied LGB people's views, while progressive newspapers increased the awareness about these people clearer and their views more visible.

As we herein find, the reviewed research into the presence of same-sex marriages in the mass media focuses on analyzing the coverage of episodes marked by conflict or controversy. Therefore, it is worthwhile examining what place same-sex marriage actually occupies in the Spanish media agenda today, after having gone beyond the stage of being merely a matter of public debate and more than 15 years after its legalization. Some works evidence that the Spanish mass media include same-sex marriage in their content, especially with the marriages of public figures, such as politicians (Carratalá, 2017) or famous people (Carratalá, 2020). To a certain extent, however, these coverages consider such stories to be bizarre or extraordinary, which justifies their appearance in the media's agenda. Therefore, what exact place this reality occupies in the media discourse that is not strictly about LGBTQIA+ stories is still to be explained to evaluate the relevance of heteronormativity in Spanish broadcast journalism.

### **Methodology**

The main objective of this research is to determine whether Spain's public television broadcaster (Televisión Española or TVE) offers marriage coverage that integrates family (LGB parenting) and affective-sexual (lesbian, gay, bisexual) diversity by incorporating same-sex couples into generic news about this civil institution. The creation of TVE in 1956, under Franco, pursued a propaganda-type objective that, later in the Spanish democracy, remained a medium that depended on the political party of the ruling government

(López-Olano, 2017). However, from 2006, its news programs acquired some independence, which allowed it to be acknowledged several times (de Madariaga & Lamuedra, 2016). In 2011, which is the start of our period of study, the channel was the leader of news programs among all Spanish TV channels. As of 2012, the independence and plurality of news programs weakened with a new political reform (Humanes & Fernández Alonso, 2015), and TVE occupied third place in 2020 in audience rankings behind two private channels. TVE was selected as the object of this study for three reasons: the channel's commitment to representing social minority groups as a public mass medium, its role as a reference medium, and the accessibility to the historic archive of its broadcasts

The study pursues four secondary objectives:

1. Verify whether same-sex couples appear only as a resource image or they also act as sources.
2. Check whether TVE coverage about marriage progressively includes a higher degree of diversity.
3. Compare the number of couples formed by two men and the number formed by two women that appear in these news items.
4. Observe whether television information openly excludes same-sex couples from the narration that accompanies marriage news.

This research has two initial hypotheses:

*H1: Same-sex couples are poorly represented in television information when Spanish journalists cover the institution of marriage in Spain.*

*H2: Couples formed by two men appear more frequently than those formed by two women when Spanish journalists cover marriage from a general perspective.*

To fulfill the above objectives, a search using keywords was done of the news broadcasts by the TVE television news program on the public TVE's Internet on-demand platform to retrieve specific pieces. The search intended to retrieve all news about marriage as a civil institution or social ritual from 2005, when same-sex marriage was legalized in Spain, to December 2020.<sup>2</sup> Four keywords were employed to retrieve the pieces: *matrimonio*\*<sup>3</sup> (marriage, matrimonial), *boda* (wedding), *divorci*\* (divorce, divorced man, divorced woman, divorced men, divorced women), and *nupcia*\* (nuptial, weddings). This search produced 201 pieces, of which only 44 formed the corpus after the first review (Table 1). This allowed us to rule out all the news that did not correspond to our object of study because they dealt with coverages of same-sex marriage or were not interesting pieces for our research. Some examples are those that: (1) focus on religious weddings; (2) relate

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<sup>2</sup> The year 2020 is a symbolic date because it witnessed the 15th anniversary since the law allowing same-sex marriages in Spain was passed and, as such, was commemorated by official institutions. The same year, the Spanish Ministry of Equality began to work on preparations to devise a new law to further protect LGBTQIA+ people's rights.

<sup>3</sup> This symbol (\*) indicates that although the word as such does not exist, it does represent the common root of various concepts of interest to our study and that, in this way, can be recovered in a single search.

to weddings of public figures; (3) cover news whose leading figures are specific married couples (especially those involved in incidents); (4) metaphorically employ the notion of marriage.

