

Reading and writing practices of peasant women: reflections from some appropriation stories

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ABSTRACT. This text aims to present practices of reading and writing of peasant women with little schooling. The study is part of the research on the ways of participating in cultural practices related to reading and writing through different instances of socialization. It arose from the assumption that there is no written culture yet, but rather a diversity of writing cultures that vary according to the context of use and learning that are not exclusively dependent on written language based on the alphabetic system. The research methodology followed an orientation of the qualitative research presuppositions. We used oral history, a field diary made up of the literacy events observed in the CEBs and interviews, in order to identify forms of access and appropriation of written materials. In addition, the meanings, roles, and conceptions that CEB leaders attribute to reading and writing are presented, specifically from some appropriation histories. Through the procedures adopted in the analysis of the data it was possible to interpret that the different forms of participation in the writing cultures of these women are based on the mediation between the oral and the written.

Keywords: Peasant Women, Writing Cultures, Literacy, CEBs, Citizen Participation.



Práticas de leitura e escrita de mulheres camponesas: reflexões a partir de algumas histórias de apropriação

RESUMO. Este texto objetiva apresentar práticas de leitura e escrita de mulheres camponesas com pouca escolarização. O estudo insere-se no quadro de pesquisas sobre os modos de participação nas práticas culturais relacionadas à leitura e à escrita por meio de distintas instâncias de socialização. Ele surgiu do pressuposto de que não existe uma cultura escrita já dada, mas sim uma diversidade de culturas do escrito que variam em função do contexto de uso e aprendizagem e não são exclusivamente dependentes da língua escrita baseada no sistema alfabético. A metodologia de investigação seguiu uma orientação dos pressupostos qualitativos de pesquisa. Utilizou-se história oral, diário de campo constituído a partir dos eventos de letramento observados nas CEBs e entrevistas, com a finalidade de identificar formas de acesso e apropriação de materiais escritos. Além disso, apresentam-se os significados, os papéis e as concepções que as líderes das CEBs atribuem à leitura e à escrita, especificamente a partir de algumas histórias de apropriação. Por intermédio dos procedimentos adotados na análise dos dados, foi possível interpretar que as diferentes formas de participação nas culturas do escrito dessas mulheres se pautam na mediação entre o oral e o escrito.

Palavras-chave: Mulheres Camponesas, Culturas do Escrito, Letramento, CEBs, Participação Cidadã.

Prácticas de lectura y escrita de mujeres campesinas: reflexiones a partir de algunas historias de apropiación

RESUMEN. Este texto objetiva presentar prácticas de lectura y escritura de mujeres campesinas con poca escolarización. El estudio se inserta en el marco de investigaciones acerca de los modos de participación en las prácticas culturales relacionadas a la lectura ya la escritura por medio de distintas instancias de socialización. El surgió del supuesto de que no existe una cultura escrita ya dada, sino una diversidad de culturas del escrito que varían en función del contexto de uso y aprendizaje que no son exclusivamente dependientes de la lengua escrita basada en el sistema alfabético. La metodología de investigación siguió una orientación de los presupuestos cualitativos de investigación. Se utilizó historia oral, diario de campo constituido a partir de los eventos de letramento observados en las CEBs y entrevistas, con la finalidad de identificar formas de acceso y apropiación de materiales escritos. Además, se presentan los significados, los papeles y las concepciones que las líderes de las CEBs atribuyen a la lectura ya la escritura, específicamente a partir de algunas historias de apropiación. Por intermedio de los procedimientos adoptados en el análisis de los datos fue posible interpretar que las diferentes formas de participación en las culturas del escrito de esas mujeres se basan en la mediación entre lo oral y lo escrito.

Palabras clave: Mujeres Campesinas, Culturas del Escrito, Letramento, CEBs, Participación Ciudadana.

Introduction

The desire to know the life trajectories of peasant women and their pathways of formation and performance is anchored in my own life history, since I grew up following the daily routine of women leaders of CEBs who worked in the rural area of the municipality of Candiba, Bahia, 825 km from the capital of Bahia. With them, I had my first contacts with printed materials. The leadership exercise was involved in domestic chores and in the roles of mother, wife, daughter and rural worker. This context, when I was still young, taught me not only to value community work, but also to think about the different roles assumed daily by the leaderships that work in the rural area. The reminiscences of the cultural practices of reading lived in the nights of full moon or the meetings around the bonfire and the "counting" of stories in the collective wheels realized in the house of flour still today remain alive in me. Many were the stories about werewolf and mule without head, the biblical stories and the causes, like those of Pedro Malasarte, that I heard.

As for the world of writing, the presence of books or other printed materials, in my childhood, school newspapers or religious printed materials such as newspapers, newsletters and

booklets, posters and leaflets of the Fraternity Campaigns, books of songs and catechisms. The practices of reading and writing were motivated by conversations and mediated by orality in the space of the family, school and church. These memories intertwine, dialogue among themselves and compose my reader universe, which welcomed and involved the study presented here. From now on, the first person in the plural is used to present a work done in many hands and in many voices.

The reflections of this text are a cut of a doctoral research regarding how women leaders of the Ecclesial Base Communities (CEBs) of the Diocese of Caetité/BA, who rarely or never attended school, build their ways of participating in the cultures of writing. We emphasize that we do not only intend to describe the ways of participation of peasant women in the cultures of the writing, but to understand how the little school education, the peasant origin, the gender issue, the religious belonging and the reading of printed religious materials that circulate in the CEBs are part of the construction of these subjects as readers and writers.

