

DOSSIER

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND JOURNALISM:

the case of Brazilian Women's spring

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ABSTRACT - This article aims at reflecting on one of the most arid grounds of the discussion regarding gender in journalism: reproductive rights. More specifically, we seek to identify what has been published about the discussion on abortion in the media and the potential of the historical moment, in which new movements reheat the debate on women's rights. To that end, we have collected data, analyzed content, and articulated intersectional theoretical references of the two fields: gender relations and the journalistic field, based on the coverage of the movement of Brazilian women in November 2015, known as "Women's Spring", in the national magazines *Época* and *IstoÉ*. The analysis of the material has revealed a wide coverage, not criminalizing, but restricted to the traditional discursive rituals that surround topics considered as taboo and which do not fit into a public health framing.

Key words: Journalism. Gender relations. Reproductive rights.

DIREITOS REPRODUTIVOS E JORNALISMO: o caso da Primavera das Mulheres brasileiras

RESUMO - Este artigo se propõe a refletir acerca de um dos terrenos mais áridos da discussão de gênero no jornalismo, os direitos reprodutivos. Mais especificamente, buscamos identificar os interditos à discussão sobre o aborto na mídia e as potencialidades do momento histórico, no qual novos movimentos reacendem o debate sobre os direitos das mulheres. Para tal, articulamos o levantamento de dados, análise de conteúdo e um referencial teórico interseccional aos dois campos: as relações de gênero e o campo jornalístico, utilizando como base a cobertura da movimentação das mulheres brasileiras em novembro de 2015, conhecida como "Primavera das Mulheres", nas revistas *Época*

e *IstoÉ*. A análise do material revelou uma cobertura ampla, não criminalizadora, mas circunscrita aos rituais discursivos tradicionais que se operam em/sobre temas considerados tabus e afastada do enquadramento da saúde pública.

Palavras-chave: Jornalismo. Relações de gênero. Direitos reprodutivos.

DERECHOS REPRODUCTIVOS Y PERIODISMO: el caso de la Primavera de las mujeres brasileñas

RESUMEN - Este artículo se propone a reflexionar sobre uno de los terrenos más áridos de la discusión de género en el periodismo, los derechos reproductivos. Más específicamente, buscamos identificar los interdictos a la discusión sobre el aborto en los medios y las potencialidades del momento histórico, en el que nuevos movimientos calientan el debate sobre los derechos de las mujeres. Para tal, articulamos el levantamiento de datos, análisis de contenido y un referencial teórico interseccional a los dos campos, las relaciones de género y el campo periodístico, utilizando como base la cobertura del movimiento de las mujeres brasileñas en noviembre de 2015, conocida como Primavera de las Mujeres, en las revistas nacionales *Época* y *IstoÉ*. El análisis del material reveló una cobertura amplia, no criminalizadora, pero circunscrita a los rituales discursivos tradicionales que se operan en / sobre temas considerados tabúes y alejados del encuadramiento de la salud pública.

Palabras clave: Periodismo; Relaciones de género; Derechos reproductivos

Introduction

National Research on Abortion 2016 - conducted by ANIS – Bioethics Institute and the University of Brasília revealed that, only in 2015, over 500 thousand women underwent an abortion. In a country with a strong Christian background, where the practice of abortion is only legal when: (1) the pregnancy represents risk to the woman's life, (2) it is a consequence of rape, or (3) is leading to the birth of an anencephalic fetus; it is important to consider the possibility of cases being underreported and, consequently, serious public health problems arise from this invisibility. According to the estimations of the World Health Organization, a million Brazilian women abort illegally and unsafely every year. Every two days, a woman dies as a consequence of a clandestine abortion.

The data previously mentioned help outline the urgency of this debate and, therefore, make this an issue of public interest. In this context, journalism, as a discursive field of mediation of the construction of senses in a society, is itself a relevant political instance to allow us to understand how secularized relations of power are perpetuated or severed in relation to discourses and

symbols articulated in its publications. Because of this, this paper seeks to analyze the relationship between journalism and women's reproductive rights, based on a paradigmatic analysis of the coverage of the Women's Spring by magazines *Época* and *IstoÉ*, both sold nationally.