**Table 1. Distribution of the Number of News Pieces Obtained by an Advanced Search.**

Keyword	Matrimoni*	Boda	Divorci*	Nupcia*	Total
Selected	5	19	17 <sup>4</sup>	3	<b>44</b>
Ruled out					
Same-sex marriage	38	2	0	0	40
Not applicable					
Religious weddings	4	1	2	0	7
Public figures	6	25	1	0	32
Particular married couples involved in some specific news, like crime	41	12	6	0	59
Metaphorical meaning	4	8	7	0	19
Total	98	67	33	3	201

The 44 audiovisual pieces that formed the analysis corpus were pieces of information that considered marriage as a civil institution (marriage between two people that brings about the couple's rights and obligations before the law) or a social ritual, given its expression as a wedding. To fulfill the above objectives, all the news pieces were subjected to a quantitative content analysis, which took into account textual and visual elements to determine whether same-sex couples appeared as a resource image or a source.

The direct participation of couples formed by two men or two women could appear only in one image (as subjects of current affairs to illustrate a new piece or as a resource image) or via the image and its spoken words (thus by means of direct statements and taking them as sources of information). In this way, with a coding sheet specifically designed for the study, the following were calculated: broadcasting date, how many couples appeared in each news piece, how many of them were same-sex couples, how many were formed by two men, how many were formed by two women, and how many statements given by couples were included as sources of news by indicating if they were straight or same-sex couples. Discourse signals (graphs and the journalist's voice-over) that described the marriage relationship were also recorded by specifying if it was, or was not, an exclusionary representation that left same-sex couples to one side.

Four criteria were contemplated for computing the presence of opposite- or same-sex couples. First, the couples represented by images and those referred to by means of textual discourse were

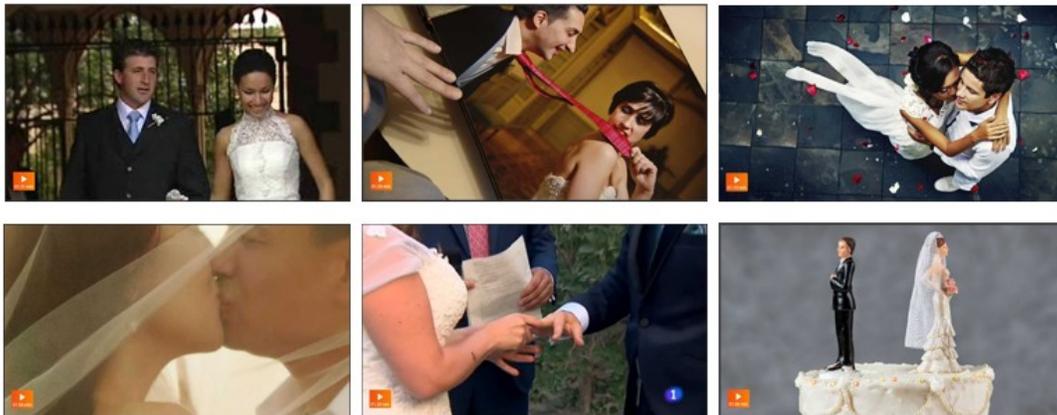
<sup>4</sup> The search actually gave 20 interesting results for this research, but three of these pieces were retrieved during the first inquiry made with the keyword matrimony.\*

considered either by a voice-over in the piece or with some people's words that appeared in any direct statement. The second criterion was to indicate those couples whose presence stood out because their particular story had been used to illustrate an informative fact, which normally implies their also acting as a source. They were computed only on one occasion, regardless of them being the object of either textual discourse or visual attention. Third, it is pointed out that identifying couples from images employed as resources of audiovisual pieces was applied when images were unambiguous, or this could be logically read as such from the discourse accompanying them. Finally, in some pieces, the same couple may appear repeatedly as a resource image. In these cases, it was only counted on more than one occasion if it appeared again after four shots, as it was understood that it was a new representation of same-sex couples in that specific narrative.