In this context, the research asks: to what extent do the reading modes and strategies carried out at leaderships, families or community halls influence the

appropriation of reading and writing? What is the meaning of reading the printed matter for women with no or little schooling who act as leaders in the rural CEBs of the Diocese of Caetité/BA? As a group of individuals, belonging to the rural environment, participate in situations that require reading and/or writing? Which instances favor the expansion of reading and writing skills in rural contexts? These questions arose from the reading of research on the ways in which individuals participated in the cultures of writing, which were little discussed in the publications consulted, and from the observations made in the Movement of Peasant Women of the Diocese of Caetité.

When analyzing the profiles of six peasant women, we find that the trajectory they have traversed has been long until the conquest of the public and religious space. Daughters of small farmers were born and lived in the countryside; in there, they learned the readings of the field from an early age. Their childhoods were marked by the popular religiosity, the difficulties of survival and the difficult access to the school. Low schooling levels Margaret and Dalia (third grade), Acacia, Jasmine and Iris (fourth grade), and Hydrangea (sixth grade), are not just a matter of late arrival at school. We noticed that the distribution of access to written culture for these

women, in addition to being regulated by schooling, was limited by factors related to social scope, ethnicity/race and gender.

The research was carried out in six Base Ecclesial Communities, located in the Parish of Our Lady of Sorrows, located in the municipality of Candiba/BA and linked to the Diocese of Caetité/BA. Data collection was done through the use of oral history, a field diary made up of the literacy events observed in the CEBs and interviews, in order to identify forms of access and appropriation of written materials - which, why, how and when these women read and write. The documentary analysis made it possible to contextualize and characterize the institutions involved in this research process, situating them in the past and present.

The research methodology followed an orientation of qualitative research assumptions (Flick, 2004). The understanding of the data was based on the assumptions of the qualitative approach, which has these characteristics: interaction between the researcher and the object investigated, emphasis on the process, permission for modification of collection techniques, re-reading of questions, localization of new subjects, review of the entire methodology during the course of the work, concern to portray the

participants' personal views, fieldwork, description and induction. This perspective is thus aimed at the discovery of new concepts, new relations, new forms of understanding of reality (Green *et al.*, 2005).

In the text that follows, we present studies, researches and reports of experiences that discuss a way of being a woman, of participating in the cultures of writing and religious and social practices. In addition, we describe some stories of the appropriation of reading and writing practices experienced by peasant women, highlighting how their insertion in the world of writing has occurred through different moments of interaction with the written object.

Women, writing cultures and citizen participation

This study is part of the research on the ways of participating in cultural practices related to reading and writing through different instances of socialization.

We start with the assumption that there is no written culture yet, but rather a diversity of writing cultures, which vary according to the context of use and learning. Incidentally for Marinho (2010, p. 75), "written culture involves practices of writing that are not exclusively

dependent on written language based on the alphabetic system".

In the perspective proposed by Galvão (2010, p. 218-220), it is controversial and complex to conceptualize written culture, since the term implies thinking about some consequences, such as the fact that this culture is not homogeneous. The author affirms that it is important to think about writing cultures, since, in this way, it is possible to understand and embrace the diversity of practices and uses that involve everyday practice, as well as to perceive the uses of writing cultures present in a community, without, however, prioritize one practice over others. Thus, it is not a matter of conceiving the world of writing, literate practices, only as an acquisition of the ability to write; the concept must extend to "every event or practice that mediates the written word". (Galvão, 2010, p. 219). The researcher considers written culture as a "place - symbolic and material - that writing occupies in/for a particular social group, community or society". (Galvão, 2010, p. 218). She understands that there is no written culture given *a priori*, but that it is possible to think of a diversity of written cultures that alternate depending on the needs and functions of the context of use and learning.

The master's research of the first author of this article, carried out in the Post-Graduation Program of the Faculty of Education of the Federal University of Minas Gerais (FaE/UFMG), from 2007 to 2009, evidences, through educational practices and tensions (EJA), the system of values, habits and attitudes that permeates the experiences of men and women who seek schooling, translating the role and place of each one in that space (Reis, 2009). Some women, for example, complain about the different conditions under which school-poor people have to resume their interrupted schooling. Others describe the ways of thinking and living, analyzing the rhythms, the permanencies or the changes in their personal and institutional trajectories, as this account illustrates:

Just because I went to school, my husband separated from me. I told him: "When I was a kid, my father would not let me study, now another man [husband] will not stop." It was more important for my husband and father to learn to use my hands than my head. Because I was not only using my hands, that is, washing, ironing, cooking, etc., my husband thought it was bad and he left me with two children. (Magdalena, 32 years old). (Reis, 2009, p. 175).

The situation reported in this testimony is also present in the surveys carried out in the EJA field. Women refer to the postponement of the dream of

education because of the practices of family care and life support that are sometimes imposed on them (Bastos, 2011; Fonseca 2005; Nogueira, 2003).

Our hypothesis is that, despite all the constraints and constraints of a patriarchal society, there are creative and alternative practices embraced by many women, whether working with their husbands or assuming the responsibilities of family and children alone. In addition, in order to be able to stay in school during the literacy process, they develop tactics to cope with the reactions of their peers, who threaten them with expulsion, beatings, embarrassment and attempted demoralization (Reis, 2009). Many women seek schooling concerned with obtaining autonomy to carry out daily activities that require reading, aiming to end the constraints and dependence of another person and break with the relationship of domination-exploitation-submission. Thus, they build the possible rupture.

