

Mujeres magazine as a classifying space of the performativities of being a woman in Cuba

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Abstract

This article analyzes the journalistic discourse of the Cuban magazine *Mujeres* between the years 2010 - 2015, by questioning its thematic agenda as a dynamic resource for meanings. The main objective of the study is to understand the singular knowledge produced about the experience of women in the economic spheres in Cuba. For this, the qualitative research crosses the meanings produced about the participation of Cuban women by journalistic narratives with the specific characteristics of the productive scenarios where they act, thus revealing how *Mujeres* promotes particular readings of those contexts and their subjects. The asymmetry in the visualization between the state and non-state economic spheres, the politicization of women's roles in non-state productive scenarios and the disregard of other

forms of participation of Cuban women, are among the main results achieved. These limits of the constructed meanings allow us to understand how the journalism of the magazine operates as a classifying device of being a woman in Cuba.

Keywords: Magazine journalism; Women; Production of meanings; Gender representations; being a woman; Cuba.

1. Introduction

In current mediatized societies, journalistic discursive practices play a central role in the process of understanding, interpreting and producing social reality (Correia, 2005; Neto, 2008; Thomson, 2002). In this sense, Correia (2005) emphasizes that the use of the media radically transforms the organization of social life, creating new forms of action, interaction and exercise of power. This author also argues that understanding how the world works, recognizing who the actors that inhabit it are, or identifying the norms that guide social relations constitute practices that are increasingly determined by the interpretative frameworks provided and legitimized by the media.

Following this idea, several authors consider journalistic discursive practices as a singular form of knowledge production that provide a notion of reality and the time in which it is inhabited (Benetti, 2013; Bomfim et al., 2022; Traquina, 2012; Tavares, 2012). Prado (2009) adds that the cognitive maps proposed by the press media are accompanied by a standardization of the *ought to be* based on what he defines as "cartographic function of the media" (p. 39). The author points out that media discourses construct experiential fields in which the limits of reality are established, the possible spaces to be inhabited and the performativities to be fulfilled by the subjects.

The interpretative power and the cartographic function of media enunciators acquire singularities in magazine journalism. Meanings about the world are constructed differently in magazines, doing so in a slow, fragmented, repeated and emotional way (Benetti, 2013).

It should also be taken into account that magazines constitute a means of communication of great incidence in the legitimization of behaviors, consumption patterns and notions about social reality (Scalzo, 2003; Azubel, 2013; Vorraber, 2012). Magazine narratives are presented as allies of novelty and operate based on the lack of knowledge of the interlocutor. In this way, their discourse is presented as possessing specialized knowledge that speaks of

the particularities of a given topic, issue, group or task, constructing singular and appealing understandings about the world (Benetti, 2013; Bomfim et al., 2022).

These knowledges are permanently supported by the legitimization established through the experiences of the represented subjects. In this way, it is the stimulus to identify with the experience of the *Other* the resource used to incite to live the present and validate the interpretative frameworks provided about reality and the roles attributed to the subjects (Benetti, 2013). In addition to mapping themes of pleasure, personal achievement, social success or individual/collective well-being, magazines convey proposals for readers to achieve their goals, instituting an experiential field where the subject attends the construction of his self based on the experience of the Other. This leads to the fact that the communication contract that magazines establish with their audiences is deeper than the one reached by other media since their narratives not only talk about "important" issues, but lead the reader to immerse himself in a process of micro-entrepreneurship of the construction of his own Self (Charaudeau, 2013).

The emotional bond that magazines develop is fundamental to their effects on the construction of the reading subjects. Magazines, more than informing in a rational way, find in the emotional an effective tool for the reader to identify with the experiences represented and attribute truth value to the interpretative frameworks shown (Benetti, 2013).

In addition to the peculiar way that magazines develop to dialog/identify with their audiences, Schwaab and Tavares (2009) highlight the thematic treatment as another discursive resource of magazines for the visualization/legitimization of the interpretative frames of reality. The authors take up the theory of media agendas (Sousa, 2002) and the contributions of Freyre (2007) to adopt the notion of *generating theme*. With this theoretical basis, they refer that the media, more than setting the topics to think about in a given period, participate in a circuit of meanings where the audience plays a leading role in the construction of meanings about reality (Bertasso & Rangel, 2019). This means that the theme is understood not as a communicative guideline, but as a dynamizing agent of meanings about everyday life. The themes, rather than talking about contents, trigger a dynamizing process of signifying operations that interpret reality from singular lenses (Schwaab & Tavares, 2009).