In November 2015, thousands of women occupied the streets of the main state capitals in Brazil, protesting against Law Project number 5069 proposed in 2013, submitted by the then federal representative Eduardo Cunha. This project sought to make the access to prophylaxis and legal abortion more difficult for women victimized by rape. This Law Project was retrograde in its attempt to scale back rights that had already been secured; it made it mandatory to present a police report and a medical report signed by the Legal Medicine Institute to prove the sexual violence undergone. Only then, would medical assistance be performed and interruption of the pregnancy be an option. The Law Project also proposed punishment to medical professionals who prescribed emergency contraception, known as morning-after pills, and who informed patients about legally-approved reasons for abortion: rape, risk of death of the woman, and anencephaly.

The Law Project gained wide repercussion nationally and provoked protests against its passing by the Congress. This mobilization against the Project gained relevance and started to voice demands for gender equality and fight for rights, in a movement that came to be known as Women's Spring, in reference to the "Arab Spring"¹, and became a topic of news reports, first page of newspapers, and raising reactions in social media. The protests were described by newspaper *El País* as follows:

In other countries, women fight for equal salaries, for equality in management boards, for laws to allow them to conciliate work and family life. In Brazil, too;but also not only that. Today, they fight to not go back in the rights they have secured so far and, most of all, they fight for the right to go out (by bus or subway) without being harassed, insulted or disrespected. They fight so that girls today are not badly treated as they, their grandmothers, mothers, and older sisters have consistently been treated (*El País*, 2015, s.p.).

According to the Brazilian Forum on Public Security, in 2016, 135 cases of rape were registered in Brazil every day. Data from the Ministry of Health shows that cases of collective rape in Brazil have almost tripled in five years, going from 1570 in 2011 to 3526 in

2016. It is important to emphasize that there may be underreporting in these numbers. The Brazilian Institute for Applied Research in Economic (IPEA) released, in 2016, an x-ray of sexual violence in Brazil, based on data from the System of Information on Disease Notification (Sinan), the Health Monitoring Secretariat (SVS), and the Ministry of Health. This report found that only 10% of all cases were reported and registered. Out of thousands of people raped, 89% are women, and 70% of all cases involve children or teenagers, half of which have already suffered prior abuse². This is an utterly grave issue, which makes it necessary to discuss it broadly, in a plural manner, taking media outlets into consideration because they are responsible for publishing information for a large number of people.

Journalism and gender relations: webs to be women

In plural and unequal societies, such as the Brazilian one, journalism plays an important role because it is one of the main links between different social segments, in that it highlights the most relevant issues in the public agenda and greatly influences the maintenance or the questioning of the status of current powers. It is a fact that journalism is a symbolic field permeated by a series of actors and institutions, where there is an intense competition for power which materializes in the senses presented in the journalistic coverage of different topics, which themselves compete to be included in the media and public agendas.

Symbolic systems and tools of knowledge and communication can only wield structuring power because they are structured themselves. (...) Symbols are the genuine tools of social integration: as tools of knowledge and communication, they bring about *consensus* regarding the sense of the social world, which fundamentally contributes to the reproduction of the social order: "logical" integration in the condition of "moral" integration". (Bourdieu, 1989, pp.9-10)

This is why media outlets are fundamental pieces in the creation of the agenda of public debate; it is partially responsible for raising issues to be discussed in the public sphere. According to Habermas (1997), this can be understood as an "adequate web for the communication of content, stating of positions and opinions; in this web, communication flows are filtered and summarized to the point where they are consolidated in public opinion regarding

specific issues” (Habermas, 1997, p. 92). This sphere is part of the constitution of societies – it is the field where public issues are addressed by public and private actors. This is a space where public opinion is formed as considerations of a part of the populations concerning State, society and other public issues.

Public opinion is frequently revealed by private initiatives, mainly media outlets: these outlets are a crucial point in this process in that they perform the function of feeding public opinion, by setting the topics for discussion and determining which issues are more relevant, as well as the function of publicizing these opinions formed. For Habermas (1984), the public sphere has become an arena of conflict between different interest groups who seek the media in order to manipulate the audience, that is, the public.

Taking into consideration the importance of media outlets to publicize ideas and influence the public sphere, it can be said that the editorial guidelines applied by a media outlet, its enunciation strategies and the option to publicize certain discourses/sources to the detriment of others have a direct impact on the discourse published by the newspapers regarding a certain issue and, consequently and more importantly, influence the way this discourse will be received and interpreted by public opinion.