In the Ecclesial Grassroots Communities, the Peasant Women's Movement (MMC) and the Catholic Initiative Education Movement (MEBIC), women face confrontations and tactics that alter the state of non-submission. As Certeau (1999) says, they change their way of doing things by appropriating spaces in another way, for example by participating

in social movements, the Church and the residents' association. According to Galvão and Di Pierro (2007, p. 16), "especially those who have achieved a position of community leadership and the possibility of public speaking, preserve self-esteem, refuse tutelage and reaffirm their capacity for discernment." Remarkable, in this sense, is the comment of this woman:

Be someone I already am! I am already someone ... but I want to be someone who knows how to speak correctly, because if we do not know how to read, speak and write without errors, in today's world we suffer ... especially the people who are leaders of community, as I am, and have to go to the public offices to solve problems of the residents, have to deal with documents such as minutes, regiments, projects, presence list, have to give many signatures, etc., ... we have to have the word easy, especially when the leader and animator of the community is black, poor and woman, etc. You have to have the wisdom to turn! (Priscila, 40 years old). (Reis, 2009, p. 162).

As Priscila explained, her work in the religious field and in the residents' association showed her the importance of seeking, in adulthood, new ways of structuring oral and written discourse. Her purpose was to qualify her citizen participation, to integrate in different activities, to play roles and to interact with diverse technologies and cultural instruments.

She recognizes that "*knowing how to speak right*", "*knowing how to read, speak and write without mistakes*", "*dealing with documents*", "*having the word easy*", makes a difference in reading, writing and speaking in a social context of increasing marginalization of groups that do not know or can not read and write, given the centrality of schooling and the necessary mastery of written language in increasingly "grafocentric" societies. However, when she says that "*she has to have the wisdom to turn around*," she says that schooling is not the only way to gain access to legitimate cultural heritage. This implies thinking that "going through school does not guarantee typical school development, just as not going through it does not prevent it from happening". (Oliveira 2009, p. 238).

Regardless of the years of schooling, Priscila believes that leaderships - when they master the use of reading, writing and oral skills - possess the skills and attitudes necessary for active and competent citizen participation in situations where reading and / or writing practices have an essential function. In addition, they maintain with others and with the world that surrounds them forms of interaction, attitudes and discursive competences that give them a determined and differentiated state or

condition of knowledge in a literate society.

The reports of Priscilla and other women interviewed during the masters' research - mostly black, from rural communities, leaders of CEBs and associations, and rarely or never attended school - have given rise to some reflections that, in turn, have contributed to thinking about the perception of leaders, about the ways they learn to read, about the ways they actually read. In addition, we seek to identify the values they attribute to the act of reading, to observe that attitudes are constructed in their experiences as Bible readers and religious printed materials within and outside the community. It is worth mentioning that, as women with little or no schooling, relate with autonomy and curiosity with the uses and practices of reading and writing.

The study by Paz Albuquerque (2007) on the trajectory of participation and female emancipation of poor women in the Diocese of Goiás reveals that the livingness and experiences of women working in CEBs are singular and little explored. The author points out that the religious transformations of Liberation Theology were attended by women. He acknowledges that such participation objectively favored the creation of a pedagogical process that contributed to

subjective and objective changes in the lives of poor women, transformations related to autonomy and valorization. Giving a voice to these subjects, the study identifies a woman's look and history about the Diocese of Goiás and Liberation Theology, recognizing the vision of the participants in this movement. Even showing the difficulties encountered by poor women in age-old sexist institutions such as the family and the Catholic Church, the results of the research also reveal the achievements they have made.

According to Galvão (2010, p. 231), studies on the churches are almost absent as instances of spreading the writing. Religious practices, however, as some works have already shown a fundamental role in the approximation between individuals and written culture. Souza (2007, 2009) shows, for example, that in the small rural community that has studied, located in the North of Minas Gerais, the only instances of circulation of the writing, besides the school, are the religious practices of the Catholic Church. Silva and Galvão (2007), in turn, expose how the insertion in Pentecostal religious practices of the Assembly of God contributed to bring their leaders closer to the written culture. Galvão (2010, p. 239) states: "These studies indicate the need to know the practices of subjects that are decisive in

the processes of production and diffusion of writing and the processes of approximation of the written culture of ordinary individuals”.

Studies developed by the Santa Barbara group of researchers at the University of California, "conceive of literacy as a social phenomenon that is situationally defined and redefined through the interaction of different social groups including reading groups, families, classrooms, schools, communities and social groups". (Castanheira *et al.*, 2001, p. 354). As a process, the phenomena of literacy can only be perceived in the actions of the subjects, in the orientations of their attitudes, in the expectations of the individuals and, lastly, in the way in which they interact, interpret and construct the texts.

The changes in the sociocultural practices of individuals have led to discussion about what it means to be literate. With respect to this debate, Street (1984) had already defended for 30 years that literacy is more than the ability to decode to understand senses expressed on a page, on a computer screen or even in a situated social practice. Barton and Hamilton (1998) consider that literacy allows the individual to grasp a set of skills and knowledge and effectively participate in all the events of the community to which

they belong and the traditions, habits and customs with which they are identifies.

The survey on "Literacy and Literacy of Young People and Adults" by Viovio and Kleiman (2013) in the first decade of the millennium also points out that there are many studies and research on "literacy and literacy" and "literacy and schooling" related to literacy outside of school or linked to specific groups, local and local practices. The authors show that "the literacy practices that subjects share and the always result in the expansion of modes of action and insertion in grafocentric societies" (Vóvio & Kleiman, 2013, p. 193).

In view of the complexity inherent to the senses and the ways in which youth and adult literacy programs have been implemented in Brazil, this research aims to understand how subjects traditionally associated with orality construct, throughout their life trajectories, ways of participating in cultures of writing. Therefore, by centralizing the focus of this study on non-school educational processes, we generate subsidies to better understand the role of popular religious bodies (in this case, Catholic women) in the formation of women and their processes of approximation with reading and writing.