It is possible to affirm then, that specialized magazines, by addressing issues related to specific niche audiences, configure behavioral logics, consumption patterns and unique interpretative schemes of everyday life, which leads them to operate as spaces of legitimization/classification of specific attitudes and experiences. In other words, magazines, to the extent that they try to meet the demands of their readership, also try to discipline it by offering life recipes and rules of behavior (Bassanezi, 1996; Bertasso & Rangel, 2019). Magazines, and other instances, actively participate in the production of identities (Moya, 2017, cited in Fernández, 2019; Seffner & Ulloa, 2015).

In this regard, various authors warn that femininities and masculinities do not exist as a constant and universal essence, but are constructed and produced in the midst of complex and unequal power relations and marked by the particularities of the cultural-historical context. In other words, femininities and masculinities are taught, valued, permitted and stimulated, and in these dynamics it is impossible not to take into account the participation of magazines (Ipek, 2021).

Considering these contributions, it is necessary to constantly question how social identities are represented and managed in the media discourse and, specifically, in the discourse of magazines (Sanjuan & Garcia, 2019). This challenge is assumed by adopting *Mujeres* (Women) magazine as material for analysis, which is the only Cuban press media aimed at this audience. *Mujeres* comprises a universe of more than four million readers, its editions are quarterly and reaches 137 thousand copies per publication (Moya, 2017, cited in Fernández, 2019).

The main objective of the study presented here was to understand how the magazine's narratives produce singular knowledge about women's experience in the economic spheres in Cuba. The increasing centrality of the media in the functioning and configuration of societies and the high political implications of these "truths" on identities, makes this critical exercise essential for the understanding of social complexities and heterogeneities and for the recognition of the forms of existence in contemporary social formations (Cervulle & Julliard, 2019; Garcés & Pedroso, 2018).

1.1. Cuba's political/social history

The Republic of Cuba is one of the thirteen countries that make up the islands of the Caribbean Sea. It was a colony of Spain until December 1898, when the Cuban-Spanish-

American War ended. After the war, Cuba was militarily occupied by the United States. The U.S. troops withdrew in 1902 under the condition that the Platt Amendment be included in the Cuban Constitution of 1901. This amendment granted the U.S. government the right to lease territories for the installation of naval and coal bases and to intervene in Cuba's internal affairs when deemed necessary (Guanche, 2017).

In 1902 the Republic of Cuba was born with Tomás Estrada Palma as president. The following years were marked by administrative corruption, political instability, American interference, uprisings and social conflicts. In 1940 the progressive political forces managed to approve a new constitution, considered one of the most advanced of the time, but in 1952 a military coup took place and the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista was installed (García, 2005).

According to Marrero (2018), in 1958 there were 21 newspapers, 12 radio newscasts and 28 magazines circulating in Havana, while in the provinces there were 36 newspapers, 16 newscasts and 33 magazines, in addition to three television newscasts and three cinematographic newscasts. There were magazines aimed at the family, especially women, such as *Ellas*, *Romances* and *Vanidades*.

Batista fled Cuba on December 31, 1958, after three years of intense armed struggle led by the 26th of July Movement - headed by Fidel Castro - and the 13th of March Revolutionary Directorate - headed by Faure Chomon. January 1st, 1959 is established as the date that marks the beginning of the Cuban Revolution, self-defined as an anti-imperialist process of political and economic changes to empower the marginal sectors and reinforce national sovereignty. In 1961 Fidel Castro publicly declared the socialist character of the Revolution, which was reflected in the Cuban Constitution of 1976, which also established the political system of a Single Party (the Communist Party of Cuba, formerly the United Party of the Socialist Revolution of Cuba) (Desages, 2021).

The positions of the media in favor or against the measures taken in Cuba after 1959 (Agrarian Reform Law, Urban Reform Law, Law of General and Free Nationalization of Education and Nationalization Laws), began to evidence an ideological-class struggle between two sides: counterrevolutionaries (press of bourgeois and pro-imperialist ideology), and revolutionaries (press of anti-imperialist and socialist ideology). Gradually the revolutionary press gained ground with the withdrawal from the country of the owners of

various press media or with the intervention of their workers. On November 15, 1961, the women's magazine *Vanidades* is nationalized and replaced by *Mujeres* magazine, becoming the official publication of the Federation of Cuban Women (Villaescusa, 2015).

During those years, the hostility of the United States towards Cuba, which continuously denounced imperialist strategies in Latin America, became evident. As U.S. aggressions and its isolation policy increased, Cuba consolidated its alliance with the former Soviet Union in the era of global bipolarity, establishing economic, political and military agreements that were decisive for the strengthening of the socialist system on the island (Callejas et al., 2011).

By the year 1970, the Cuban government had achieved that the press media were exclusively revolutionary, until it was finally established in the 1976 Constitution that all communication and mass dissemination media are state or social property but never privately owned. Its operation takes place under the supervision of the Ideological Department of the Communist Party of Cuba (Fernández, 2019).