It is important to emphasize that, even after the inception of the cyberspace, which expanded the dimensions (and challenges) of the traditional public sphere, making it possible for individual to become protagonists in enunciation acts, media outlets have retained strong influence over the construction of social imagination and public opinion.

This is why the inclusion of a certain agenda in the public sphere must be observed not only from the point of view of what the media has to say about an issue but also from the point of view of how it is being said, that is: what frame the media outlet has chosen to frame that issue. Thus, the way the issue will be discussed in the public sphere is directly related to the way each media outlet codifies what happened. This happens in a specific language, defined by a specific organizational framing shaped by its technical structure, organization and the sense of the public to which it is addressed. This lends the journalistic discourse special characteristics, depending on which media outlet has produced it. This happens because “not only do they establish public agenda,

but media outlets also have the power to determine how we should think about the issues present in the media” (Colling, 2002, p. 114). The way the news are framed, “the way they are presented and contextualized, and how certain terms, certain instances of the real, are favored to the detriment of others when it comes to describing something, all this has a decisive impact on the construction of its meaning” (Gradim, 2016, pp. 18-19).

Todd Gitlin defines framing as “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, selection, emphasis, and exclusion through which symbolic manipulators routinely organize discourse, be it verbal or visual” (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7). It can be understood as socially constructed interpretative patterns by means of which people ascribe meaning to situations and events (Goffman, 1986). In the case of news, it is processed by framings that have been established by the primary definers of the fact, and then by the framings of the journalist and the editor until it reaches its final format. “The very techniques of construction of news – title, lead, inverted pyramid -, all of which require opinion and selection, constitute framing devices destined to highlight the “news” out of the shapeless amalgamation of elements that make up an event” (Gradim, 2016, p. 25).

Still on the theory of framing, Anabela Gradim emphasizes the ideas of Gaye Tuchman, who, in order to develop the notion of framing, starts at the metaphor of a window: “Comparing the news to a ‘window to the world’, as they outline and frame what they focus on, in a not completely transparent process, even though it generally remains invisible” (Gradim, 2016, p. 47). The author continues:

News are stories and narratives that cut portions out of everyday life to which it attributes “*newsworthiness*” and public interest. This form of organizing a current event constitutes the “*frame*” in the window metaphor. (...) As products from social institutions that maintain a relationship with themselves and with other institutions, and products originate in a certain culture and well-established professional routine, the news inevitably design frames, because it is in their natures to be windows to the world (Gradim, 2016, pp. 47-48).

Still on the topic of framing, Bourdieu indicates the “journalists wear special glasses from which they see certain things and not others; and see what they see in a special way. Journalists perform selection and construction of what is selected” (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 25). The author also describes framing as “invisible structures that

organize what is perceived and determine what is seen and what is not seen (...) which is a product of education, history, etc.” (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 25).

It is important to note that all the framings applied on the fact that is going to become news are immersed in a political game between many social actors who have influence over public opinion, especially the State and the media. Thus, framing originates from a dispute to determine which interpretation will prevail after the formation, development and resolution of controversy and conflicting political opinions (Porto, 2004).

In parallel to the framing - that is: how a certain topic is approached -, the absence of a certain topic in the media discourse also shows a political choice on the part of the media outlet. This directly impacts the spreading of information regarding a certain issue, because when this issue is not covered, or when it is covered superficially by emphasizing only one side of the topic, media outlets tend to contribute to a non-discussion, and to an inaccurate interpretation of the issue in the public sphere.

It has been noted that sexual and reproduction rights are an issue that is usually silenced or covered in a partial, non-plural manner. In most cases, these issues are covered in a superficial way, from a religious angle, as has been described by Débora Diniz and Ana Paula Damasceno concerning abortion:

(...) generally, this issue is taken away from the fields of health and women's reproduction rights and becomes a religious or political issue. (...) media influencers, represented in this case by the professionals of printed media in Brazil, are concerned with situating the debate on abortion in the field of religious morality and national politics rather than analyzing it as a public health issue (Diniz & Damasceno, 2001, p.1).

Pregnancy interruption is, in most cases, covered under the guise of illegality and the consequent criminalization of women who take part in it, which makes public debate on this issue difficult, especially because the construction of public knowledge is mediated by the media, and therefore this media is a practical tool in forming and shaping public opinion.