## Results

### *Family and Affective-Sexual Diversity When Representing Marriage*

The analysis of the 44 audiovisual pieces making up our sample revealed that most news stories offered a representation of marriage limited to couples formed by one man and one woman. Indeed, 77.3% of the examined items only represented straight couples. As Figure 1 shows, many shots offer the audience a representation of marriage as a couple formed by one man and one woman. In only 10 of the studied news items could references to same-sex couples be identified. Eight of these 10 pieces visually depicted same-sex couples, while the other two represented them by spoken discourse. This means that same-sex marriage appeared in only one in every five news pieces on marriage when addressed from a generic point of view.



**Figure 1. Opening shots of news items about marriage broadcast by TVE. From left to right and top to bottom: (1) "Pre-Nuptial Agreements" (TVE, 2011a, 0:00:00); (2) "Wedding Photography in Madrid" (TVE, 2012a, 0:00:00); (3) "Wedding Videos Renewed With the Latest Technological Advances" (TVE, 2015b, 0:00:00); (4) "Demands for Divorce and Separation Decreased by 2.6% in 2015" (TVE, 2016, 0:00:00); (5) "Spain is the Second EU Country With the Highest Divorce Rate" (TVE, 2018, 0:00:00); (6) "Divorce Inquiries Rise in Spain After Lockdown" (TVE, 2020, 0:00:00).**

When considering our complete sample, the analysis showed that 210 different couples were identified. A check to determine whether they responded to the heteronormative model or not yielded the result that the vast majority of the cases corresponded to this pattern: In fact, 94.2% of the total sample were couples formed by one man and one woman. Thus, only 5.8% of the couples in the overall calculation (12 in all) could be identified as illustrating same-sex marriage. This lack of proportion particularly and intensely came across in some pieces with many heteronormative couples, where gays or lesbians would never appear. This is the case in one news piece entitled "The Best Wedding Photographer Is Spanish" (TVE, 2011b). Its shots included pictures of up to nine man-woman couples, but none representing a same-sex relationship. The same could be said of the piece "1,001 Weddings at IFEMA" (TVE, 2013). It depicts seven couples that conform to the heteronormative model, but not a single one that challenges this pattern. When analyzing only the pieces that included different kinds of marriages, the proportional presence of same-sex couples increased in relation to the total and represented 17%. However, the relationships featured in these news stories still favored a heteronormative account by including 59 man-woman couples.

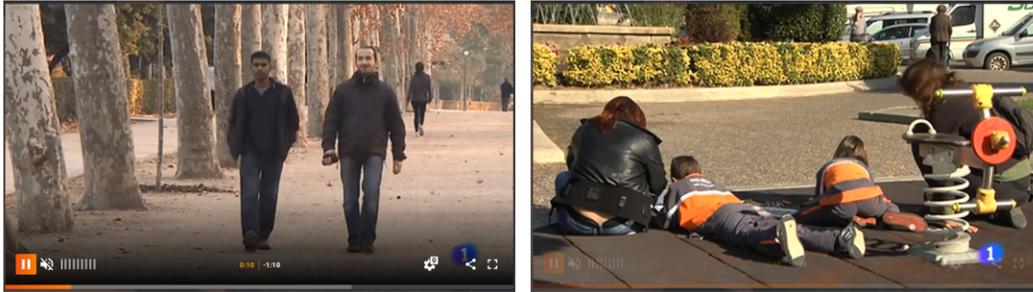
It is worth mentioning that of the 12 couples coded as same-sex relationships, only two were clearly perceived explicitly and unambiguously as such (see Figure 2). These two couples, one formed by two women and another by two men, appeared, respectively, in the items entitled "Wedding Videos Renewed With the Latest Technological Advances" (TVE, 2015b) and "The Best Wedding Photographers Meet in Barcelona" (TVE, 2017).