The Cuban Revolution, with the aspiration to build a superior society, was oriented to the formation of improved subjects and, to achieve this, it implemented a bio-political machinery of correction and normalization (López-Labourdette, 2015) oriented to form the New Man. As part of this formative/disciplinary/normatizing process the media had a central role in the education of the people in the values assumed as valid in accordance with the socialist transformation. In this way, not only was the media ecosystem restructured and expanded since the early 1960s, but the production of new narratives was conditioned to show the Cuban reality from a press model with a marked Soviet influence (García, 2014; Padilla & Dayrell, 2018; Moragues, 2012).

At the end of 1991, after the fall of the Soviet Union, Cuba began to suffer an expressive economic crisis that produced social tensions also marked by criticism of the authoritarian character of the government and the Communist Party. In 1995, the island's economy began to show signs of recovery, which took on greater levels in 2002 with the strategic alliances with Venezuela and Bolivia (García, 2005).

Fidel Castro, president of the country since 1976, was replaced in 2008 by his brother, Vice President Raúl Castro, who initiated a process of socialist transformation that had as its most transcendental events the liberation of access to hotels, car rental, concession of usufruct of

idle land, free sale of cell phones, authorization of moonlighting, access to internet, rapprochement with the Catholic Church and reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States.

Access to Internet has put pressure on the country's media ecosystem. The consolidation of new alternative media favored the diversification of narratives on the contradictions and heterogeneities of society (Ramírez, 2018). Ramírez and Salgueiro (2018), highlight how the public sphere in Cuba has found in alternative media the ways to expand, providing greater space for debate and visibility of new demands and life experiences.

Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermudez currently holds the presidency, facing a serious economic and social crisis associated with Donald Trump's measures for the tightening of the economic blockade towards Cuba, closure of tourism during the Covid pandemic, failure of recent economic measures, increased migration, increased media campaigns against the system and consolidation of criticism of the political system, considered by various groups as undemocratic and totalitarian.

2. Materials and methods

For the achievement of this study conducted between 2019 and 2021, a qualitative methodology was adopted in tune with the interpretative humanistic paradigm (Hernández et al., 2003).

The *Mujeres* magazine constituted the material of research analysis. It is the only state-owned press specialized in women's issues. It has four million readers and its editions are quarterly. About *Mujeres* magazine, Moya (2017, cited in Fernández, 2019) states that the fact of being the only press medium oriented to women in Cuba constitutes its handicap, since in each edition it has the challenge of addressing the multiple interests of its broad niche of female readers. For this reason, the structure of the magazine covers more than twenty sessions and exceeds 90 pages. The magazine covers a wide range of topics through various formats, although reporting and interviews are the main journalistic genres used. In its pages one can find from cooking recipes, sections dedicated to the history of Cuban and foreign women, spaces for legal advice, health, academic articles on feminist theories, to segments where there is interaction with the readers.

Considering the structure of the magazine, it was necessary to make a selection of the material to be analyzed, taking into account the indicators of thematic content and time range. The former conditioned the selection of the sections *Quehaceres* and *Protagonistas*, as they are the spaces dedicated in all the issues to show the participation of Cuban women in the productive spheres. On the other hand, the time frame focused on the 24 printed editions published between 2010 and 2015. This period was considered to be the one in which several of the transformations derived from the updating of the economic and social model promoted by the state were implemented, with great impact on the levels and forms of participation of Cuban women. The empirical material reached a total of 51 journalistic materials, as shown in Table 1. In all cases, the analyses covered only the textual part of each subject.

Table 1

Journalistic subjects analyzed

No.	Title of the report	Section	Year	Edition	Subject matter
1	Con muchas ganas de hacer	Protagonista	2010	1	women and international collaboration
2	El envés de las cosas	Protagonista	2010	2	women and teaching
3	La profesión que la cautivó	Protagonista	2010	3	women and teaching
4	Ana María Quesada: del piano a la ciencia.	Protagonista	2010	4	women and teaching
5	Hacer florecer la tierra	Protagonista	2011	1	women and science
6	Estremecen la tierra	Protagonista	2011	2	women and leadership
7	Centro Ecológico Procesador de Residuos Urbanos: lo que va de ayer a hoy	Protagonista	2011	4	women and leadership
8	El encanto de las muñecas de trapo	Protagonista	2012	1	women's participation in socio-cultural projects
9	Premisas de una delegada del Poder Popular. Paciencia, pasión y entrega	Protagonista	2012	2	women and leadership
10	Para que las cuentas den	Protagonista	2012	3	women and leadership
11	Mujer de muchos caminos	Protagonista	2012	4	women and agriculture
12	Arminda Meneses: un traje a su medida	Protagonista	2013	1	women and leadership