The control of discourses by newspapers concerning abortion can be classified as what Michel Foucault (2003) calls exclusion system. According to the author, there are three types of interdiction: 1) taboo of objects referring to, basically, sexuality and politics; 2) the ritual of circumstance, according to which certain issues must

only be discussed in specific circumstances; and 3) the right that is a privilege or exclusive to the speaking subject: a connection to the most “reliable” sources to cover certain issues, which centralizes voices and homogenizes discourses. To talk about discourse is to discuss relations of power in a given society, as well as the *status quo* that uphold norms and values:

(...) I suppose the production of discourse in every society is controlled, selected, organized, and redistributed by a certain array of procedures that have the function of conjuring their powers and perils, control their random occurrence, and to dodge their heavy, fearsome materiality (Foucault, 2003, pp.8-9).

There is another agenda that is usually criminalized by media outlets: social movements and street protests. Whenever social movements are covered by traditional media outlets, it is, with rare exceptions, superficially and from the angle of criminalizing them, which tends to force public opinion to be against these movements. According to researcher Leopoldo Volanin (2007), social movements in Brazil have always been a target for criticism by the traditional media. “Mass communication, being dominated by the dominant classes, transmit to the society, with all the strength of their ideological oppression, the idea that social organizations are movements that disrupt the social, political, and economic systems of the country” (Volanin, 2007, p. 2).

Still according to Volanin, media outlets will not easily give space to the expression or constitution of interests that jeopardize the basic structures of capitalism, because they behave according to logic of the market and have profit as their objective. Thus, the political and economic elite use mass communication to spread their ideology, trying to present them to the population as a consensus:

By doing this, the elite intend to gain support, especially from segments of the middle class, using media outlets to incriminate social movements and their leaders. Society ends up convinced and believes that the act of fighting for a right becomes a crime against social order (Volanin, 2007, p. 14).

Nevertheless, Women’s Spring, this paper’s object of study, was covered by some media outlets, and was especially covered in magazines *Época* and *IstoÉ*. On the other hand, to be covered by the media is not a guarantee of a plural discourse of empowering of these movements in a context that publicizes

their ideas and makes their demands understandable by the general population.

It is important to reiterate that the act under analysis was situated in the intersection of an actions related to the feminist movement, or at least to feminism as a line of political thought that demands radical disruption of logics of oppression that degrade women in relation to men and criticism of hegemonic normativity of legal institutions that justify these unequal relations of power. It is necessary to analyze how these two magazines approached the issues presented by the movement. Was there criminalization of the protest? Did the media outlets present the movement's demands in a way that contributed to public debate on the topic of gender, especially women's reproductive rights?

An analysis of the Women's Spring

Época and *IstoÉ* magazines were chosen as the object of study of this paper because they were the only weekly media outlets that showed the protests in their cover, which means they were the main topic to be covered in their respective issues. Furthermore, being published weekly, there is more time to analyze the facts and write the text, which may lead to more complete material being published. Outlets published in printed form were chosen because it is possible to develop the discursive materiality on their pages, which makes it easier to analyze the contents of each news report, and this is one of the methodological tools used by this paper.

The *corpus* of pragmatic analysis in this paper is composed by the news reports regarding the Women's Spring published in *Época*, issue number 909, and *IstoÉ*, issue number 2397. The first magazine is published weekly and is owned by Editora Globo, which is part of Grupo Globo, and has an approximate publication of 390,000 copies. They describe themselves in their page on social media website Facebook³ as “*Época* – content that transforms”, and in their Itunes⁴ profile as a magazine that “informs you, helps you understand, and opens space for you to give your opinion on what happens in Brazil and in the world. Every week, you will receive, through this application, an issue of the magazine that inspects power and tells the story behind the facts, without avoiding controversy”⁵.

The weekly magazine *IstoÉ* is published by Editora Três, and has an average publication of 322,000 copies, according to data from the National Association of Magazine Editors (ANER)⁶. On their page on Facebook, it is described as “the most combative weekly magazine in Brazil”⁷, and on the publishing house’s website as “one of the most influential media outlets in the country”⁸.

To explore the *corpus*, this paper will use as methodological tool the analysis of the content of the journalistic coverage of the women’s protests published in the magazines mentioned above. The research method relies on the use of this tool and on the possibility of establishing a qualitative reading of the journalistic material under analysis.