According to Souza (2007), studies that are currently concerned with the

description of the use of writing, the forms of participation of subjects, families and social groups in the written culture, and the implications of this participation have tried to understand, for example, what people do with writing. In this direction, research carried out in Brazil by Galvão (2001, 2004) evidences particular forms of participation of individuals in the world of writing. The author draws attention to pathways of subjects singular, whose contact and experience with writing occur outside the schooling process, such as "collective and aloud reading experiences of cordel leaflets" and the readings of "movies subtitles" (Galvão, 2004, p. 147).

According to Abreu (2002), if, on the one hand, we already know well how are the ways of reading, access to written materials, the reasons for reading and the spaces given to the reading of prestigious cultural groups - if we are already aware the history of canonical books, and the way in which learning and the dissemination of school reading occurs - on the other hand, the ways of contacting books and written materials were not satisfactorily researched. Moreover, little is known about the objects and practices of reading in circulation among discredited groups, such as peasant populations. Thus, it seems important to us to understand how little school education, peasant origin, gender

and religious affiliation contribute to the modes of participation in the writing cultures of CEBs peasant women leaders.

Reading and writing practices of peasant women

The practices of reading and writing developed in the CEBs, in the union, in the Pastoral da Criança, in the association, in the Movement of Peasant Women, in their residences with their children and in so many other spaces, cover the innumerable experiences of peasant women. These experiences are not only related to the school space, because their activities of reading and writing are considered considering the different social demands.

Acácia and Íris, for example, experience, in the Pastoral da Criança, diversified practices of literacy regularly implemented. These relate to the uses of reading and writing with the following objectives: to communicate; organize and require the execution of actions; and to assign meanings to the activities they carry out during the home visit, the care of children under 6 years of age, the celebration of life, the accompaniment of families and the community, the reflection meeting and the evaluation of the activities carried out.

Other experiences of reading and writing performed by Acácia refer to the follow-up of pregnant women in the

Pastoral da Criança through the instrument "Loops of love". Each month, the pregnant women receive a card with the main information about the development of the baby, changes in the woman's body and the incentives for them to prenatal. They are messages that improve the self-esteem of the expectant mother and have her follow up, month by month, the development of her child and keep in mind the care she should take with her gestation.

It is worth remembering that the activities of Pastoral da Criança are strongly marked by orality, reading and writing, as well as being represented in an intense way by a learning that is learned and acquired with the other, in specific cultural contexts that require participation, activity and action. We quote the following a practice recorded in the field diary, held at the São José Community Center:

Today is "Celebration of Life" day. On this day, families and leaders come together to evaluate the development of their children, exchange experiences and celebrate the results achieved. The community organized the celebration in the community hall, outdoors, under the trees. The leaders weigh the children and share a snack in a party mood. While the children are heavy, the weight is recorded in the child's notebook, for family control, and in the Leader's Notebook, and later sent to the National Child Pastoral Coordination. The meeting is enriched by playing with children. Spirituality is present through

mysticism. (Field Diary, Aug. 26, 2012).

All the activities carried out by Acácia and Iris and by other leaders are, at the end of each home visit, written and recorded in reports that are then addressed to the parish staff of the Pastoral da Criança and later to feed the data of the National Coordination Pastoral da Criança and to prove the services provided. In the case of literacy events, the construction of these reports, a result of the activities carried out, constitutes a practice located, inherent in the social scope of the work of this association. The implementation of this type of practice is established as a literacy event that, in the view of Barton and Hamilton (1998), takes on a formal character because it is implemented through procedures adopted by a social assistance agency, in this case, the Pastoral Teams of child.

In the community of Jasmine, we observe the realization of a biblical circle coordinated by her. The theme of the meeting was "The problem of divisions within the Community". Initially, Jasmine made an introduction saying that in the first letter to the Corinthians, what most concerns Paul is the divisions within the community. According to her, this unease runs through the whole letter, but receives special attention in the four initial chapters.

Contextualizing the reading, she said that *"the same problem occurs today in many of our communities."* She emphasized that there are tensions and divisions that hinder the lives of many well-meaning people. However for her, what draws attention in Paul's letter is the affection and, at the same time, the firmness in the way of teaching that *uses to discuss the problem of the divisions in search of a solution. She emphasized that "Paul's way can help us in finding a solution to the problems we face today in our communities"*.

After the introduction of the meeting, participants were asked to locate the passage "1Cor 1,1-16" in the Bible. The reading was made aloud by one of the people present; Meanwhile, the others followed the narration silently. Then, Jasmine proposed to the participants a reflection on reading from the method See, Judge and Act. Assuming *To see*, he asked, *"Look closely, what was happening there in the community of Corinth?"* There were several comments based on the text. Jasmine then teased the group by asking, *"Does something like this happen in our communities today?"* After the speeches, Jasmine divided the group into pairs and proposed the exchange of ideas from these questions: *"1. These problems of division occur in our community and / or our families? 2. Why is it that so many*

divisions are born, when all seem to want the common good? 3. What are we doing to create more unity? "

After the sharing of the pairs, the second moment of the biblical circle, known as the Judge, began, which, for Jasmine, is the occasion to illuminate the situation of the community from the biblical text. In this way, she again proposed the slow and attentive reading of 1 Cor 1: 1-16. She asked that, as they read, they would keep this question in their heads and hearts: *"What are Paul's suggestions for overcoming the differences in our communities and in our families?"* There was a moment of silence, and later Jasmine suggested that the participants exchange ideas in groups to discover the light of the biblical text for the present from the inquiries: *"1. What more caught your attention in Paul's words? 2. What are Paul's suggestions for overcoming disagreements? 3. What light do we find to illuminate the problems of our community? "*