13	Mujeres jefas de finca: raíces de un árbol que empieza a crecer	Protagonista	2013	2	women and agriculture
14	Orgullo de maestra	Protagonista	2013	3	women and teaching
15	Palabras del alma	Protagonista	2013	4	women and teaching
16	Historia recuperada del olvido	Protagonista	2014	2	women and science
17	Atrevida vocación	Protagonista	2014	3	women and non-traditional professions
18	Nardys Marrero Gullán: del asfalto al campo	Protagonista	2014	4	women and agriculture
19	Mujeres emprendedoras: realidades que cambian	Protagonista	2015	1	women's participation in socio-cultural projects
20	Ana Gloria, asombrosa memoria	Protagonista	2015	2	women's participation in revolutionary struggles.
21	Educación como misión	Protagonista	2015	3	women and leadership
22	La enseñanza como destino	Protagonista	2015	4	women and leadership
23	Como de tierra y trabajo	Quehaceres	2010	1	women and agriculture
24	Apuesta a las alternativas	Quehaceres	2010	2	women and leadership
25	Razón de mi vida	Quehaceres	2010	2	women and science
26	Centro Artesanal El Quitrín de Santiago de Cuba: la cubanía en el vestir	Quehaceres	2010	3	women and tradition
27	Agricultura: entre el surco y la mesa	Quehaceres	2010	4	women and agriculture
28	Daimi, la maravilla de sus manos	Quehaceres	2011	1	women and non-traditional professions
29	El valle que soñamos	Quehaceres	2011	2	women and agriculture
30	Centros de Orientación y diagnóstico: una luz en la cuesta	Quehaceres	2012	1	women's participation in socio-cultural projects
31	Chaparra, sueños cumplidos a la sombra de un central	Quehaceres	2012	2	women's participation in socio-cultural projects
32	Guaniquiqui, del bejuco al mueble	Quehaceres	2012	4	women and tradition
33	Empresa de proyectos para Industrias Varias (EPROYIV): donde la experiencia cuenta	Quehaceres	2013	1	women and leadership
34	El misterio de las mil y una manos	Quehaceres	2013	2	women and self-employment
35	Daylin entre las aguas marinas	Quehaceres	2013	2	women and non-traditional professions

36	Oficios en buenas manos	Quehaceres	2013	3	women and non-traditional professions
37	Magaly González Gómez: una vida en pocas palabras	Quehaceres	2013	4	women and leadership
38	Y valió la pena	Quehaceres	2013	4	women's participation in socio-cultural projects
39	Pasión por la cerámica	Quehaceres	2014	1	women and tradition
40	Cuarteto singular	Quehaceres	2014	1	women and non-traditional professions
41	Paisaje en verde	Quehaceres	2014	1	women and agriculture
42	Experimentar, innovar, crear...	Quehaceres	2014	1	women and tradition
43	Destreza al volante	Quehaceres	2014	1	women and non-traditional professions
44	Otra vida después de la tormenta	Quehaceres	2014	2	women and agriculture
45	Reina del azúcar	Quehaceres	2014	3	women and leadership
46	Con la herradura de la buena suerte	Quehaceres	2014	3	women and leadership
47	Soy feliz en los canteros	Quehaceres	2014	4	women and agriculture
48	No a la violencia: de cara a la comunidad	Quehaceres	2015	1	women's participation in socio-cultural projects
49	Confección de manualidades. Tradición ancestral	Quehaceres	2015	2	women and tradition
50	¿Mercedes o Chavela? Entre cintas y tules	Quehaceres	2015	3	women and self-employment
51	Diálogos en Los Portales	Quehaceres	2015	4	women and leadership

Source: own elaboration.

Based on this sample, the analysis was based on the identification of the topics addressed by the sections and their frequencies in the journalistic discourse, in order to contrast them with the main economic events of the national context. This analysis made possible to cross-check the meanings produced by the thematic agenda of the magazine on the participation and functions of Cuban women in the productive spheres and the singularities of the economic scenarios. From this analytical framework, the feminine representations and the subject positions from which Cuban women are questioned by the discourse, allowing to make visible the values and attitudes associated with the models of *being a woman* represented by the magazine and legitimized as valid.

For the analysis of the journalistic materials, the technique used was documentary analysis, taking into account that the documents constitute a set of discursive practices inserted in a historical, cultural and political context and are elaborated in the midst of tensions, confrontations, ruptures and discursive resignifications (Lemos et. al, 2010). We start from an understanding of discourse that dialogs with the perspective of poststructuralist authors, specifically with that of Laclau (2004). Discourse is conceived as the result of a practice of articulation between linguistic and extralinguistic elements that transcends the material existence of objects to account for the dimension of shared meanings (Laclau, 2004; Mendonça, 2015).

