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Radio, Citizenship and Social Identity

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Abstract:

This article is about the issue of citizenship, identity and media, namely radio. With industrialized societies, the development of capitalism and the complexity of modern society, people stopped having direct contact with facts, they depend of the mediation of the media. The means of communication lead to new identities and behavior models. Media acquired a very relevant social importance in the social construction of reality. Radio, a mean of communication that this study is about, has caused important changes in the society of the 20th century. It has become bigger, it has become universal. All over the world, radio is still the most broadcasted mean of communication according to UNESCO. Radio participated actively in the construction of social meanings due to its strong presence in the daily life of its listeners. With this perspective, a survey in the city of Palmas, Tocantins – Brazil was done with 600 women. The objective of this survey was: to diagnose the main themes that interfere in the quality of life of those women, to evaluate radio as a promotional form of identity and the feminine citizenship. The results confirmed radio's potential as a tool to make conscious criticism and women's political and social development easier.

Keywords: gender, citizenship, consciousness, radio

Introduction

This present article about women's citizenship and the problematic of gender has the objective of bringing together the areas of communication and education to diagnose the main themes that interfere in the quality of life of the women of Palmas, Tocantins – Brasil. It is fundamental to discuss the role of the media as one of the main forums of discussion in democratic societies as they have acquired a relevant social importance in the social construction of reality (Berger; Luckmann, 1985). It is through the media that social issues are discussed. Robert Park (2009: 43), for example, refers to the news article as a form of knowledge, said that news guides the public more than it informs. The circulation of news determines the level of participation of the member of society.

The means of communication, namely journalism, can contribute for the development of society by broadcasting information, debates and opinions. This way they can collaborate with the construction of citizenship with educational and informative actions that can make the public reflect. In this perspective this research was developed in the city of Palmas, the capital of the state of Tocantins in Brazil and is based on the project *Mulher e Políticas Públicas: conectando mulheres, parlamentares, movimentos e organizações de mulheres e audiências de radio* (Women and Public Politics: connecting women, parliamentary, movements and organizations of women

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and radio audiences)². The base of the project took place in João Pessoa in Paraíba. The conductor of the project created 25 radio programs about the main topics: Women and Politics, Women and Health, Women and Education, Women and Work, and also Women and Violence.

The citizenship of women is marked by the fight for equal gender rights. The exclusion of women from the political process lasted for a long period of time demanding the affirmation of the gender so that it was possible to obtain rights they were forbidden to them.

Women, as an unequal group in terms of structural position, have not had the same accessibilities to every political instance. Besides that and differently from men, women's life cycles target their life, particularly motherhood. For women, the cost-benefit relation is different from the one established by men because they have historically obtained less political benefits.

The oppression women suffer is due to the role society gave them. The critical thought, that has the objective to bring knowledge and respect to speeches, as well as the way those speeches reverberate in the objective reality, have to do with the conscience of the gender relations lived in daily life.

ONU defends that social development does not exist without the development of women. They are the ones who have held the main responsibility of the biologic and social reproduction tasks, domestic violence and the neglect of public politics. These cannot be created nor implemented by an abstract citizen but more and more they have to take in consideration the specifications of social groups.

Education becomes a fundamental process to help people to promote the process of change in their lives. Paulo Freire (1977: 69) adds that "[...] education is communication, it is dialogue in a way that it is not the transfer of knowledge but an encounter of speakers that seek significance and meanings". This way, this author suggests the union between communication and education.

In this perspective of oppressed groups, the theoretical path chosen to work was the approach of the gender that, according to Eleonora Oliveira (1999:70), "is the category that explains the relation of power among sexes and that gives us the social dimension of sexual inequality based on the naturalization and *biologization* of the sexes", with methodological support of problem-based education proposed by Paulo Freire (1980), that prioritizes that work of consciousness formation essentially in the explored sectors.

So, besides the identification of the main themes that affect the everyday life of the women of Palmas, this light work has also the objective to evaluate radio as a tool capable to promote the awareness, reflection and debate about gender issues, looking for the emancipation of women.

As a methodological procedure, the first step consisted of the amplification of book and document readings that approach the theme of radio as a tool for popular education, historical and political context of the country and state, namely related to the issue of gender. The proposal of radio programs came from the understanding of the themes that affect the daily life of the women of Palmas. For that, research was done using the available literature in local documental sources like: the CEDIM (Conselho Estadual dos Direitos da Mulher); Casa da Mulher 8 de Março; Coordenação da Mulher, Direitos Humanos e Equidade; and Delegacia da Mulher - A variety of themes that approach the feminine universe. This bibliographic and documental research culminated in the suggestion of the following themes: Work and Citizenship Law; Civil Law, Physical and Psychological Integrity, Women's Health. Each theme was subdivided in topics also based on the bibliographic research.