Broadly used by different areas of empirical social science, content analysis is a very useful method in journalistic research. It can be used to detect trends and models in the analysis of “newsworthiness” criteria, as well as framing and agendas. It is also useful to describe and classify journalistic products, genres, and formats, to assess characteristics of the production of people, groups, and organizations to identify typical elements, significant examples of discrepancy, and to compare different journalistic products produced for different media in different cultures (Herscovitz, 2010, p. 123).

The analysis of the material will be conducted according to the following categories: (a) sources and interviewed characters; (b) presentation of the reasons that were presented for the acts described; (c) the presence or not of topics on sexual violence and abortion, as well as their presentation throughout the news report; (d) criminalization, by the media outlets under analysis, of the issue of abortion; and (e) emphasis on the protest in the issues under analysis.

While exploring the corpus, it is possible to see that the topic of the Women’s Spring was highlighted by these two weekly magazines. It was on the cover of both, and many pages were dedicated to discussing the issue a 17-page thematic dossier in *Época*, and a six-page news report in *IstoÉ*. The issue was also emphasized in an editorial written by Editora Globo. It is possible, therefore to outline two styles of coverage of the protest: one type of coverage was done entirely in the third person, showing many different characters, and in which the journalist presents themselves as a discourse mediator whose function is to tell stories and to allow the characters to speak for

themselves; the other type of coverage is a mixed one, where constant displacement of the role of the journalists can be seen: they sometimes function as mediators relating facts in the third person and sometimes position themselves as characters, telling their own experiences.

IstoÉ's coverage of the issue of women's rights relied on speeches by specialists as well as members of social movements. The magazine approaches the main reason for the protests in a direct manner, and, in some parts, discusses the practical implication of the issue on women's lives. The story, written by reporters Camila Brandalise and Fabíola Perez, also includes other agendas of the women's movement, especially the feminist movement. It has a protest on avenida Paulista⁹, which initially opposed Eduardo Cunha's Law Project, as its main narrative thread and then moves on to discuss a broader sphere of civil rights demands.

It was a political movement, addressing the president of the House of Representatives, Eduardo Cunha (PMDB-RJ), and his infamous Law Project to limit the access of raped women to abortion – a right that is guaranteed by law today – and makes it mandatory for the raped woman to go to a police station. But the act, which happened in other states of the Country and included participants of all ages, contemplated much more. The women involved spoke about sexual harassment, racism, intolerance, and sexism (Brandalise & Perez, 2016, p.44).

In this news report, the Brazilian Women's Spring is shown as an example of fight in a context of historical protests under the same scope: fight for women's civil rights. Presented as an infographic, the report shows a timeline of "actions that changes mindsets, laws, and even governments in the fight for rights and justice" (Brandalise & Perez, 2016, p. 44). The 2015 protest is narrated a node in a web of protests¹⁰, which goes to show its political and historical importance.

Besides the infographic, there are other resources to help craft the narrative, such as the image at the very beginning of the report: sentences spoken by the women during the protests, which reveal the motivation of the protest, are highlight in speech bubbles, in a reference to the participants' voice. These bubbles appeared alongside with an image of the working woman, wearing a bandanna and rolling up her blouse's sleeves, showing a muscular biceps which, associated with the sentence We can do it!, became a symbol of the feminist movement in the 1980's, and which notes

the fact that women can carry out activities usually performed by men, deconstructing the idea of women being the weaker sex. It is important to mention the image displayed in the magazine, a black woman took the place of the woman in the original poster, which indicates that black women were protagonists in the fight for rights described in the news report.

Starting with the image, it is possible to see that women were protagonists, and this is reflected in the presence of women as the only sources and characters in the news report. The text is based on the opinion of specialists on issues related to women's rights, including female historians, female college professors, female representatives of the Public Ministry of Brazil, and female professionals and students who work with or who are involved in feminist organizations, and it shows important characters in the fight for women's rights, such as Judith Butler, Maria da Penha, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and Malala Yousafzai. In spite of the space given to female voices, it is important to note the absence of talks by women who took part in the protests but who did not belong to any feminist organization and who are not specialists in gender issues.

Regarding the issues of sexual violence and abortion, it is possible to see that they were not presented in a criminalizing manner. Pregnancy interruption is shown prominently in a photo of a protest in Recife, and is discussed in the narrative under the topic of the Law Project 5069/2013, along with the issue of sexual violence. However, the text does not discuss any other issues related to sexual violence, such as insecurity and the high number of rape cases; neither does it discuss the legalization of abortion outside of violent cases, that is, pregnancy interruption as a right of choice by women.