Therefore, when we speak of **discourse**, we refer to the set of meanings articulated and shared by a community of senses. The comprehension of this category is fundamental for the study by allowing us to understand how the meanings constructed about Cuban women by the narratives of *Mujeres* magazine produce an understanding of being a woman that transcends the materiality of the bodies represented to enter into a symbolic dimension, from where the boundaries of their recognition and valuation as social beings and political subjects are defined (Mendonça, 2015).

For the discourse analysis of the selected journalistic subjects, the methodological procedures proposed by Monje (2011) were followed:

- separation of the information.

The information was separated into two groups, taking into account the selected sections: *Quehaceres* and *Protagonistas*).

- Identification of thematic categories in each section (inductive categorization).

Based on the content of each section, several thematic categories were identified inductively.

Section *Quehaceres* (thematic categories):

-women and leadership

-women and agriculture

-women and tradition

- women and non-traditional trades
- women and self-employment
- women and participation in socio-cultural projects.

Section *Protagonistas* (thematic categories):

- women and leadership
- women and agriculture
- women's participation in socio-cultural projects
- women and non-traditional professions
- women and teaching
- women and science
- women and international collaboration
- women's participation in revolutionary struggles.

- Coding.

An identifying code was assigned to each fragment according to the correspondence of its content with each thematic category.

- Synthesis and grouping.

The contents of the journalistic materials of each section were grouped taking into account the corresponding thematic categories.

- Interpretation and elaboration of conclusions.

An interpretative analysis of each content unit was carried out, which was constituted on the basis of the thematic categories adopted.

3. Results and discussion

For a better understanding of the results, the analysis has been structured taking into account the two sections of the magazine that were analyzed: *Quehaceres* and *Protagonistas*.

3.1. Analysis of the journalistic subjects of the *Quehaceres* section

Six main topics were highlighted in the 29 journalistic articles of this section: **women and leadership; women and agriculture; women and tradition; women and non-traditional trades; women and self-employment; and women and participation in socio-cultural projects.**

With regard to the frequency with which these topics were addressed, there was a marked difference between the 24% of occurrence of the topic **women and agriculture** and the 7% of the topic **women and self-employment**. This imbalance marks a thematic hierarchy that leads to an unequal understanding of the participatory universe of Cuban women, giving greater relevance to women's participation in agricultural work. Another element that also affects this significant process is the centrality of the *employment* marker, since the journalistic subjects of the *Quehaceres* section exalt the experiences of Cuban women linked to public employment, to the detriment of those who are inserted in the private sector, represented only by the subject of **women and self-employment**.

The visibility of the theme **women and agriculture** is in tune with the implementation at the time of government strategies that sought to encourage the participation of Cuban women in the agricultural sector¹, distribute the female productive forces surplus to the process of labor reordering² and overcome the existing gender gap in the rural sector in Cuba (Arce, 2012).

These connections of the discourse of the *Mujeres* magazine with the governmental objectives were also identified in the use of several discursive resources that reinforce the significance given by the magazine to this subject matter and to the women who participate in them, as shown in the following discursive sequences:

¹ Among the measures implemented were the decentralization of state agricultural production, the search for new formulas to organize and stimulate the labor force of [agricultural] cooperative entities, among others. More information in Arce (2012).

² In 2011, the labor reorganization process caused the displacement of more than a quarter of a million workers (Echevarria, 2014).

Since the Cuban government approved Decree-Law 259, which authorizes the delivery of idle land as usufruct to those who wish to work it, the number of women farmers and associated to the so-called Cooperatives of Agricultural Production and Credit and Services does not stop adding, all over the country (Fariñas, 2010, p. 12).

Grouped in agricultural production cooperatives, *CPA*, or credit and services cooperatives, *CCS*, 105 women give their enthusiasm to food production and livestock (Campo, 2011, p. 12).

This is the case of Mery González Rodríguez, a Cuban born and raised in Cárdenas and one of the women landowners benefiting from the new law that allows the acquisition of idle land for cultivation (Digna, 2010, p. 72).

These forms of association are also reinforced by the permanent reference to the efficiency of the business management of the production cooperatives in which Cuban women participate, the positive results of the gender equity programs in the cooperative sector and the importance of women's work for society. Likewise, the narratives make use of the displacement of meanings as metaphorical effects to give greater discursive connotation to these topics. In the report *Entre el surco y la mesa* (Fariñas, 2010), the use of this resource is objectified in two phases: a first one, where the participation of Cuban women in agriculture is signified as a protagonist of state purposes; and a second displacement of meanings occurs when the narrative attributes a new meaning to that link of women, by objectifying it as a *matter of national security*. The following discursive sequences allow us to observe the use of this resource:

With a growing and indispensable presence, *many Cuban women are now protagonists in the State's objectives* of guaranteeing food security for the population (Fariñas, 2010, p. 12) (author's italics).