**Figure 2. A lesbian marriage (TVE, 2015b, 0:00:00) and a gay marriage (TVE, 2017, 0:00:00) opened two news items broadcast by TVE.**

The other relationships coded as graphic illustrations of same-sex couples showed two men or two women in a situation that, in accordance with what the news item covered, and especially with the voice-over that accompanied the image, contributed to such readings. This is the case of the shots in Figure 3, taken from the news entitled "Spain Is the Second EU Country With the Highest Divorce Rate" (TVE, 2018). The first shot, showing two men walking alongside one another in a park, appeared interspersed between two other shots representing each couple formed by one man and one woman with a loving attitude, and as a resource image with the voice-over of the journalist who wrote the piece, which says: "While this program lasts, 45 couples will have divorced, as stated by the Spanish Association of Family Lawyers" (TVE, 2018, 0:00:11). The second image, shown for a few seconds, is a picture of two women in a park with two children. The newscaster indicated that "nine in every ten

couples who separate have small children” (TVE, 2018, 0:00:47), which could lead people to think that the two women in this image formed a couple.

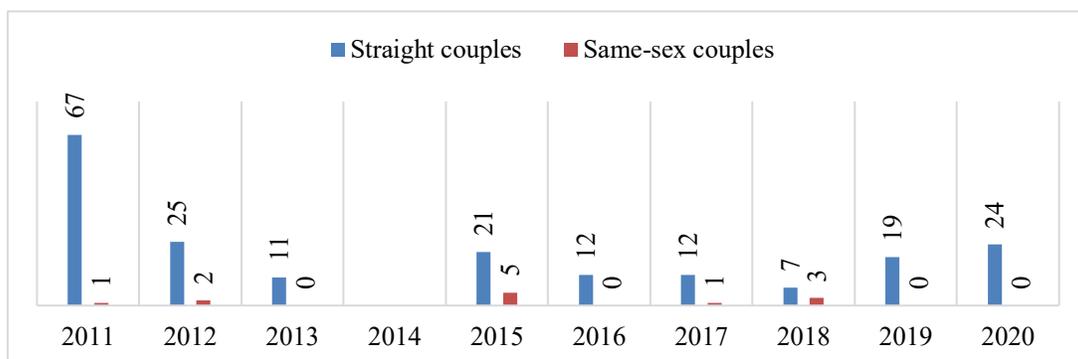


**Figure 3. These shots depicting two men (TVE, 2018, 0:00:11) and two women (TVE, 2018, 0:00:47) could be interpreted as representing same-sex couples.**

Same-sex couples’ visibility may be either limited to their presence as a resource image in the studied news items or appear as a source. Analysis of the 44 pieces in the corpus revealed, however, that not a single one actually featured an interview with a same-sex couple as part of the news. Conversely, 14 news items (32% of the total) included direct statements of man-woman couples.

#### ***Evolution of Representing Diversity***

The analysis of the data evidenced that the representation of non-heteronormative couples in information about marriage has not progressively grown over time. As Figure 4 shows, the pieces showing same-sex couples were concentrated in five years (2011, 2012, 2015, 2017, and 2018), while the largest sample of these relationships, with five cases, was concentrated in the mid-point of our study period, 2015.



**Figure 4. The representation of different types of couples disaggregated over years.**

As the general data suggest, we cannot find a similar space given to opposite-sex and same-sex couples in the marriage news that the TVE television program has broadcast in any of the analyzed years. It was in 2018 when the distance between one model and the other was shorter because three same-sex couples were illustrated as opposed to seven heteronormative couples. The first year when the audiovisual

pieces were retrieved, which was 2011, revealed a marked disproportion by showing 67 couples formed by one man and one woman as opposed to only one relationship model that could be interpreted as a same-sex marriage. Moreover, the fact that the pieces broadcast in the last 2 years, which the corpus contemplated, completely excluded same-sex marriage as related to the institution of marriage or wedding celebrations suggests that building journalistic discourse from a family and affective-sexual diversity perspective does not represent a progressive trend in audiovisual information.

