ADDRESSING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: ACTIONS AND PUBLIC POLICIES

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ABSTRACT
This work aims to discuss the actions and public policies to combat the gender-based violence, especially policies addressed to women, and it is based on a research conducted at the Specialized Police Station in Defense of Women (Paraná/Brazil) and on the Brazilian legislation in the past decades that address the issue, and is anchored in the history of the study of women and gender relations. It is evident in the Brazilian context the importance of implementing policies and actions to eradicate deep-rooted gender discrimination in society, because although there are specific laws to punish the perpetrators and protective measures for women - the institutionalization of gender violence - we witnessed and experienced daily a variety of types of violence and crimes committed because of gender / based on gender. Therefore, our aim is to address the issue in paying attention to the motivations that still socially reproduce these violent and discriminatory practices.

KEY-WORDS
Women; gender-based violence; public polices; discriminations; power relations.

Body of work
We begin this work by presenting some cases of violence recorded between the late 1980s and 1990s, in the Specialized Police in Defense of Women in Maringá-Paraná, and also the recent episode of attempted femicide - the case of Gisele in Porto Alegre/RS, on August 2nd, 2015 - to demonstrate the perpetuation of violence against women in its various manifestations: physical aggression, moral, psychological, verbal, symbolic, sexual violence, femicide, patrimonial violence, institutional and obstetrical, among many others.

(Oc.108/96) C.M.T... dating for 02 years with BKJ... started to argue, when he began to attack her verbally ... and that if the complainant breaks up with him he will throw acid so that she is deformed and not meet anyone else ... [Verbal Aggression and Threats - recorded on 23/02/96].

(Oc.05/89) At 10:00 today, attended this Specialized Police, V.A.G, single, of age, complaining of her father M.G, the one drinks and is morally attacking the family, and on the last day 1, her father beat her mother and her broke her leg ... [Physical Assault / Injury Body - registered on 03/01/89].

(Oc.567/95) At 15: 30, attended this Z.S at this station, representing his daughter, a minor A.S ... the minor dated and fled with P.C.Z, living with that one for 04 months ... that on

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02/12 around 5. A.m. ... grab her on the street by force, dragged her by the hair, took her into the woods and tried to rape her, that to defend herself bit and scratched and managed to escape ... [Attempted Rape - registered on 04/12/95].

[...] He was jealous of all the boys, I could not accept invitations to add profiles on social networks, could not talk to former colleagues from school. I had no contact with anyone, only with some girls. He went out to work and I stood at home taking care of everything. His mother encouraged him. For example, he wanted to eat a cake. I tried and failed. “I will not do, I’ll buy,” I thought. Then his mother told him that he had to break my face. [...] There were several separations. I sent him away, so he went to his mother’s house and kept asking me for forgiveness. When I definitely decided for separation on August 2, the worst happened. [...] I raised arms and hands to protect my head, and it just continued. “Bitch!” He shouted. I said I’d forgive him to see if he would stop, but he continued to the end. (Case Gisele, Porto Alegre, 22, attempted to Femicide - Source: Folha de S. Paulo, 13/08/2015).

These records are evident cases of violent gender relations, a phenomenon that we must face day to day. From the conceptual contributions of gender studies and understanding gender relations as a category of historical analysis, I refer to the American historian Joan Scott, when she says:

When I talk about gender, I refer to the discourse of difference between the sexes. It does not refer only to ideas but also to institutions, structures, the daily practices, as well as the rituals and all that is social relations. The discourse is a world ordering tool, and although is not anterior to the social organization, it is inseparable from this. Therefore, gender is the social organization of sexual difference. It does not reflect the first biological reality, but it builds the sense of this reality. Sexual difference is not the original cause from which social organization could derive. It is rather a moving social structure, which must be analyzed in their different historical contexts (Scott, 1998, p.2).

So from this gender perspective, I consider to be more appropriate to use the term/concept of gender violence to analyze the complexity of violent relationships between genders. And for that, I appropriate from the contributions of sociologist Heleieth Saffioti, stating that:

Gender violence, although the expression encompasses domestic violence, cannot be used as a synonym of this, it not only has a wider dimension, it has also more diffuse features and does not indicate that it is routinely directed to the same target. Gender violence reaches, preferably, the category that is part of subordinate way in the context of unequal gender relations (Saffioti and Almeida, apud Almeida, 1998, p.18).

It is important to note that gender violence commonly affects women, but also children, teenagers, homosexuals, transgender and other social groups, causing irreparable damage to life. Gender violence is usually practiced by the one that has a greater share of power in a relationship (see the example of Gisele’s mother-in-law who encouraged her son to “break her”). In terms of gender relations between men and women, the man commonly exerts

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greater power and domination over women and children, due to patriarchal and chauvinist heritage, which touts strength, virility and power stereotypes to men.