Guaranteeing *food security for the Cuban population has become, for the State, a matter of national security* (Fariñas, 2010, p. 14) (author's italics).

These discursive elements contribute to the fact that the state professional link of women is understood as a positive value and that **women and agriculture** is consolidated as one of the relevant issues of the time. Such connotation contrasts with the treatment given to **women and self-employment** which, despite being one of the emerging economic sectors of greater consolidation since 2011 (Alcázar, 2013) and one of the main professional scenarios of Cuban women³, is addressed only in two newspaper articles.

Despite its centrality as a productive scenario, employment in the private sector still lacks expressive political legitimization. Alcázar (2013) points out that there is an ambivalent relationship with the private sector, also known as **self-employment**, since its existence is allowed while its expansion is limited. In this sense, the author points out that for political and government authorities, self-employment represents a transgression of the socialist principles that govern the island's economic and social system. This means that this sector is not recognized as a flexibilization or democratization of economic participation by means parallel to state mechanisms, but as a contingent economic sphere that weakens the hegemony of the state as a provider of services and benefits to society. For this reason, the occupation of Cuban women in these spaces has less prestige, classifying them as workers belonging to an inferior category. Silva and Menoya (2021) even denounce the existence of inequalities in relation to the labor rights of women in the public and private sectors. For example, the right to maternity in Cuba is regulated differently to the detriment of women linked to self-employment, evidencing a devaluation of their insertion in this space.

This narrative, which contrasts with the wide range of non-traditional jobs where Cuban women are shown in the state sphere, establishes a biased view of female participation in the self-employed sector. First by reinforcing a sexist understanding of **self-employment** and also by disregarding the universe of 201 authorized activities in the country in that period (Soa, 2014).

It is also striking how the journalistic discourse highlights women's political commitment in contrast to their economic contributions. The following discursive sequence provides details of these meanings:

³ According to research by Echevarría (2014) and data from the Statistical Yearbook of Cuba 2015, the incorporation of women in this sector increased from 29,500 in 2010 to 151,900 in 2015.

This woman, born and raised in the most traditional city in central Cuba, has more work than hours in a day. "I am secretary of the zonal communist party nucleus, I exercise the position of lay judge in the Municipal Court and I collaborate with the House of Orientation for Women and the Family, of the Federation of Cuban Women, she explained. But, in addition, she weaves and maintains an independent business with a lease and another contract for the sale of light food (Edith, 2013).

3.2. Analysis of the journalistic subjects of the Protagonistas section.

In the *Protagonistas* section, made up of 22 reports, the presence of eight main topics was observed. Four of them coincide with the topics covered by *Quehaceres*: **women and leadership; women and agriculture; women's participation in socio-cultural projects; and women and non-traditional trades**. The other four, **women and teaching; women and science; women and international collaboration and women's participation in revolutionary struggles**, diversify the thematic universe of this section.

In the analysis of these journalistic subjects, a greater thematic variety was identified, so they were organized into three main blocks considering their reiterations in the discourse. The first block, **women and leadership and women and teaching**, represents 59% of the total content of the section. The second covers three topics that share the same percentage (9%): **women and agriculture, women's participation in sociocultural projects, and women and science**. Finally, in the last block are the topics with the lowest representation (between 4 and 5%): **women and international collaboration, women's participation in revolutionary struggles and women and non-traditional trades**.

A first aspect identified in the analysis is the marked contrast between the image constructed around the experiences of Cuban women at decision-making levels and their actual presence and participation in these spaces. Although the presence of Cuban women in high-level positions in various economic spheres is highlighted, the reality is contrasting. This is evidenced by Echevarría (2014), when she shows how the Cuban economic context between 2010-2015 was marked by a gender gap, considering the unequal relationship between the levels of education acquired by women and their presence in managerial positions. The author highlights how Cuban women represented the majority of professionals with university degrees (56.3%), with technical training (60.5%) and in administrative positions (65.4%). However, their participation in managerial positions barely reached 30%, being

underrepresented in this professional category and highlighting the effects of the so-called glass ceiling, an invisible barrier that limits women from continuing to advance when they approach the top of the corporate hierarchy (Aduna & Medina, 2021; Camarena & Saavedra, 2018; Loden, 1987).