### ***Couples Formed by Men and Couples Formed by Women in Audiovisual Coverage About Marriage***

The analysis showed that same-sex couples were poorly represented in the journalistic coverage of information linked with the institution of marriage. On the few occasions that TVE has included such relationships in its news, it opted to reflect couples formed by two men and couples formed by two women. Thus, the data revealed that of the 12 identified couples, seven were formed by two women, which made them the majority. Nonetheless, one noteworthy finding was that although the couples formed by two lesbian and/or bisexual women were the majority, they appeared only in four pieces. Conversely, the five relationships between two men included in the sample appeared in five other news items. Therefore, more journalistic pieces of information represented a relationship between two gay and/or bisexual men. Thus, taking into consideration the whole sample on the whole, the pieces illustrating a same-sex marriage using a picture of two men seem to predominate.

### ***Exclusion of Same-Sex Couples in News About Marriage***

The audiovisual pieces about marriage as a civil institution or a social ritual can explicitly leave aside same-sex marriage by two strategies. On the one hand, this can be achieved by expressing discourse that undoubtedly excludes same-sex couples by means of a description of the marital relationship that does not consider these family types. On the other hand, this can also be accomplished by performing this estrangement to reserve a specific place in discourse to talk about same-sex marriages to, thus, establish a clear differentiation between marriage in its general sense, presumably one that aptly corresponds to the heteronormative code, and same-sex marriage as a distinct reality. Our studied news pieces provide examples of both strategies.

With regard to the first of the above-described excluding-type formulae, we found that the voice-over, statements given by sources, or discourse graphically reproduced on the screen favored a description of marriage as being exclusively a union between a man and a woman in six news items. We identified three examples of the first of these cases. The text spoken in the news entitled "Divorces on the Rise" (TVE, 2011c) indicated that almost half the marriages that broke up in 2010 had small children. It added, "During these processes, children's custody is mostly for mothers, and fathers pay maintenance allowance in almost 90% of cases" (TVE, 2011c, 0:00:24). This completely leaves out of the informative focal point what actually happens in same-sex marriages that have children. Another news item, entitled "Bridal Fashion" (TVE, 2012b), included a speech in which the journalist states,

It is calculated that a bride in Spain spends a mean of approximately 1,500 euros on her wedding dress and the bridegroom spends about 700 euros on his wedding suit; her dress is still the most costly item, except for the wedding reception. (TVE, 2012b, 0:01:01)

This implicitly led readers to imagine only a wedding between a man and a woman. The third example was the news item "Spain Is the Second EU Country With the Highest Divorce Rate" (TVE, 2018). During the voice-over, the journalist stated, "The parents of 150,000 children divorce every year in Spain" (TVE, 2018, 0:01:08). Although its expression could correspond to the generic use of "parents," which includes both heteronormative couples and couples formed by two men (in Spanish, "padres" can be translated as "parents" and "fathers"), it would apparently exclude the notion of families with small children whose parents were two women.

This representation of the family as a model that precisely corresponded to the heteronormative pattern also came up in two more examples. Both graphically represented pictures evidently excluded homoparental family units. We first observed in the item "Divorces Affected by the Crisis" (TVE, 2015a) that one of its shots illustrated a blackboard with a drawing of how a marriage relationship with children was managed. It read "Communication system: father-mother" (TVE, 2015a, 0:00:20). This inevitably leaves out other family realities where married couples with children could be formed by two men or by two women. Second, we contemplated a similar strategy in the news item "Divorces Dropped by 2.8% in the Last Year" (TVE, 2019). It included a graph with data about the custody of children of the divorces registered in 2018. It contained only three categories (mother/father/shared), which completely leave out discourse on the reality of homoparental families. Our last implicitly exclusive discourse example was more subtle, a piece entitled "Pre-Nuptial Agreements" (TVE, 2011a). It contained a statement by a lawyer who explained the reciprocity to characterize new pre-marriage agreements about a hypothetical future divorce. She pointed out, "So we can say, will she be entitled to a pension? No, neither of them will be entitled to the other's pension" (TVE, 2011a, 0:01:08). Once again, it is an imaginary construction of a matrimonial model that employs discourse to favor the heteronormative relationship pattern.