On October 21st, the Constitution and Justice Commission of the House of Representatives approved the Law Project 5069/2013, which makes it more difficult for a victim of sexual violence to seek treatment in the Unified Health System (SUS). "It is the normalization of an inhumane, prejudiced treatment of women", says Silvia Chakian de Toledo Santos, coordinator of the Special Combat Group against Domestic and Family Violence against Women of the Public Ministry of São Paulo. She explains that the project makes it mandatory for women to undergo a forensic exam in order to prove that she was victim of sexual violence. Only after that may she have access to treatment. "People who work in this field know that not every case of violence leaves behind enough evidence for a medical report to attest the violence", says Silvia. Moreover, this document creates a condition according to which, in order to have access to the health system, a woman must seek Criminal Justice beforehand.

“It is unacceptable because not every woman can withstand the pain of reporting their aggressor. Many cases of abuse happen within the household, and the onus of such a criminal process would be a burden for the women.” (...) The Law Project is going to be voted in the Plenary of the House of Representatives, but not without protest (Brandalise & Perez, 2016, p. 45).

From a broad point of view, it is possible to classify the magazine’s coverage as positive regarding the importance of women’s civil rights and gender equality. The narrative relies on opinions and positions of women of the society, including race issues.

In regards to *Época*, which covered the topic in its editorial, it is possible to see coverage of the movements for women’s rights. The dossier published by the magazine is composed by a central news report, written by journalists Cristina Grillo, Grazielle Oliveira and Marcela Buscato, and by “three articles written by renowned journalists of Editora Globo” (Lima, 2015, p. 20).

The main report¹¹, titled “The Women’s Spring”, has as its main theme the movement of women who fight for rights, gender equality, and a safer, more equal society for women. Street protests against the Law Project proposed by Eduardo Cunha are presented as a point in the story of this movement, which is described in the news report as “currently the most important political movement” (Grillo, Oliveira & Buscato, 2016, p. 66).

The narrative is based on testimonials by activists who belong to this movement, specialists on women’s rights, such as a female anthropologist and a female historian, and also shows facts to support the opinions presented, such as sexually-charged messages sent to a female participant in a culinary *reality show* who was only 12 years old – a fact also mentioned in the news report by *IstoÉ* – and participation of women who created collectives to publicize information about feminism. The characters and the sources are exclusively women, and some of them also appear on the news report published by *IstoÉ*: historian Margareth Rago, journalist Juliana Faria, founder of the website *Think Olga*, and actress Taís Araújo, who was victim of racism on social media.

Besides the main news report, the dossier is composed by three other articles, two of them covering the issues of abortion and harassment suffered by women, which is one of the categories of the analysis conducted in this paper. In the article “My first harassment”, journalist Marina Caruso describes a situation of

sexual violence she suffered when she was a teenager, which shows the women can be harassed anywhere, even at school. However, even if the story represents a reality lived by many Brazilian women when the aggressor is somebody who is close to the victim, the opinion of the reporter can be inferred as being correlated to common sense regarding sexual harassment in the form of catcalling, a fact that is considered embarrassing by many women.

Different from my friends, catcalling did not bother me. On the contrary, I liked it and did as much as I could to provoke it by wearing tight ballet clothes. This may sound strange in a time such as today, when some women consider even respectful flirting as harassment (Caruso, 2015, p. 78).

One of the characteristics of culturally-inherited truths (norms, values, etc.) seems to be their resurgence even when there are attempts to deny them. It is the same with sexual rights, “the idea of Reproductive Rights disagrees with the perspective of biological determinism, and inserts freedom of reproductive choice in a broader citizenship context” (Ávila, 1993, p. 16).

Discourses not only appear as logical systems of production and symbolic resignification, but they indicate, as noted by Foucault, that “we live in a society which marches for the most part to the ‘rhythm of the truth’ – that is, a society which produces and circulates discourses which function as the truth, which disguise themselves as the truth, and which, because of this, retain specific powers” (Foucault, 2009, p. 231).

A significant quantitative information must be considered: *Época* magazine, in its main news report, refers to representative Eduardo Cunha only once, and by doing this displaces its criticism to a broader sphere: sexist culture, and directs its coverage to the empowerment of women and their capacity for political organization. By doing this, by making superficial criticisms to the representative, the magazine performs a kind of thematic displacement which, in spite of the number of pages dedicated to the issue at hand, makes their approach shallower in its most relevant aspect: reproductive rights and a conservative advance in the establishing of the agenda for this issue.