This confrontation between the symbolic and objective dimensions of Cuban women's participation in decision-making positions allows us to identify how the magazine's discourse seeks to highlight and encourage women's participation in this professional category. This singularity again places the narratives of *Mujeres* in tune with the strategies of the state, at the same time that they are distant from questioning the relationship of inequality that affects Cuban women. Only two of the eight articles that address this issue question this asymmetry and its treatment is marked by the absence of a critical analysis that unravels the power relations that originate it. The following discursive sequence demonstrates this:

It is true that there are still few women in decision-making positions, but certainly with this daily effort and consecration, demonstrated in the Construction Materials Company in Santiago de Cuba, the number will not only increase, but will contribute to raise the quality of products essential for the advancement of our society (Zulueta, 2011, p. 66).

As can be seen, although the text refers to the low female representation, the problem is diluted in a narrative of optimism that minimizes its effects in the face of the promise of an encouraging future for society as a whole. Even an explicit demand for more effective policies for the transformation of this gap is not observed and the solution is deposited in the individual action of women: "...with this daily effort and consecration, demonstrated in the Construction Materials Company in Santiago de Cuba, the number will not only increase...".

It is also observed that the experiences of women leaders are represented from narratives of success, social recognition, work efficiency, commitment to the assigned tasks and defense of positive moral values, as the following discursive sequences show:

Her eloquence, extroverted character and efficient control of her management, quickly win people's sympathy and respect... indefatigable, demanding and a first-class conversationalist,

describe the characteristics of this 47-year-old woman who has in the fulfillment of her management a task for which she is passionate (Suárez, 2012, p. 65).

She has two terms as a delegate. *Her people love her because she is a natural leader*, she tells things straight up, and does not suffer from evasions to keep her mouth shut. She does not promise sand castles, but *does her best to help find a solution to personal, collective and community issues*. When she gets involved in a roll, one of those necessary to solve certain problems, she does it with the passion and insistence she has as a premise (Ravelo, 2012, p. 66).

... among five leaders with good results and a long career, I was chosen to take care of this school. Although at first I did not like the idea of leaving my career behind, I understood the arguments that *effective leadership* was necessary to straighten things out here (Fariñas, 2015, p. 66).

These discursive particularities contribute to the production of meanings that, while highlighting women's empowerment, provide a limited and distanced view of the obstacles faced by Cuban women managers.

With regard to the theme of women and international collaboration, its low presence in the magazine's narratives is striking. International collaborations include all the official collaboration programs between the Cuban state and other countries in different areas such as health, sports, construction, culture, etc. This aspect is in contrast to the fact that Cuban women constitute 64% of the professional force that participates in international collaborations (MINREX, 2018). Likewise, the importance and growth of this economic area is disregarded, since the early 2000s international collaborations were consolidated as the main component of the country's exports and the largest source of income for the Cuban economy (Sánchez, 2011).

The highlighting of values such as satisfaction for the fulfilled duty, commitment to the political system, the enhancement of Cuban social achievements in contrast with a chaotic external reality allows the construction of an ideal imaginary of the national social reality in comparison with the foreign context. Likewise, the doctor interviewed is shown

disconnected from her context, by showing her totally devoid of the personal, economic and professional implications of her participation in the international collaborations. In this way, the personal and affective dynamics developed by women, the processes of adaptation and survival experienced in the difficult contexts in which they have exercised their professions and the effects caused by the transformation of their socio-classist scale in society are silenced.

4. Conclusions

The results presented lead us to think how the theme in the sections *Quehaceres* and *Protagonistas* operates beyond being a journalistic guideline on the reality and experiences of Cuban women. In fact, in *Mujeres*, the theme acts as a dynamic axis and articulator of meanings about the national context from which specific understandings of women's experiences are legitimized and their possible forms of action are classified. Therefore, rather than presenting a balanced account of the complexity and diversity of the condition of being a woman, the magazine offers a singular, interested and limited reading of this condition. This issue is also pointed out by other authors when analyzing the communication system in Cuba (Sosa-Varcancel et al., 2019).

There is also an imbalance in the frequency of the themes represented, giving greater social recognition to specific experiences of being a woman. Thus, the centrality of the themes Women and Agriculture and Women and Leadership not only makes visible priority policies of the time, but also contributes to legitimize valid forms of participation attributed to women. In relation to this, several authors, when discussing the contributions and limitations of these discursive practices around Cuban women, point out that, although these contributions and limitations helped to associate them with new values that re-signified their symbolic representation and political understanding as a social group (Garcés & Pedroso, 2018; Verdecia, 2009), reproduced essentialist stereotypes and of a marked universal character that made them as limited and dangerous as the ones they wanted to overcome (Cervulle & Julliard, 2019; Gay-Sylvestre, 2012).