Even if relations have been socially constructed with the unevenness of power between the genders, power is not an inert or passive target. This means that when a person feels threatened, coerced or abused, one tends to resist pressures, creating a force field, a counter, and according to Foucault (1982, p.183) “power flows, transitions between those who they relate in some way.” This field of power between genders does not always happen peacefully, but by ways of aggression, retaliation, even though one offender is a close partner, as happens in relationships of gender. After all, as more forms of resistance, counter-power strengthen, more the status quo tries to stay in power, using the domination and violence.

The violence shows that there is a struggle and resistance of genres from the perspective of having control over the other, by not allowing the other to switch directions in the relationship, i.e. there is a struggle to preserve the status quo by maintaining social organization as it is, for the permanence of power relations, and often uses the resource of violence to the coercion of another, as a way of expressing their domination and power. Violence seeks to nullify the forces of one of the poles of the relationship, attempts to remove the individuality of the person, violence immobilizes.

Addressing violence against women is mainly due to the work and struggle of the feminist and women’s movements so that the state recognizes the need to create specialized agencies for victims of violence, and would provide a legal treatment to the issue. This closer look at the issue (which was previously seen as a question belonging to the private sphere) comes from the 1980s, when one realizes that it was a specific type of violence: the gender-based. A violence that goes beyond the physical abuse and moral frailty, in other words, that limits women’s action by establishing the areas that women can take and hold that defines the social roles, places they can go, what they can talk, write and even think about, that determines the types of appropriate clothes to wear, the way they should behave, a violence that imposes how their sexuality should be experienced, and so many other prohibitions.

The perception of the complexity of gender-based violence culminated in actions and creation of public policies to address and combat this phenomenon. One of the measures implemented in Brazil, yet in the 1980s, was the implementation of specialized police service of victims who were women (the women’s police stations) and a few housing for victims. The police stations play an important role, because they represent a space of they own, where victims formalize their complaints, bringing up a problem that is cultural, social, legal, and public health. The first women’s police station was created in São Paulo in August 1985 - 30 years ago - and then several police stations were being installed in the country since. They are still scarce, as we have just over 500 police stations in a country with 5,570 cities, therefore only 10% of Brazilian municipalities have this specialized care. And it is worth remembering the precariousness that many of these places work, as in the lack of training of police officers to understand the cases from the perspective of gender, and also the absence of female officers for providing assistance to the victims. This unpreparedness or neglect with women’s police stations, often by providing a poor service, commits an institutional violence against the victims.

We recently (February 2015) had the creation of the first House of Brazilian Women in the city of Campo Grande/MS; and in June the same year, the opening in Brasilia/DF of a sec-
ond unit, built with funds from the federal government. Other units are being built in capitals. The first units are already running and providing daily and multidisciplinary care: from receptionists who welcome and triage female victims of violence, to psychologists and social workers teams, and to the promotion of economic autonomy. A center of transportation also works at these Homes, to take the victims to hospitals for care and for examinations at the Institute of Legal Medicine (IML). The differential of the House of the Brazilian Woman is the integration between the Specialized Police for Assistance to Women (DEAMs) working 24 hours a day, the judiciary, the State Prosecutor’s Office and the Public Defender’s Office, serving in the same space. In addition, it provides other services such as a toy room, halfway housing and living space for women and children (from 0 to 12 years old) that are accompanying the victims. The Federal Government prospects that each state should have one of these houses.

There are several achievements of the feminist and women’s struggles after decades of work and organization of movements in combating violence. In this sense we can mention the institutionalization of gender-based violence with the creation and specialized care in police stations, the line Ligue 180 created in 2005, the law Maria da Penha established in 2006, and it is also important to mention the implementation of public policies such as the National Pact for Combating Violence Against Women, launched in August 2007 by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, as part of the social agenda of the federal government. This plan consists of a federative agreement between the federal, state and local governments for planning actions and integrated public policies throughout the country.

In 2013, it was the launching of the program “Woman, Living without Violence” by President Dilma Rousseff, in order to integrate and expand existing public services, through the coordination of specialized care in health, justice, public safety, social assistance and the promotion of a financial autonomous network. The initiative was transformed into a government program, including the measures and actions already mentioned to combat violence.