The reason for abortion rates to drop after it is legalized is simple. Women interrupt undesired pregnancy regardless of the law. When abortion is legalized, the ease of access

to health services makes it possible to properly educate patients on contraceptive methods and how to receive those free of charge. This is what makes a difference (Segatto, 2015, p. 76).

The decriminalization of pregnancy interruption was also discussed in the editorial of the magazine, titled “Women against what is cruel and inhumane”. Signed by the magazine’s news director João Gabriel de Lima, the editorial lists some advances women have secured through feminism and addresses directly the issue of abortion.

Brazil is a country that refuses to tackle pregnancy interruption as a public health issue, as it is in more developed countries. Brazil is also a country where one woman dies every two days from an abortion conducted in bad conditions. This Law Project may worsen this situation even further (Lima, 2015, p. 20).

In spite of having been written by different media outlets, the narratives analyzed in this paper converge in their treatment of the framing of the many issues related to women’s rights and the growing mobilization in social media. Both magazines mentioned, even in the undertitle of each news report, the advance of feminist demands in the virtual environment: “Women’s voices echo in the streets and in social media and becomes a protagonist in the fight for civil rights, for the end of harassment, and even for the impeachment of representative Eduardo Cunha” (Brandalise & Perez, 2016, p. 41) and “Women take the streets and social media, and create a movement that shakes the country” (*Época*, 2016, Front cover).

The women’s movement has used digital media as platform for the proliferation of their fight; it even functions as a strategy to breach the blocking of feminist agendas by traditional media outlets in most cases. “In the digital age, possibilities of feminist intervention certainly encounter an even more potent resonance” (Vieira, 2012, p. 13).

The strength of the movement itself was the consequence of the articulation power of social media. However, caution is necessary when discussing social media in order to avoid instrumental fetishism of the *medias* and deterministic approaches. This caution is necessary not only for academics but also for journalists, especially because they have an ethic role in the production of socially-shared senses. The context itself of this

discussion is a paradox: in a moment when women have a larger power to speak, boosted by technology, and are more empowered, these political subjects need to go to the streets to stop processes that are legally processed, which threaten to go back to a time when women were not even considered political subjects. The ritual of circumstance (Foucault, 2003) of debate on reproductive rights was also notorious, especially because the discussion occurred only in these issues of two magazines, even though the protests continued on the streets in many state capitals in Brazil, and even though the Law Project continued to be discussed in the House of Representatives.

Some conclusions and other incentives for the continuation of the debate

Feminism, as political action and critical thought, aims at gender equality and the end of the submissive condition of women in relation to men's patriarchal dominance. Among other causes, feminism proposes the democratization of everyday life, expanding spaces of speech in the public sphere, and acknowledging the importance of women in history (Veloso, 2011).

Since its heyday in the 1970's and 1980's, this movement has propelled actions that have transformed society in their attempts to include women as political subject of their own history. This feminist legacy has been recovered in recent days through the mobilization of women in the streets who resume agendas from the 1970's, such as *my body, my rules*, among other catchphrases.

This female mobilization, such as the SlutWalk, which happens every year since 2011 in many cities in Brazil and around the world, indicates social discontent over gender violence, the lack of female autonomy, and the disrespect to women's human rights. The sentiment of fight for right is not restricted to the feminist movement anymore, but has spread through a generation of women who go to the streets using their voices and bodies as instruments of political fight.

Opposing social regress in the field of human rights, these protests grew alongside with social pressure. In this context, acts of mobilization by women started to pressure the public sphere more and more, and were no longer seen as isolated initiatives, acquiring

a status of fight for rights. As it grew, this movement became part of the agenda of media outlets.

Regarding the object of this paper, The Women's Spring, as a massive mobilization in many cities, gained relevance in magazines *Época* and *IstoÉ*, which were analyzed here. However, it is important to mention that this happened because of the pressure the protests simultaneously generated in big cities, especially in the southern and southeastern regions of the country. Mobilization in social media was intense, and it was inevitable that it be included in the agenda of country-wide media outlets, as were the periodicals analyzed.