This exclusion of same-sex couples from messages about marriage was clearly conveyed when an audiovisual piece marked a delimiting frontier between couples corresponding to heteronormativity and those that did not. We found two clear examples. One corresponded to the previously mentioned news item entitled "Divorces on the Rise" (TVE, 2011c). No sooner than it started, the journalist pointed out that "more than 110,000 couples [ . . . ] ended their marriage last year" (TVE, 2011c, 0:00:07). It then informed how many had actually separated or divorced, how many mutually agreed to do so, or who had the custody of small children. Some seconds later, the voice-over added, "There were 245 broken homosexual marriages" (TVE, 2011c, 0:00:34) and went on to offer general disaggregated data about divorce processes according to nationalities and Spanish autonomous communities. This discourse separated data on same-sex marriages from the rest of the information and offered no accurate details by way of explanation, unlike the details given when dealing with the general statistics that, apparently, corresponded only to heteronormative couples.

The second example proved more revealing. The piece entitled "Divorces Dropped by 2.8% in the Last Year" (TVE, 2019) started with the words of the journalist in the first-person plural, which implied that the audience were part of the data that he offered: "We the Spaniards divorced less in 2018 and, judging

by the statistics, we did so with fewer conflicts" (TVE, 2019, 0:00:00). Eight seconds before this item ended, the journalist finished by saying, "One final piece of information: In 2018, 1,141 same-sex couples divorced" (TVE, 2019, 0:00:58). He provided no more data to properly interpret this information, but he did with the general figures, also related exclusively to marriages formed by a man and a woman. Moreover, the way in which he had started by including the TV audience in his discourse denotes an imaginary construction of the audience as one formed exclusively by heterosexuals. When the item ended, he spoke to this apparently heterosexual audience for a whole minute about people like them and, as if it were an element to supplement his information, he told them what happens to same-sex marriages; that is, those formed by different people to whom he apparently addressed and whom he apparently identified himself with. At least, that is what his discourse suggested.

### Conclusions

The main objective of this study is to determine whether the information that TVE has offered in recent years favors the inclusive representation of marriage by integrating coverage of same-sex couples into news items about this civil institutionalization or the social celebration of weddings. The data collected from the results indicate that this coverage stands out for clearly favoring a definition of marriage being a couple formed by one man and one woman. Very rarely do they show a same-sex couple, which indicates that the audiovisual discourse favors the symbolic hegemony of heteronormativity, even 15 years after same-sex marriage was legalized in Spain. Couples formed by two men or two women are barely represented and are not represented in clearly unambiguous samples.

The percentage of same-sex marriages held in Spain during the study period lies between 1.96% (2013) and 3.52% (2020) of all marriages. Although the overall outcome of the present research points out that the representation of these couples comes to 5.8%, it stresses that these marriages are completely ignored in almost eight of every 10 news items. Besides, no public TV broadcaster should be restricted to proportionally representing minorities according to sociological data but should promote their visibility to favor their normalization and nondiscrimination in society on the whole. Moreover, and as previously mentioned, these minorities are never heard because this study finds no evidence about such couples appearing as an informative source. Therefore, this finding confirms H1 which, in line with previous studies that have analyzed how the mass media treats LGBTQIA+ people, indicates that same-sex couples are poorly represented in TV information when news items do not address facts that are specifically related to same-sex marriage.

This finding addresses the social responsibility of those journalists who work for TVE which, as a public medium, must monitor its commitment to represent social minorities in all its spaces. In 2020, when our study period ended, the Spanish government officially commemorated the 15th anniversary of the legalization of same-sex marriages in Spain. However, according to our results, no same-sex marriage appeared in TVE's news broadcast the same year when dealing with the institution of marriage from a generic point of view. Thus, rendering LGB people invisible when coverage speaks about society in general is worrying and is much more worrying in a context in which social discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people is rising: According to the Home Ministry data, in 2020 hate crimes against this population were the third most frequent ones and represented 64% more than in 2015. This increase in hate felt for LGBTQIA+ people

coincides with the arrival of the extreme right-wing party in Spain, called Vox, in Spanish institutions, which is represented in the Spanish Parliament since the 2019 elections; and Vox spokespersons are openly against same-sex marriage.