As soon as the participants finished speaking, Jasmine made the following reflection:

Reading and meditating on Paul's letters to me is to seek ways to evangelize and live today with courage and wisdom ... Many people left the countryside and lived in the city, attracted by the propaganda and dreams of a better life. On the farm, life is not easy, work in agriculture is

heavy, but I think life here is not worse than in the city ... The faith here is transmitted within the family, there is solidarity between us, and the children accompany the parents in life and in religion ... For those who leave the countryside and go to the city full of hope, life in the city becomes a nightmare. Everything is very rushed. There is no time to talk and socialize. In the city, those who do not have work do not have money. No money in a city dies of starvation. On the other hand, with money you get everything the city offers in terms of consumption. The city produces a change in people's minds. Children adapt more quickly than their parents to city life and no longer accept their way of living and acting. They no longer follow their parents' religious behavior. They abandon their faith and seek new ways of living their religion. And in a city what is not lacking are religious proposals and Churches. In fact, the city is a large religious market, where people choose the religion that appeals to them most ... (Summary of the Jasmine speech notes).

In the third moment of the biblical circle, called Acting and Celebrating, Jasmim asked the group to systematize a phrase or word of what had been reflected in the meeting. Finally, the participants formulated spontaneous prayers with the intention of thanking God for life, for the learning of that day and for the commitments made. Some of them wrote the prayers in little papers, some read aloud, while others put them in a small box. Everyone prayed a psalm in the Bible and closed the meeting with the Lord's Prayer and the final song.

By focusing on literacy in the religious space, we conceive it as a phenomenon not only situated, but also as a multiple, since its effectiveness is motivated by the innumerable uses of reading and writing established in response to the demands of communication that occur in a religious practice of literacy. We note that this practice, in rural contexts, is present in the communities with the modes of participation that the Church proposes and with the Christian orientation. This is given by the representative of the Church, as a participant of the liturgy team, and especially by the priest, both take the voice of this institution, supported in the written "sacred" text.

Sunday worship, the most frequent religious event in the Catholic Church and in the community, consists of reading the booklet "The Sunday", produced by the publisher Paulus, who traditionally publishes Catholic texts. This four-page booklet contains liturgical readings for each Sunday, reflection proposal, songs of the liturgical hymnal of the CNBB and article with the theme of the day or the ecclesial event.

We observe the celebration of Sunday worship in the community of Hydrangea. At the time, according to her, there were five liturgy teams, and she participated in one of these. The booklet is

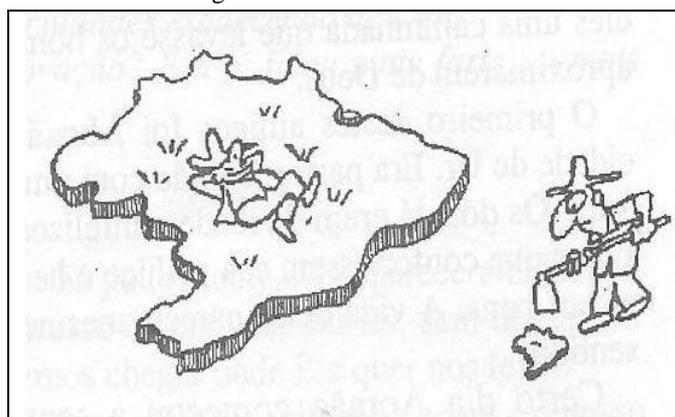
read by members of the liturgy team, who take on the roles of readers, commentators and leaders, according to their organization. The assembly participates in the worship according to the indication made in the leaflet itself, just as it does at the time of the songs. Literacy practices, in this context, are convened by a ritual, which requires specific modes of participation and regular practices around the written text.

Another religious event of which Hortensia participates is catechesis. This happens weekly, and it is attended by children, adolescents, young people and adults. The people of the community itself volunteer to serve catechesis. According to Hydrangea, in general, there are more

women than male catechists. They are prepared in some meetings in the parish and each one works with a separate group by age group. A predetermined book is adopted by the parish, which guides the work. In the following, we describe a meeting held with 33 persons, aged between 14 and 20 years, on November 10, 2012.

Initially Hortensia proposed a moment of spontaneous prayer and, shortly thereafter, presented orally the theme of the fifth meeting: "God Calls Abraham". In the first moment, called "Looking the life," she put on a poster the image of Brazil illustrating the latifundia (Figure 1) and asked the believers: "What is the dramatic reality that the drawing shows?"

Figure 1 - Latifundia in Brazil.



Source: Adapted from Buccioli (2004, p. 17).

She then presented another poster organized as follows by the catechist:

Figure 2 - Way to divide the lands in Brazil. Figure 2 - Way to divide the lands in Brazil.

LANDS IN BRAZIL ARE MORE OR LESS DIVIDED LIKE THIS	
A man distributes 100 hectares of land among 100 farmers: He gave:	
45 hectares	1 farmer
34 hectares	9 farmers
18 hectares	37 farmers
3 hectares	54 farmers

Reflection: what do you think of this way of dividing the land?

Source: Adapted from Catechist material.

After this, the catechist Hydrangea invited the believers to sing and pay attention to the words of the song "*There is not, O people, O no / Moonlight like this of the Sertao*". When they finished singing, asked the group: "*Between the bad distribution of land and income, social injustices, poverty, etc., and migration, is there a connection? Why?*". There was significant participation of young people, who inferences, through prior knowledge, knowledge of the experience of migration in the family and community, to interpret the texts presented; asked for clarification on unknown issues and noted the information presented.