The second stage consisted of the application of questionnaires about the main urban sectors of the city of Palmas. We looked to know by order of what importance the women in Palmas give to each topic of each theme. As a statistic technician on field, we target women in function to their residential concentration: north and

² The project Women and Public Politics was developed in 1999 by the Federal University of Paraíba, by the department of Social Communication and Tourism of the Social Sciences and Arts Center and The Pedagogic Habilitation Department of the Education Center, and by the Women's Center 8 de Março, with the support of the DFID (Department for International Development of the English government) and the British Council.

south regions of Plano Diretor, Aurenys, Taquaralto, Taquaruçu, (Santa Bárbara e Taquari), that give a total of a feminine population of 68.620 (IBGE, 2000 Census).

For being an unpublished work and so, for not existing any previous information about the researched variants, we used the percentage for occurrence (success) defined by a "P" and nonoccurrence by a "Q" of 50% each, which is a usual procedure in these situations. A level of trust defined by $Z = 98\%$ was used, and the margin of error was established at over or below 5%. After applying the formula used to determine the samples of the finite populations with a normal distribution of probabilities existing in the majority of statistic books, a sample of 600 was scaled.

Radio and its role for citizenship

Since modern democracy's advent, the means of communication have taken an important role in the constitution of spaces to exercise citizenship. Some authors have almost joined the ideas of public space and media as a consequence for the society having become extraordinarily complex making it physically impossible to assure an effectively democratic process through physical spaces (of discussion and social interaction). Due to this fact, some questions are asked, such as: how can the media help citizens learn about the world, about debate and how to make informed decisions in the context of this research of radio, especially in their journalistic role? (Dahlgren, 1997: 1).

The technological accessibility and the portable receivers, says Paula Cordeiro (2010: 50), gave and still give today a huge importance to radio, mainly in poorer and illiterate countries. Radio has a cultural influence as well as the power of social intervention. Research shows its important contribution mainly related to local experiences where more direct and specific interests of public life are shown. In this perspective, radio acts like an educational instrument and the researches about it have occurred preferentially in the scope of communitarian communication. Cordeiro (2010: 61) says that radio participates actively in the construction of social meanings through its strong presence in the daily life of its audience. Vera Lúcia Raddatz (2006: 1) agrees with Cordeiro's thought and says that radio is the mean of communication that comes closest to the citizens.

Media have become part of key public spaces and the meditation of citizens and authorities. In relation to radio, Winocur (2002: 71) says that its programs are based on citizen's lives: experience with the city's government, life conditions and other issues relation to their emotional and private life. For the author, radio creates a privileged scenery to talk about the demands and necessities of the citizens. It offers a space for debate and free circulation of ideas with direct participation from citizens.

In his analysis, Winocur (2002: 101) highlights radio as a suitable tool to make the learning process easier. This process is necessary to acknowledge and this depends on the development of the capacity of critical reflection about social reality to be able to transform it. She affirms that radio has a new place in homes and cars due to its capacity to diversify, making it different from television that is more and more uniformed and predictable. With the globalization of television, radio is responding better to people's necessities (Kautz apud Winocur, 2002: 75).

Radio, for Winocur (2002: 97) can be considered to be a public sphere in the new globalization and *deterritorialization* of culture and information, not in the sense of a unique sphere, homogeneous and separated from state and private life, but exactly the opposite, in the fragmentation of multiple spaces of diverse and heterogeneous conception.

Paulo Freire's perspective and the contribution of the feminist movement

The first step for awareness is, like Freire's education, the co-participation of subjects in the knowledge process that starts with a dialogical process that makes subjects reflect about reality, looking to understand their situation in society. This co-participation of subjects in the act of thinking starts in communication.

This way, the culture of power learner (his/her relations/processes and forms/structures) through the capacity of objectifying and knowing reality in a critical way is a reason for the transformation of reality and for the liberation of individuals and groups from what limits their social, intellectual and political participation (Freire, 1980).

One of the methods for that conscience to emerge consists in allowing the subjects to relive and reconstruct their experiences by the effort of, in the form of group work, to expose their life, thought and feelings according to the topics that were approached. Radio is an excellent tool for this awareness process.