Since 2005, by the time of the creation of the line Ligue 180, the call center has recorded 4,488,644 calls (balance data released in the first semester of 2015). In the first semester of 2015, the Center conducted 364,627 consultations, which were on average 60,771 visits/month and 2,025 calls a day. Cases of physical violence, psychological violence, moral violence, patrimonial violence, sexual assault, false imprisonment and human trafficking are some examples of complaints. Yet in the first semester, it attended all 27 unit states, and 3,061 of the 5,570 Brazilian municipalities (representing 55%). This shows how violence is everywhere and emphasizes the importance and effectiveness in the internalization process of line Ligue 180 to regions that do not have specialized care. From March 2014, the line Ligue 180 has accumulated a dial-report function, in other words, in addition to providing care and guidance of women in situations of violence, it took over the task of sending the reports of violence to the competent bodies for research (with the authorization of users). The hotline model is mostly sought by females (representing 59.98%). But it was found that there was an increase in Central demand by others close to the victim, reporting of violence against women events, like the family, neighbors, and friends, it shows a greater awareness.

4 Law number: 11.340, from 07 August 2006 - The Maria da Penha. This law criminalizes domestic violence as a form of violation of human rights. Amending the Penal Code and allows attackers to be caught in the act, or have their preventive detention when threaten the physical integrity of women. Also guarantees some unprecedented measures of protection for the woman who is at risk of life, such as the removal of the aggressor from the home and the prohibition of their physical approach to abused women and children.
of gender-based violence and drives a change in how the popular saying goes, now we can say, “Anyone should do good between a man and his wife.”

The calls in the line *Ligue 180* reveal how violence can be a routine and permanent link to the perception of feminicide risks against the victims of violence. Therefore, it is evident the importance of Law No 13.104, from March 9, 2015 – The Law of Femicide – because it frames and visualizes the violent deaths of women for reasons of gender and misogyny present in cases of murder. The femicide crime enters the list of heinous crimes.

These initiatives and measures comprise the current program “Woman, Living without Violence”, and the Office of Policies for Women – in a status of Ministry - as responsible for program’s coordination and for its implementation, acting jointly with the Ministries of Justice, Health, Social Development and Fight against Hunger, and Labor and Employment. This implementation has been taking place in various ways: the creation of the House of Brazilian Women, patrolling the Maria da Penha Law, campaigns against violence, the extension of line *Ligue 180*, and the humanization of the care for victims of sexual violence, among others.

In a country and society where women are the majority of the population and the electorate, they occupy a larger number of university chairs, and a large portion of them are heads of families, why are thousands of women still living with violence? With so much legislation and protective and preventive measures, why there are still so many cases of gender-based violence? What are the reasons for the considerable increase in physical assaults, rape, false imprisonment and femicide, in Brazil in recent years?

The possible answers go through questions of naturalizing the devaluation of women, transmitted by biological, legal, religious, educational and socio-cultural speeches; by legacies of patriarchy and a macho culture that is inscribed in social practices; by naturalization of violence against women. To combat these discourses and practices, we need to invest in changes in education, in the form of social organization, promoting socio-cultural changes that respect and accept the differences, the otherness, and the “other”, who practices sisterhood and promote gender equality.

An education focused on gender equality, in which our children grow up learning that men and women may be different, without ceasing to be the same, and that they can and should be respected in the same way, that no one is superior to the other. This is true for gay people, black, transgender, people with special needs, among many other differences. Our education, our culture would be inclusive and not exclusive.

It is time for men and women break the biological speeches, sexist and misogynist as well as the propagated interdictory practices as “natural” because they are not. We cannot allow biological speeches of past centuries (although many people and conservative groups still currently insist on being based on it) to continue perpetuating socially, and delimiting spaces and social practices. We must break with this and understand the complexity of sociocultural factors, gender relations, of how they are built, legitimized and reproduced. It is necessary to promote gender equality in all areas and relationships.

I turn now to the research conducted in the occurrences records of Maringa’s Women Police Station, Paraná/BR, in the period between 1987 and 1996, to support our reflections.

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5 In Portuguese: Sororidade from Latin, *sororis*, sister and idad, related to quality. The Sororidade is the pact between women who are recognized as sisters, being an ethical, political and practical dimension of contemporary feminism.
The city of Maringá was highly developed in the 1980s and this served as an attraction for people from other places searching for better living conditions.

In the time frame covered by the survey, the number of incidents recorded amounts to a total of 6,399 complaints covering a wide typology of crimes. So for a qualitative analysis of the data, we start from a selection of 3,721 occurrences which allowed defining the profile of victims and aggressors, the motives and the circumstances in which the attacks occurred, and our research showed characteristics similar to national and international wide surveys.

Our research covered, according to the Brazilian Penal Code, the following crimes committed against women: attempted murder, bodily injury, libel, defamation, slander and moral aggression totaling 53.80% of worked occurrences, there is, so that just over half of 3,721 complaints, refer to crimes against life, personal injury and against the honor.