In the second moment of the meeting, titled "Searching the Bible," a written text with the story of Abraham was shared and read in a shared way. After reading this, Hydrangea introduced the third part of the meeting, called "Coming back to life", inviting the believers to talk

in groups for 15 minutes, from the following questions:

1. What can the story of Abraham teach us? 2. Would God want to give every husbandman a land like Abraham? 3. So why are there so many landless farmers? 4. What are the difficulties of life that most discourage us? 5. Do we sometimes try to solve the difficulties by forgetting God? 6. Has our faith ever experienced any ordeal? And did faith grow stronger or weaker? (Diary of Field, November 10, 2012).

The socialization of the conversation in the plenary was participatory. Using the book *Sings People of God* (Buccioli, 2007), they sang the song "The Lord called me to work". Finally, the catechist presented and discussed the week's commitments.

Figure 3 - Commitments of the Crisming.

COMPROMISSOS:

1. A caminhada do nosso grupo começou há pouco tempo. Já apareceram dificuldades? Alguém desistiu? Nosso compromisso é continuar firmes, sem desanimar porque temos confiança em Deus e queremos chegar onde Ele quer nos levar.
2. Procurar descobrir algumas dificuldades que mais desanimam a gente e o nosso povo e ver como é possível resolvê-las sem esquecer de Deus.

Source: Adapted from Buccioli (2004, p. 19).

In the light of the above, we understand that literacy events promoted by the Catholic Church can be defined as literacy practices, since they are regular in the community and contribute to the construction of cultural patterns of reading and writing (Barton, 1994). Cult and catechesis, besides being a practice of regular literacy, contribute to the for the maintenance of a local religious identity. Hydrangea reported that in his community, *"people participate in worship on weekends and also in catechesis, because there they feel a group, a knot"*.

Another observed reading practice occurred in the encounter of the crises and which was carried out by Margarida on the 11th of November 2012, in the community of Dourado, as portrayed in the following excerpt from the field diary:

Initially, Margarida made a moment of relaxation with the group of believers. She then summoned the Holy Spirit of God and asked for his help. Margarida explained that she follows the steps learned from the nuns. At first, each of the believers took the Bible and read the Bible text

calmly; read, re-read, read again, until he knew what was written, until they assimilated the text itself. Then they closed the Bible and made a moment of inner silence, remembering what they had read. The young people shared orally their impressions of the text by repeating words, phrases, verses ... Margarida said: "Now it is no longer just what the text says, but what this Word is saying to each of us within reality in which we are living. What has God said in the past and what is he talking about today through this text? What does the text say? [asked the young people to take the text to their own life and to the personal and social reality] What is God speaking to me?" She told the believers that the reading and meditation of the Word become an intimate and personal encounter with God. Going on, she asked the believers: "What the biblical text and the reality of today motivate us to pray." At that moment, she proposed personal prayer, the spontaneous expression of our deepest convictions and feelings. And she asked, "What does the text make me say to God? [Pray - supplicate, praise, dialogue with God, pray ...] ". After that moment, Margarida suggested contemplation, which, for her, is not something that goes through the head, but it is a new act that involves our whole being. Closed the moment of prayerful reading of the Bible with the questions: "from this text how should I look at life, people, reality ... What

should I do with concrete? What has remained in my heart and awakens me to a new way of being and acting? " She asked the witnesses to register in the notebook and, finally, suggested that they choose a phrase to memorize. (Field Diary, 11 Nov. 2012).

Margarida reported that with the priests, nuns, and walking companions, she learned how to read prayerfully from the Bible, a practice she performs individually and collectively, especially in times of retreat and worship. It is pertinent to emphasize the importance that the uncle, the nuns and the priests had in the life story of Margarida, instigating it, mainly, through the example to deepen in the practice of the reading. The following excerpt illustrates well our statements: *"I do not forget my uncle Abilio, who learned to read by himself and who taught the children and many nephews and other people in the community. He was a wise man."* According to Margarida's speech, we understand that the relation between the taught and acquired practices of reading and writing does not take place in a linear way, but rather occurs in function of the religious context in which they appear.

For Acacia, one of the originalities of CEBs is to articulate Bible reading and celebrations with popular struggles and movements of improvement of the conditions of life and work of the people, mainly, in the field and in the periphery.

According to the interviewee, the current challenges of the Church invite us to rediscover the taste of sharing life with others in the dynamics of otherness, making the Christian community the space to strengthen friendship, sharing and fraternal communion. Let us look at the speech of Acacia:

Praying is not only praying when getting up, when going to sleep, it goes much further: it is to transmit the life to other people in the day to day. To talk with the companion to share the lunchbox with those who do not have lunch, that is to pray ... I pray when I am in the Church and when I am denouncing the injustices and the low salary, because there I do not pray only for me, but I pray for others. .. Meeting of the Biblical Circle is prayer, when we achieve a victory, it is prayer ... Love and praise to God should not be expressed only in worship, but in everyday life ... In my opinion, of there is no use praying if we do not help each other, so I see the need to participate in associations, union and politically. If, on the one hand, this is the most difficult, the most delicate and the riskiest part, which can generate more divisions and conflicts, on the other hand, is the most important, because of the collective good that through it we can get.

Referring to Chartier (2001), we understand that these "reading figures" refer to their own styles that reveal the relationships between the reader and the object read. We can contrast these forms of reading, in which the quantities of reading access and the various forms of

appropriation determine their specificities and their results. Chartier defines this style of reading, which occurs repeatedly, memorized, recognized, as an "intensive reading" practice. For the author, there is an attentive and different relationship between the reader and what he reads, "incorporating in his innermost being the letter of what he has read". (2001, p. 86-89). Intensive reading is therefore understood as "a way of reading that ensures efficacy to the text, thanks to a work of slow, attentive and repeated appropriation" (2001, p. 89).