For this awareness to happen, it is fundamental not only to obtain the theoretical knowledge of the theme, but also for the acquisition of that knowledge to initiate an attitude to change that reality. This is what gives the historical dynamic of society and places men and women in a position of subjects of history.

The feminist movement expresses itself as a result of many other movements that inform about the most varied forms of oppression and struggle for the overcoming of social inequality. The emergence of feminism is the breaking point of the traditional hierarchies and authoritarian political models, establishing a narrow connection between interpersonal relations and political organization.

Jane Souza (2002) explains that feminism not only introduces new aspects in the struggle of political contestation, approaching topics such as family, sexuality, domestic work, child care, etc. emphasized the political and social issue, the way men and women are educated, produced as "generic" subjects, politicizing the sexual identification and gender. Due to that, they refer to men/women, mothers/fathers, sons/daughters, etc. as a form of distinguishing a clearly discriminatory social reality.

Maria Eulina de Carvalho (2003: 60) adds that genders, defined as a pair of opposites, constitute a relation of power, or in other words they are social representations subject to political disputes for the attribution of meanings. The author explains that gender relations involve inequality and domination: "they integrate a complex system of male domination, strongly institutionalized and internalized and structure all the aspects of social life, expressing itself in culture, ideology, violence, sexuality, reproduction, division of work, state organization and discursive practices".

Valquíria Souza (1997) highlights the role of educational process that initiates within family and continues outside it, in social life, through means of communication and in school. This creates a clear differentiation between the male and female world. She adds that the term gender is used to speak about the cultural and symbolic construction of the men-women relationships.

Nowadays, gender theories have become important references for the development of methodologies and educational actions. The feminist though has always come back to the analysis of the gender relations in different contexts and periods, but it was only in the 1980s of that the term "gender" has the meaning it has today, becoming an important category for the analysis of social relations. Souza (2002, p.3) quoting Louro (1995), says that "[...] besides a theoretical tool potentially useful for social sciences, gender emerged as an important analytical category for History, especially for History of Education".

Themes about gender issues have been approached by many social scientists. The debate got more intense, especially after acknowledging that the gender differences have a bigger social content than biological, taking to the conclusion that the woman, based on Paulo Freire, is subjected to a "pedagogic submission" (Silva, 2004).

An important tool that connects education to communication reached a great level of importance in the deconstruction process of that pedagogy – the "Educommunication" (Soares, 2001). In this context, research shows that radio is a tool capable of overcoming difficulties created by the dynamism of the contemporary work, where the daily tasks do not allow people to have enough time against the main means of communication. Indeed, the day-to-day activities are not incompatible with the audio tool.

The historic condition of women and their struggles

The theme women and citizenship has a few basic questions. Where is the feminine citizenship if women are excluded from the educational, political and social process of society? Where is women's citizenship in a society where men and women, in their great majority are excluded from social wealth? How to conciliate citizenship with the absence of equal or compensatory politics? How to help reconstruct the states so that citizenship becomes a meaningful concept? The answer for these questions and many others will allow the enlargement of what is possible, even in a society that excludes and is hierarchical and that also can allow us to understand where our citizenship is.

Women are number one when it comes to unemployment in the Metropolitan Regions of Brazil. Women continue to have to deal with domestic tasks. Women continue working without pay. Women continue to shyly assume management positions, and so on. In the 21st century a reflection is necessary when it comes to the educational model which we have so that we can question its effectiveness related to equal rights and gender. Is it true that we do not have a conservative model, stereotyped and full of repression towards women? Is it true that women have full conscience of their role in society? Can women know how to exercise citizenship?

The struggle of women for equality in everything in society, work, home, school was and still is a solitary struggle marked by great tragedies. It is not by chance that the 8th of March is internationally considered to be Women's Day. That day was marked negatively by a great tragedy. North American women organized women's first exclusive strike that fought against the workday reduction and by the end of the terrible and inhuman work conditions. One hundred and nine weavers from the Cotton Factory crossed their arms as a form of protest to demand their rights to their employers. It was then, on the 8th of March of 1857 that one of the biggest crimes of all working history happened. The police, ordered by the employers closed the exits of the factory and set it on fire. The women were stuck and defenseless and died carbonized and asphyxiated in the middle of the smoke and flames. Fifty three years after that terrible episode, in 1910, during the II Women's International Conference in Denmark, Clara Zetkin, an activist, proposed that the 8th of March would be declared as Women's Day. Today that day is still marked by demonstrations and protests, being commemorated by the fighters all around the world as a symbol of workforce resistance, mobilizing the ample feminine groups against the capitalist oppression (Guimarães, 1999).