After analyzing the corpus, it is noticeable that the coverage of both weekly magazines showed the Women's Spring in a positive light, describing the growth of the feminist movement and a few causes defended by the protestors. In spite of the different types of coverage mentioned in this study, it is possible to outline a coverage profile of the periodicals: sources composed of women who were part of the feminist movement, mostly white and idle class, and also female researchers and specialists. Still, women who were not part of the movement but who attended the protests were not represented in the news reports. We come back to the same rules that govern discursive power systems, described by Foucault (2003), and thus protagonist women are also a segmented phenomenon.

The issue of pregnancy interruption is discussed in both news reports, but it is only explicitly characterized as a public health issue, as is demanded by the protestors, in the editorial published by *Época*. Because of this, a reader who is only interested in the news report and doesn't pay attention to the editorial will find a text decriminalizing of women who undergo an abortion, but will not find the issue being discussed from a public health perspective.

When the coverages published by the two magazines are compared, it is possible to see certain difference in the depth in which the issue is discussed: *Época* magazine covers the issue in a more superficial way when compared to the coverage by *IstoÉ*. Even though it dedicates more pages topic, presenting more journalists and a more diversified format, showing opinion articles, the periodical covered the issue mostly through the perspective of its own journalists. Even the sources, which are

mostly the same as the ones interviewed by *IstoÉ*, are introduced superficially, which silences the voices of the women on the streets. This can be seen in the images that illustrate both news reports: in the magazine published by Globo, the pictures are shot professionally, showing their characters' arms folded, displaced from their fight environment. Meanwhile, in *IstoÉ* there are images of women in the protests, which grants these participants of the movement legitimacy.

It is extremely important that media outlets cover social movements, especially their demands, so as to contribute to social debate on those issues. In the specific case of the Women's Spring, the magazines analyzed here have contributed to the discussion on gender equality and respect toward women. On the other hand, the cultural restrictions on a broader debate on abortion are visible in both magazines. It is necessary that this debate occur continuously and more freely.

It is essential to consider how the issue of abortion was covered in a superficial, accusatory, criminalizing and stereotyped manner during the second round of general elections, when one of the candidates was a woman. Thus, this narrative corroborates the discourse about the Women's Spring, which brings to light and strengthens the fight for equality between genders and the necessity to fight against all forms of oppression of women. Media must continuously act to defend social issues, creating the agendas in a plural way that is constructive for the public debate.

* This paper was translated by Lee Sharp

NOTES

- 1 Wave of protests and revolutions that occurred in the Middle East and North Africa between the end of 2010 and 2011, during which the population went to the streets to topple dictators and to demand better living conditions.
- 2 Retrieved from <<http://www.agenciapatriciagalvao.org.br/dossie/pesquisas/estupro-no-brasil-uma-radiografia-segundo-os-dados-dasaude-ipea-2014/>>.

- 3 Data available at <https://www.facebook.com/epoca/info/?tab=page_info> Accessed on May 22nd, 2016.
- 4 Software developed by Apple which allows users of the IOS operating system to play audio and video and to buy digital media files in the management format of digital rights manager FairPlay.
- 5 Retrieved from: <<https://itunes.apple.com/br/app/revista-epoca/id417238547?mt=8>>.
- 6 Last data published by National Association of Magazine Editors (ANER), referring to the period between January and September 2014. Retrieved from: < <http://aner.org.br/dados-de-mercado/circulacao/> >.
- 7 Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/revistaISTOE/info/?tab=page_info>.
- 8 Retrieved from: <<http://editora3.com.br/istoe.php>>.
- 9 Protests by women occurred in many Brazilian cities between October 28th and November 3rd, 2015. However, the text mostly covers the protest on Avenida Paulista and, in the caption under one of the pictures, alludes to protests in other cities.
- 10 The news report mentions historical protests such as “Suffragettes in the United Kingdom”, in 1903, and “Brazilian Suffragette”, in 1922, who fought for the right to female vote. The infographic also mentions the book *The Second Sex*, by Simone de Beauvoir, which deconstructs the idea of gender identity, and which influenced the American and European movements in the 1960’s and 1970’s; Brazilian protestors who joined the armed resistance to the military dictatorship; and the National Council for Women’s Rights, which was composed of militants who sought to include women’s rights in the Constitution of 1988.
- 11 The *Época* magazine uses the term Women’s Spring, which was the name for the movement, on its front cover and in its main news report. The news report published by *IstoÉ* does not mention this nomenclature.

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