It also highlights the existence of differentiated journalistic discourses depending on whether the experiences narrated represent women in the public sector or women in the private sector. Consequently, there is a hierarchization of working women according to the sector to which they belong, leaving those in the private sector at a lower level and with little legitimacy. In

this way, the topic contributes to the discourse in *Quehaceres* and *Protagonistas* promoting valid ways of being a working woman. The analysis of the topics covered in the sections also reveals what the magazine does not consider to be authorized ways of being a woman. While, on the one hand, the magazine highlights the image of a revolutionary woman, on the other hand, there is no space for women who openly question and criticize the country's gender policies. In this way, the magazine discredits "rebellious" behavior and silences transgressions.

The meanings constructed around Cuban women who participate in the public sector represent an empowered, politically committed woman, who occupies responsibilities in non-traditional jobs and are always associated with narratives that highlight their successes and the strategic importance of their participation. This understanding of being a woman, which clearly intends to reflect a model of empowered and emancipated women, contrasts with the gender gaps present in this field due to the underrepresentation of women. The analyzed journalistic discourses avoid a problematic experience of being a woman when they emphasize that, with sacrifice, effort and responsibilities, women achieve success, happiness and accomplished goals. In this way, the obstacles that women encounter in their professional and managerial careers are minimized and the level of commitment and individual responsibility is established as a condition for success, instead of promoting a critical and questioning analysis of the discriminations experienced by Cuban women. It is also worth mentioning that in the reports analyzed, no allusion was found to various issues of concern to non-heterosexual women: the right to assisted reproduction, marriage and adoption. In this way, *Mujeres* magazine privileges hegemonic identities and practices while denying, discrediting and marginalizing other identities. In other words, it develops what Butler (2010) calls regulatory practices at the service of heteronormativity or the "heterosexual imperative" (Ipek, 2021).

Neither are there any denunciations in relation to femicide in Cuba, child marriage or harassment at work; even though there are official statistics that show the dimension of these problems in the country (Silva & Guerra, 2011; UNICEF, 2019).

These narratives that describe being a woman associated with an experience of success also contribute to outline a cognitive map (Prado, 2009) of the performativities assigned to Cuban women to achieve social recognition. In fact, the discourse of *Mujeres* does not escape from what Prado (2009) highlights as the cartographic function of the media, when he recognizes

how the media outlines paths loaded with life models that, followed with determination and strength by the readers, will lead them to the desired recognition. When the newspaper discourses present the experiences of Cuban women through narratives endowed with common values, they are legitimizing specific ways of being and acting and, at the same time, they are setting out the ways of understanding how to be a woman in those scenarios of participation. Thus, Cuban women, being associated with values such as sacrifice, political commitment, success in their economic work and decontextualized from the incidence of power relations, delimit the edges of a singular symbolic representation that is romanticized.

These singularities in the representation of women lead the discourse of the magazine to acquire a paradoxical character. That is, at the same time that the positive reading of the professional participation of Cuban women contributes to the construction of a symbolic profile as empowered, equal and fulfilled subjects, it produces a romanticized representation of being a woman in which the existing relations of inequality and the feminine underrepresentation are disregarded, as well as the heterogeneity of the experiences of Cuban women in their participatory and experiential universe is silenced. Therefore, magazines exert a certain cultural pedagogy through the effects they provoke in our thoughts. Magazines transcend their expository character by reporting facts and events, to consolidate their productive power through the reiteration of themes and appropriate ways of living. It is through the construction of narratives that magazines act in our lives (Bomfim et al., 2022; Ruoho & Torkkola, 2018).

These contradictions evidence a framework of tension in the discursive practices of *Mujeres* magazine, as it continues under the regulation of the principles that interpret/visualize the Cuban reality from the lenses of the homogenizing/emancipating state project. Thus, in each attempt to represent Cuban women and account for the national present, the magazine debates between the transgression of state informative and editorial policies and the fulfillment of the principles that govern the communication contract with its readers.

Considering this, we understand how through the selection, the thematic treatment and the use of certain discursive resources, the narratives studied articulate effects of meanings that affect the hermeneutic potential of the magazine to show the social present and legitimize certain experiences of Cuban women to the extent that it disregards others. Therefore, the meanings produced by the journalistic discourse of *Mujeres* magazine act as a reproductive

space of classificatory norms and social hierarchization, as also evidenced in other studies (Cervulle & Julliard, 2019).

The study has shown how magazines play an active role in legitimizing and discrediting ways of being a woman, as well as the spaces that are considered "appropriate" to be a revolutionary Cuban woman and protagonist. In this way, the magazine produces social hierarchies and legitimizes exclusions and marginalizations.

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