In line with our secondary research objectives, the results indicate that we cannot state that family and affective-sexual diversity is progressively being incorporated into TV coverage because its presence does not respond to a growing tendency, which has shown wide variability during the study period. Therefore, it is not possible to speak of any trend related to the representation of same-sex couples in TVE's news despite the number of these marriages having continuously grown in recent years in Spain. Furthermore, of the few found examples of same-sex couples, we observe quite a balanced relation between couples formed by two men and those formed by two women. This evidence allows us to reject H2, which hypothesizes that couples formed by two men appear more frequently than those formed by two women. Although it is true that more couples formed by two women generally appear, couples of two men are present in more news items. However, the difference is insignificant. Finally, the analysis of the corpus reveals some samples of same-sex couples being excluded from the marriage concept. This is accomplished by discursive strategies when this concept is informatively dealt with in general terms.

Therefore, these results allow us to conclude that the discursive construction of marriage by TVE's news program responds to the heteronormative model to a great extent. Same-sex marriage occupies a clear space in TVE's news program, which is revealed by the fact that the search for analysis units produced 40 news items that exclusively covered this reality. However, what this research also shows is that the image of same-sex couples is a journalistic focal point that has its own informative niche and one marked by values linked with disturbance and conflicts (controversies about legalizing same-sex civil unions in various countries) or with what is extraordinary and sensational (when the first same-sex couples or relevant public people marry). Heteronormativity shifts and leaves to one side these couples when "unmarked" marriage is being covered, which is well-deduced as being a marriage between a man and a woman. These new, and perhaps more subtle, ways than conventional ones of making LGBTQIA+ identities invisible in dominant journalistic discourse reveal that there is still a long way to go before family and affective-sexual diversity is present in not only the news that necessarily cover specific themes about this social group but also forms part of any normal topical coverage.

The indication of the possible causes behind the observed habitual exclusion of same-sex couples from news about marriage is no easy task because, among other reasons, it was not the object of study. However, it seems reasonable to consider that the heterocentrist culture, which remains hegemonic today in Western societies, is also clearly seen by journalists who are unlikely to avoid conveying culturally and deeply rooted values, of which they are not always conscious, in their coverage, marked by subjectivity. The findings herein presented justify conducting new research to know why the production of certain news items responds to a heteronormative approach. To do so, it would be interesting to carry out qualitative analyses by holding in-depth interviews or focus groups with the journalists linked with such coverage and to, thus, better know how their culture and ideology condition their production of news.

It would also be interesting to assess the degree of the diversity of the archive images and documents found in the resource libraries available for TV professionals. Therefore, looking in-depth to

develop journalists' intercultural training to improve their competences to represent the cultural differences (in terms of nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) and the diversity of their available resources, is a necessary task, especially in a TV channel like TVE, which, being a public mass medium, should be more committed to provide information that respects minorities, integrates the image of vulnerable social groups, and promotes values of equality and diversity.

Finally, this study has its limitations. It centers on one specific information type and only one TV channel. This opens up new lines of work to analyze how heteronormativity determines the construction of journalistic information about general matters. For example, it would be interesting to assess the incidence of this phenomenon in the coverage of other themes that also serve to consider the family and affective-sexual diversity perspective (e.g., celebrating Saint Valentine's Day or International Kissing Day) with information about partner relationships without considering their legal side or with matters that regularly appear in the media about organizing and managing family life. Likewise, analyzing such a relationship with the informative discourse of private channels, even with other media types (e.g., particularly, print and digital platforms), would be interesting where the graphic and illustrative component can also allow us to see what level of visibility is conferred to LGBTQIA+ people when mass media's journalists cover topics faced by society as a whole. Future works should address intersectionality by analyzing what types of same-sex couples are represented and prioritized in the news broadcast by conventional mass media like TVE in terms of race, age, disability, and physical characteristics, among other traits. This is because the examples herein observed suggest that TV favors the homonormative model (by selecting the typical behaviors of a given social class and lifestyle) perhaps for being more easily accepted by their mostly heterosexual audiences.

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