The 154 year struggle remains the same. The restructuring process that the big capitalist companies have gone through and the neoliberal politics in many countries reinforce the condition of exploitation and condition of oppression of women. In Brazil, everyday has been a struggle against social exclusion, unemployment, withdrawal of social rights, the reduction of salaries, the lack of conditions of a worthy life that affects mainly women. They earn 50% less than men, working in the same position and unemployment among women is almost 6% higher than among men.

Facing this picture of discrimination suffered by women, many times even legitimized by the state norms and as a rule, women have started organizing themselves in small groups or even isolated. They would fight for the change of that legal picture, in the sense of amplifying feminine citizenship and changing the asymmetric cultural pattern that characterized Brazilian and worldwide juridical culture. They would make an effort to make way for an alternative right that meant the amplification of women's citizenship in the political right's sphere.

Only nowadays women receives special society attention when comes to education. The come next to children and people that have special needs, like the new educational subjects. After millenniums of social and educational subordination, exclusion from school and instruction, women is now more and more in the spotlight of the educational scene. The feminine educational problems and women's instruction have gained attention of all society. Social ascension of women has produced a profound shuffle in education. The educational practice has now been worked out for a new subject, women, children, people with special needs. The training institutions,

family and school, the factory, etc were renewed, giving life to a new process of socialization of those practices and to articulation and sophistication.

The feminist movements – that started in the 19th century were destined to save women and help them affirm themselves politically, giving them the right to vote, to learn, the social guardianships for feminine and maternity work – have put in the center of educational consciousness and the pedagogic reflection the problem of gender. They have also questioned the traditional model of learning, characterized only by the male model, seen as superior and universal but marked by the prejudice of machismo: from domination to violence, to formal abstract rationalism, to the repression and sublimation of instincts that would deny the feminine gender and, for that, now women are getting their identity back and social role back, something that before was completely denied.

Feminism claimed equal opportunities and the emancipation of women. This meant the struggle for scholarship, also in women for an opening of more jobs and “masculine” careers; for a maternity support that would allow their job permanence: with day care centers, kindergartens, etc. They also claimed the specificity of feminism, of the culture of feminine, affirming the educational priority of the gender. So, a “pedagogy from the difference” was implemented. This had a discrete diffusion and proposed to make a name for itself in pedagogy and not only in education the values, the principles, the praxis and the ideals of the feminine universe, operating a radical transformation also in the philosophy of education: opening it for feminine values being thought for women by women.

From the diverse historic moments: the struggle for the right to vote in 1934 to the creation of worker’s rights in the decades of 1930 and 1940, the amplification of the rights of married women in 1962 and the general amplification of feminine citizenship from 1970, we can say that women’s situation, in the context of Brazilian legislation, has suffered a positive evolution, but unequal, in many areas of law.

Radio as a tool for education in the feminine universe of Palmas-TO³

This research was about the following: the habit of listening to the radio, important information for the evaluation of the mean and the ways of using it, we concluded that there was a significant audience. Like we can see in figure 1, about 65% of women listen to the radio for more than thirty minutes a day while only twenty does not. This indicates the characteristics of the mean that can follow the listener any day of the week and in any place.