In a second group are the complaints about death threats, various threats and house imprisonment corresponding to 16.40% of cases, in other words, crimes against individual freedom.

In the third group, we treat the crime of attempted rape, corresponding to 0.57% of the total, it was perceived to be a significantly low number, but with serious psychological consequences for those who went through this experience. With the recent reformulations in the Penal Code, such crimes fall under the classification “against sexual dignity”, but at the completion of the research, is still framed in “crimes against custom”.

Finally, the fourth group comes to aggression resulting from drunken state, equivalent to 29.23% of the cases considered by the Criminal Code only as a misdemeanor on the politics of costumes.

The very close affinity level between victims and aggressors affects the forward decision-making of denunciation to these abuses and reveals the varied reasons why victims do not do it and continue to live with violent practices.

The various types of violence, including an instrumentalized violence, target the woman’s body, disfiguring it and treating it as an object on which great cruelty is spent. We find in the records of occurrences references to a variety of instruments used by the attackers: pliers, knives, chains, stones, scissors, chairs, sickles, knives, skewers, revolvers, forks, stools, wooden pieces, belts, daggers, hammers, rakes etc. The variety of strokes like punches, slaps, kicks, beatings and blows, reaches several areas of the body, leaving marks, scars that are recorded in double level, noting the psychological consequences of violence.

The exacerbation of violence and cruelty in the crime are always linked to power relations, and are forms of expression of statements, or reaffirmation of their own power relations. It carries a non-discursive cultural brand, or soon becomes part of the violent practices. The cruelty of a crime is not just about the violent practice, but the action and reaction that lead to the justification of cruelty, for example, the absence of justification.

The body injury, homicide attempts (today femicide) and attempts to rape, and the different forms of aggression in attacker’s state of drunkenness directly affect the physical integrity of these women, hurting their bodies and these brands reveal and take meanings of power, control, domination and male exploitation on them. It is the exercise of pleasure for enjoyment.

6 Brazilian Penal Code, approved by the Law no. 2.848, from 7th December, 1940.
The use of violence and cruelty which disfigures the female body is one of many ways that men are used to subject women and delimit the social spaces and places they can occupy. The defacement carries meanings that lead to exclusion, contempt, rejection, to banishment, to inferiority and discrimination. Cruelty disfigures, or rather, transfigures the body (turns it into something else, in another figure), and this is a way to dominate the other’s body. It is a cancellation of the other.

Although we are working with instances of data records, we know that many women do not report the violence suffered for several reasons: fear of reprisals, the hope that the abuser will change his behavior, the feelings they nourish for the aggressor, trying to maintain family ties, low self-esteem, self-guilt, introjection speeches that their lives and their bodies are possession and ownership of “their” man (husband and/or partner), and in addition there are other factors such as economic, social and cultural ones, that block the complaint and the rupture with violence.

Physical violence, threats, moral and sexual assaults directly affect the mental and emotional aspect, triggering a fragility in the structure of personality, behavior and undermining the self-esteem of those who pass through the experience of being a victim of violence. Fear, embarrassment, anxiety, panic syndrome and self-guilt are effects of constant oppression in which they live, contributing to isolation and feelings of inferiority.

The financial autonomy of many women contradicts the idea of common sense that economic dependence is one of the main reasons for the permanence of women in relationships marked by violence of gender. It is needed to comprehend the sociocultural factors to understand the complexity of practices and cycles of violence.

The self-guilt is very significant among these reasons, as it reveals how women take for themselves sexist speeches and practices that they are to blame for the attacks. These speeches are also assumed and played by the police and judiciary, which inhibit victims to report.

The gender-based violence, as noted, is a very broad field, because it refers not only to violence brought against the body, morality, women’s sexuality, but it is also a way of indicating to women and other socially excluded groups, its locus, its determined place in society. In other words, it is a deliberate attempt to prevent the “other” and in this case, mostly women, to conquer new spaces and withdraw from social models framed by a cultural tradition of domination and male exploitation that always prevailed in society. In this case, violence, markedly sexist, violates the rights guaranteed to individuals regardless of gender.

So, given this complexity that is violence, I would put the question: gender violence is not just a local phenomenon, but worldwide, and requires a longer look at the measures and public policies. The awareness that gender violence in its complexity not only affects the family, but also various social groups, and has numerous implications for gender relations, especially for the health of victims is still limited. So there is much to be done and a key point is the struggle against the reproduction of violence in gender relations, by overcoming the power gaps in social, family or marital relationships. In addition, whatever the type of violence suffered either violence committed by men or women, regardless of spaces where happens, the output is still the complaint, the official complaint, because only then can we know

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the extent and severity the phenomenon and seek to control it and carry out the punishment of the perpetrators.

References

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