It is common in CEBs, unions, the Peasant Women's Movement, associations and other spaces observed during the research, an emphasis on other modes of

communicative practices, such as visual, sound, tactile expressions among others, that join the written word or spoken. It is the event of multimodality, which shows, through different modes of discursive representation, new possibilities for the different orders of communication.

In this way, literacy practices take shape, they materialize in the various literacy events that the women leaders of CEBs participate in every day. The texts multimodal, among them those portrayed in Figures 4 and 5, presented at the commemoration of the 25 years of the Pastoral Care of the Child in the Diocese of Caetité/BA provided interaction between the participants and their interpretative processes.

Figure 4 - Photo of the 25th Anniversary of the Pastoral of the Child in the Diocese of Caetité / BA.



Figure 5 - Photo of the 25th Anniversary of the Pastoral Care of the Child in the Diocese of Caetité / BA.



Source: Research Archive (2/06/2012).

Figures 4 and 5 expose a literacy event in which the written text does not appear alone, autonomously, as language, is related to symbols and images that contribute to the attribution of meanings. In the act of constructing a given text - be it written, oral and/or imagery - the author can make use of a vast amount of multimodal linguistic resources coming from both the verbal and visual planes. All these different ways of constructing a text bring about substantial changes in the way people elaborate meaning and meaning, thus transcending the primacy given to the word. Multimodality thus fosters the emergence of diversified sense-building resources.

In this context, multimodality refers to the most distinct forms of representation used in construction linguistics of a given message, such as: words, images, colors, formats, typographic marks / strokes, spelling, gestures, intonation patterns, looks, etc. According to Rojo (2012), it is not only the sum of languages, but also the interaction between different languages in the same text.

Multimodality therefore encompasses writing, speech, and image. It is worth mentioning that in all community halls where women interviewed perform

Source: Research Archive (2/06/2012).

and/or participate in meetings and celebrations there is a notice board in which community programming and the reporting of incoming and outgoing tithing resources and other offers are exposed. We also observe the exhibition of posters and clothes, in which are exposed some activities produced by children, adolescents and young people of catechesis, which we interpret as a way of valuing their work.

The women interviewed in this research deal with increasingly multimodal texts, which require them to write and read strategies that are in accordance with the multiplicity of languages that make up the text. Jasmim explained that the use of films in community encounters awakens or even leads the "reader" to the reality lived by those people portrayed in them, cited as example the film *Ring of Tucum* (Berning, 1994). Rojo and Moura (2012) affirm that the development of communication technologies, with their specific social practices of reading and writing, requires that the formative instances focus on this reality and depart from it to teach.

In the period of production of empirical material for this research, we observed several literacy events in which women used films to discuss some subjects

in the meetings. According to Jasmim, this practice, besides evoking feelings and sensations in the participants, makes possible to know a certain experience, giving the impression of integration to this experience.

On August 19, 2012, for example, we accompany, in the community of Jasmine, the screening of the film *The Ring of Tucum* (Berning, 1994), which portrays the daily life of men and women who make Ecclesial Base Communities and popular movements a reality. The feature film takes place in 1992, the same year that the eighth Inter-Church Meeting of Basic Communities took place in Santa Maria / RS, we inferred this from the scene in which the main character André appears on a payphone and, in the background, the posters of the meeting are displayed.

The film can be divided into two moments, which blend together during the exhibition. The first is a fictional narrative with characters and scripts created. The second is composed of documentary parts; the members of these groups belonged to the popular movements and to the Ecclesial Base Communities, were religious leaders and they gained a voice (Diary of Field, 19 Aug. 2012).

Before the performance, Jasmine made a brief contextualization, aiming to motivate the group. After this presentation,

there was a moment of debate on the following issues:

according to the film, who is behind the mobilization of the people in the pastoral commitment of the journey of liberation that marked the Church of Brazil in Latin America? Should the Church care about the spiritual side or the material needs of the people? The political thinking and acting that the film poses is a challenge not only of the historical moment in which it was recorded, but also of the present day. Should the Church, the priests and the faithful refuse to participate in the political debate? Should they only deal with the evils that afflict the soul? (Field Journal, Aug. 19, 2012).

In the community hall where the film was shown, several fragments of the characters' speeches and testimony clippings were displayed on posters of the speeches of Dom Luciano and Dom Pedro Casaldáliga. One of the participants, for example, when reflecting on poetry and resuming the discussions motivated by the material *Ring of Tucum*, said: "*The Gospel prioritizes the right of the poor and capitalism fails, the Gospel proposes solidarity and capitalism competitiveness. .*". He concluded by stating that the Gospel is a radical anti-capitalist text and practice and that, if Jesus lived today, he would be characterized as "left-wing" because in his day he was against political and religious power (Diary of Field, August 19).

In this context, Jasmine spoke of his desire to see a true revolution in the Catholic Church, beginning with the implementation of the decisions of the Second Vatican Council, which took place more than 50 years ago and have not yet been implemented. These involve, for example, greater democratization of the Church; in this way, God's people would be protagonists and not sheep to be sheared. In addition, Jasmine hopes to end compulsory celibacy, to allow the priesthood of women, and to reintegrate into the priestly ministry of married priests who wish to return and a thorough review of the sexual morality of the Church (Diary of Field, Aug. 19, 2012).

Jasmim recalled that when Liberation Theology and CEBs were valued most by the Church in Brazil, the temples were full. After they began to be discriminated against and repressed, giving place to the spiritualism of "hallelujah, hallelujah", the temples began to empty. Then he asked, "Who is to blame? Who is emptying the Church? Liberation Theology, or this spiritualist church that faces God and turns its back on the poor?" (Field Diary, Aug. 19, 2012).