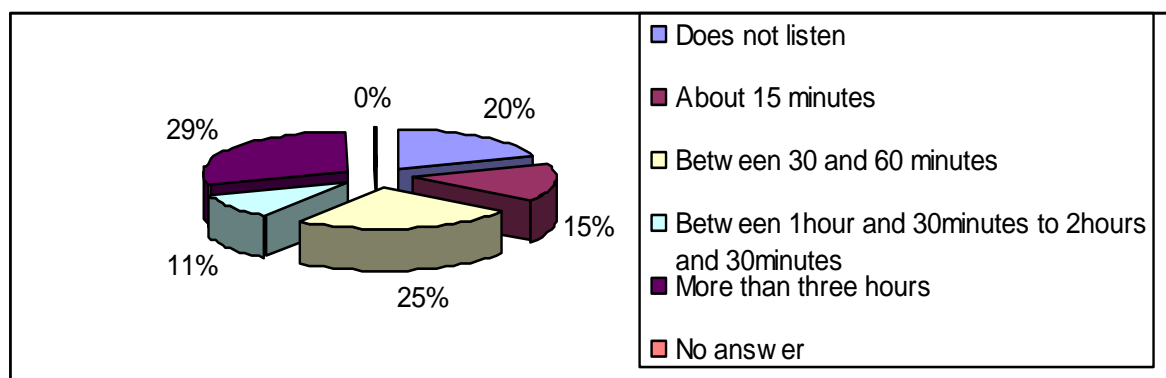


Figure 1: Time women listen to the radio. Source: on field 2005

³ The students of Social Communication the the CEULP/ULBRA (Centro Universitário Luterano de Palmas) Jaklene da Silva and Whilker Santana Wanderly collaborated in this research.

The radio program can be an instrument to incentive the reflection of diverse themes. According to Giroux and McLaren (apud Souza, 2002), pedagogy is present anywhere there can be experience and reality, not matter what level of depth.

In this way, the comprehension of the facts is more accessible to all social layers, like Lopes (1988: 120) confirms:

The effect of speech is the establishment of an intimate and affective relation between the communicator and the listener. Through colloquial and emotive language, the communicator always accomplishes his functions as a friend, family member or a counselor. This allows a commercial, moral, aesthetic, affective speech that comes through easily due to the fact they are all part of the same ideological investment.

Maria Inês Santos (2004: 46) affirms that radio looked for a different space than television and that made it more regional and local. For her, radio has looked for its involvement with community since they, through public services.

[...] by the use of comic and melodramatic language, redeeming that way, substrates of humoristic programs of the 40s and 50s and radiodrama – a genre that, by radio soap operas, best characterized radio at that time – re-updated a sensorium, like Barbero would say, characterized popular taste [emphasis of the author].

As we can understand, radio can be a promoting agent for the development of citizenship of women and especially, in this case, of women from Palmas. Through simple and dynamic programs it is possible to discuss matters that promote more knowledge by women, of their rights as citizens. Not counting orality that has shown to be fundamental to help expand the self-esteem of any person and, in women's case that is a very important point in the search for citizenship.

Evaluation of the main themes about gender, done by women from Palmas-TO

Related to the matters they like to listen to on the radio, within four great themes presented, we can understand a certain anxiety and necessity to approach matters like: Guardianship of children and food pension; marriage and separation; payment and maternity benefit equality; sexual and domestic violence; sexual transmitted diseases; cancer and abortion.

For each theme, some matters were presented so they could order them by order of importance, the ones they would like to be discussed more in radio shows. For each theme, an option of non-interest was also presented. The percentage of non-interested was noticed to be very low, at a level of almost zero in the theme of women's health. In fact, from the six hundred interviewees, only one affirmed that she had no interest in any of the matters in relation to that theme. Figure 2 shows the order of interests of the women of Palmas for each theme.

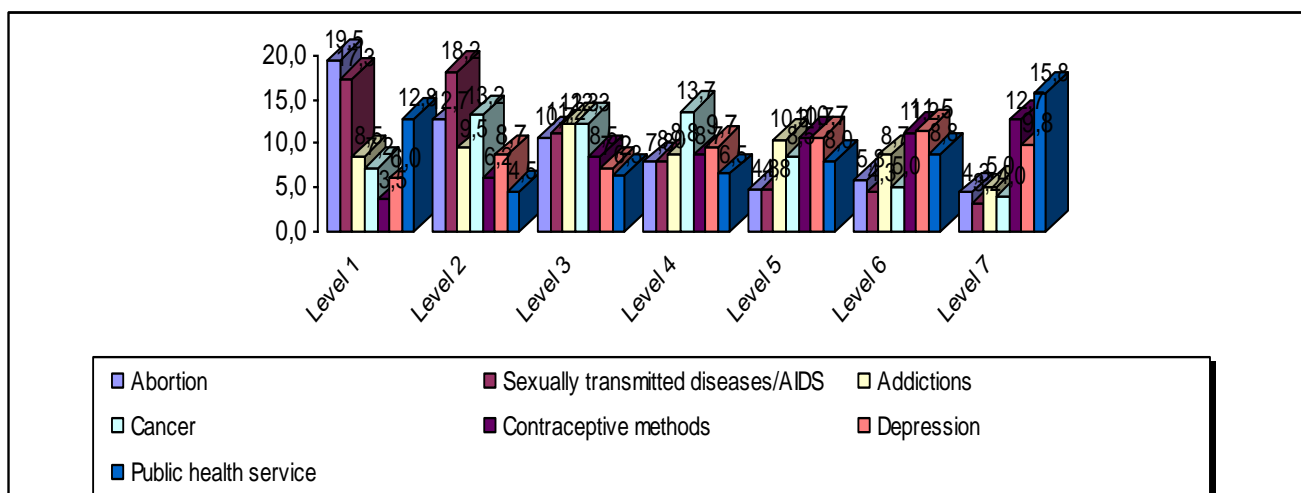


Figure 2: Themes in the area of health for discussion on the radio. Research: on field 2005