Jasmine said she constantly looks at the moon, the stars, the crucifix, and said:

I know that God knows me and knows who I am, that is enough ...
We see God with the inner eyes ...

God is like the air we breathe, we do not see God, but feel him; and without the air we can not live, nor can we live without God. I think every time we feel excited to get up in the morning and have to start the day, to be able to reach out to the other ... God is there, because God is not an object, God is a supreme passion, supreme energy ... It is very good to have a God inside, who loves us and walks with us. (Jasmine, age 53).

Jasmine also lamented the increase in the power of pressure and influence of evangelicals in the political arena. She fears that some of these, not all, "*are shocking the serpent's egg.*" Since they can not impose, through their preaching, their morals and customs upon the whole population; then, they seek political power, because by law they can make any universal decision (Field Diary, Aug. 19, 2012).

In this direction, another participant of the group expressed his desire to see a profound political reform happen in Brazil: "*we must stop being objects of electoral campaigns every two years, and become protagonists.*" He acknowledged the importance of personal rights granted by the government, such as the ease of credit and access to the motorcycle and car, but regretted the lack of social rights, which basically consist of security, food, housing, health and education (Diary of Field, Aug. 19, 2012).

Acácia and Íris, in the meetings of the Pastoral da Criança, use the radio materials they receive: Viva a Vida program; interviews; spots, vignettes and jingles; CD with songs from Pastoral da Criança; and the presentation of the Pastoral da Criança. The radio program Viva a Vida is a weekly radio show, which has a 15-minute duration and features topics on health, nutrition, education, rights, community organization, and other issues of interest to its public (Diary of Field, Mar 3, 2012).

In view of the above, we understand literacy practices as activities that should be thought of in a broad way. We consider that the uses of technologies allow apparently oral activities to be marked by representations proper to writing. Listening to a news item on a radio show, for example, as Kleiman (2008) discusses, is a literacy event, since the text heard has the typical marks of the written modality.

In order to analyze how the members of the studied communities use the writing, we had to identify and characterize the diverse situational contexts in which these individuals make use of the writing. In the religious context, we note the uses that CEB members make of writing within the environment of their community. Kleiman (2008) explains that, from the moment that the studies stop taking the effects of

writing practices as a universal and begin to analyze these effects through social and cultural practices of different groups, there is a broadening of the concept of literacy.

Conclusions

The results of the survey revealed that women found in social movements, Catholic Church CEBs, political parties and trade unions, sense, motives and even conditions to face gender discrimination, the inequalities of power existing in the family and in the public space of social movements and the Church. The experience of participation of the CEB leaders in these formative spaces presents them as possible literacy agencies.

In this context, the Ecclesial Base Communities emerge as spaces of strong bonds of solidarity and formation of critical awareness of the poor. In these spaces, people begin to express their opinions and anxieties from day to day. As the chorus of a well-known singing of CEBs says: "*Suddenly our sight cleared, cleared, cleared. We have discovered that the poor have value, have value, have value*" (Diary of Field, April 29, 2012). Community is the place of self-esteem; in it people feel valued and encouraged to face their personal problems collectively. As Durkheim (2002) says, the individual gains his strength and his life in the

collective, his form of religiosity is strongly centered on the collective aspects.

Women participate in new spheres of activities and interact with different uses of reading and writing. We note that CEBs play an important role in promoting access to, circulation and use of a variety of text-based activities. The discourses and values constituted locally about the demands of reading and writing experienced by them and the meanings they attribute to their practices generated in them a gradual process of "empowerment", supported by literacy practices.

The women leaders of CEBs are mobilizing agents of their knowledge and their experiences, both reflect in their ways of doing. They are promoters and mediators of the everyday practices of writing to carry out the activities. They know the means, the limitations and the possibilities, the weaknesses and the strengths of each of the members of the group and their local practices. They can, in community living, identify people who are not literate but understand the social roles of writing and distinguish genres or recognize the differences between written and spoken language. They also live with literate people who, even if they master the writing system, have little idea of their possibilities of use.

These women realize that there is no standard for all individuals at all times because, as Barton and Hamilton (1998) argue, are culturally constructed. From this perspective, such practices can be conceived as a changeable and dynamic phenomenon, since they are inserted in society and are capable of change.

Each person has different experiences and purposes for reading and writing. In the case of this research, we observed different experiences of the women of the CEBs and several demands made on them. Thus, we note different requests and goals in relation to reading and writing, for adults and children, for men and women, and for the social institutions in which they participate.

By knowing the modes of participation in the cultures of the writing of peasant women leaders of the CEBs, we can describe the Base Ecclesial Communities as a space of literacy event, circulation of texts and practices of reading and writing. On the other hand, the family and religion, the Peasant Women's Movement, the unions, the Grassroots Movement and adult literacy institutions, school and non-school literacy policies and religious or commercial uses, typical of literacy in circulation. The school is not the only guardian of the transmission of writing, although its school form of dealing

with writing can reach other social spaces, showing that the relations between spaces and subjects are multiple. Participation in literacy events and practices is much more linked to our social and cultural experiences than to our own knowledge of schooling programs are considered as training institutions; and the school and the Church as instances of diffusion of texts and practices of reading and writing.

We conclude, therefore, that the modes of participation in the cultures of writing are diverse and can be determined by the institutions, school and non-school literacy policies and religious or commercial uses, typical of literacy in circulation. The school is not the only guardian of the transmission of writing, although its school form of dealing with writing can reach other social spaces, showing that the relations between spaces and subjects are multiple. Participation in literacy events and practices is much more linked to our social and cultural experiences than to our own knowledge of schooling.

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ABNT

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