Although we can conclude that women are interested in all matters, the results show that in relation to the theme women's health, the interest level is higher.

The research shows that, in the specific case of Palmas, the fundamental role that radio has in the political and social education of women, since it is a mean with a great audience for this public, and does not get in the way of women's daily tasks. Communication produced by and for the organized subaltern sectors, like Peruzzo affirms (2007: 2) has contributed to expand the education appearance about the exercise of citizenship. For the author "the achievement of citizenship means the transformation of subjects to citizens, whose social framework requires the involvement with people, conditioning their citizen status to the quality of participation". That participation happens through education, in a way that people have knowledge and the conscience of their rights and duties. So, radio has a fundamental role in this process.

Final thoughts

We understand now that women are interested in hearing about matters related to their lives and that radio, being the massive mean of communication it is, it can and it has the obligation to accomplish its role to inform. As Gisela Ortriwano (1985) says, this mean of communication mobilizes masses, making them participate actively in life. Bringing citizenship and media closer, or media and citizenship, make us recognize new scenarios of constitution to live in democratic societies and it also makes us understand that we do not understand citizenship fully without looking closely to the function of power through media speech.

The participation of the public in media has its origins from the times the newspaper appeared, but its importance in terms of opinion happened when telephone became popular due to the radio in the 60s (Winocur, 2000: 89). The role of the media in democracy should be to give to citizens the information they need to play their roles. The way that information affects the understanding and compromise with democracy molds the identity of each citizen. For Cruz (2000: 285) the increment of the importance of the means of communication and the speed in which information is broadcasted have made the capacities and opportunities to learn grow, and have helped to define social conflicts. With the growth of the media, the demonstrative effect of the collective action multiplies.

Media are a pre-requirement today, even though they are not a guarantee to mold the democratic character of society because they are the porters of political communication besides the face-to-face

communication (Dahlgren, 2009: 3). The comprehension of social sense of the media reveals that the rules that daily structure the circulation and reframing of the messages, and as we can understand, radio is the mean of communication that can better play this role and can really give women their social identity and active participation in society as real citizens.

Differently from men, women have never learned how to think by themselves, to believe that they had rights and not only obligations. Women absorbed the machismo culture and assumed a submissive role towards men, transmitting inclusively this culture to their children, using a form of education that she made different for the two genders. Women have always been great fighters. First she learned to fight for the others, or in other words, for her husband, for her family. Only later on, women became conscious that they also had to fight for themselves and other women, in the search for recognition as a participative citizen of all the historic process.

There is still much more to work on, mainly when it comes to the search of equality in work relationships, struggle for equal salaries in the same positions, the struggle against sexual and domestic violence, the right to health and education. These facts for which the results in this research in Palmas evidenced a need for permanent discussion about gender and issues related to the construction of citizenship. Radio, as a mean of peculiar characteristics, shows that it is the ideal one for this activity and redemption for the social identity of women due to having a low production cost and to the service of elaborated proposals for its programs.

All the issues presented here point in one direction: education. Not any regular education, but education as a practice of liberty, proposed by Paulo Freire (1981) and also not any kind of freedom, but a responsible freedom. To assume this responsibility it is necessary to be conscious. That will only happen if, first we can identify the concrete problem, feel a part of it and then understand it that problem is in a bigger situation, of a collectivity and to transform that reality it is necessary to take action together. In our opinion radio is one of the main tools for promotion of the consciousness that will generate the development of citizens that participate in the construction of a society that is more and more fair and also in the construction of their own identities.

We hope that, with this research, there can be more radio programs capable of illustrating the feminine universe to: i) disquiet women, not only the ones from Palmas, in relation to many aspects of their daily life; ii) provoke necessary debates for the awareness related to their gender condition; and iii) incentivize their political participation and citizenship exercise.

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