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From the interpenetrating threads of weaving: a concept for feminist studies

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Resumo: Aprendemos junto aos grupos de estudos e pesquisa nos quais estamos inseridas e pesquisamos. Uma das aprendizagens realizadas, durante nossos percursos profissionais, tem sido articular os estudos feministas, a pesquisa participante e a pesquisa autobiográfica. Neste artigo, apresentamos nossa compreensão sobre a integração desses três aspectos, os quais produzem nosso "fazer pensar" pesquisa em Educação por meio do conceito de "interpenetração", que é uma técnica da tecelagem manual. Revela fios que se juntam, mas não se confundem, formando desenhos. Sendo assim, essa técnica é utilizada como metáfora para pensar em nossa opção metodológica. Partindo dessas análises, tal conceito representa a busca de um "fazer pensar" fecundo com as mulheres excluídas dos processos formais de Educação, mas que se educam na vida, nas resistências diárias à subjugação de gênero, classe e raça e, igualmente, no mundo do trabalho.

Palavras-chave: estudos feministas; pesquisa participante; pesquisa autobiográfica; interpenetração.

From the interpenetrating threads of weaving: a concept for feminist studies

Abstract: We learn from the study and research groups in which we are engaged and research. One of the lessons learned during our professional paths has been to integrate feminist studies, participant research and autobiographical research. In this article, we present our understanding about the integration of these three aspects, which produce our "making think" research in Education through the concept of "interpenetration", which is a manual weaving technique. It reveals threads that come together, but do not get mixed up, forming designs. As such, this technique is used as a metaphor to reflect on our methodological option. Based on these analyses, this concept represents the search for a fruitful "making think" concerning women who are excluded from formal educational processes, but who educate themselves in life, in the daily resistance to gender, class and race subjugation and, equally, in the work environment.

Keywords: Feminist studies; Participatory research; Autobiographical research; Interpenetration.

Los hilos que se interpenetran en el tejido: un concepto para los estudios feministas

Resumen: Aprendemos junto a los grupos de estudio e investigación en los que operamos e investigamos. Uno de los aprendizajes, durante nuestros recorridos profesionales, ha sido la articulación de los estudios feministas, con la investigación participante y la investigación autobiográfica. En este artículo mostramos nuestra comprensión sobre la integración de estos tres aspectos, que producen desdoblamiento en el hacer pensar la investigación en Educación a través del concepto de interpenetración, técnica de tejido manual, que presenta hilos que se juntan, pero que no se confunden formando dibujos. De esta manera, utilizamos dicha técnica, como metáfora

para pensar en nuestra opción metodológica. Partiendo de estos análisis, el concepto representa la búsqueda de un hacer/ pensar fecundo entre las mujeres excluidas de los procesos formales de Educación, pero que se educan en la vida, en las resistencias diarias al sometimiento de género, clase y raza e igualmente en el mundo del trabajo.

Palabras claves: estudios feministas, investigación participante, investigación autobiográfica, interpenetración.

Introduction

A weft in weaving is never solitary, it is made with many threads. In the research experience, the weaving is also collective.¹ In this article, we narrate events from the research that marked our understanding about the paths of investigative *thinking* and *making*. Something happens when we observe our movement, along with that of scientific initiation, master's or doctoral students, of their times and in their textual productions. This plot thickens as we consider the path we have taken, combining the studies we have done with the way we have searched for other information that is not only found in books and articles. The visits, the interviews, the trips to the places where we search for information/knowledge don't seem to provide us with the same certainty as the reading done in articles and books that have already been published. On the contrary, there is an increase in our uncertainties and doubts, in which we even question our own trajectories as researchers, because we realize that some of the references we read do not take into account the new contexts that arise in our biographies.

We went through numerous changes during the execution of our scientific projects. As projects, they seem so convincing, but when they are lived out, in the comings and goings in the field, they change constantly. It is in the empirics that historicity takes place and where, at each visit, we see life that pulsates as a structuring and destructuring element of the question asked. We identify with the article by researchers and lecturers Maria Aparecida de Souza Perrelli, Flavinês Rebolo, Leny Rodrigues Martins Teixeira and Eliane Greice Davanço Nogueira (2013), who, as we do here, analyzed their investigative experiences as formative processes. Although they do not allude directly to feminist and/or gender issues, we realized that some of the reflections pointed out in their articles relate to the experiences presented here. Telling our stories, simply for the sake of telling them, is possible and part of everyday life. However, telling our stories, producers of experiences, related to the reading of the world and of texts, involves a much more complex universe. We would like to focus on this aspect in this article.

The complexity we refer to deals with the readings that have formed our perception about the possibilities of knowing, stirring us in the area of Education, mindful of the importance of authors such as Guacira Lopes Louro (2002), Joan Scott (1998; 2001), and Ivone Gebara (2000).² Other authors, such as Paulo Freire (1981), Carlos Rodrigues Brandão (1981), Marie-Christine Josso (2007; 2010), Danilo Streck (2014), Cheron Moretti and Telmo Adams (2011), also compose this web of theories. We interchange our studies based on the awareness that authors like the ones mentioned above have analyzed experiences based on social movements, such as the feminist one, and on experiences of Popular Education in Latin America. In these dialogues with authors, we identified the importance of life stories. Through them, we arrive at the self-training process of those who research. With feminist studies we perceive the experience of marginalities denounced from the reality of women, and we get closer to the resistance struggles of Popular Education, which led to the emergence of participatory research as a way to systematize the knowledge of excluded groups.

Moretti and Edla Eggert (2017) deepen the understanding of experience, thought by women, by stating that it is a "category that demands history and context from ourselves" (p. 48). Addressing one's own context means conceiving that their experience is a process with potential for conceptualization and theorization, and always maturing. And, in this re-knowledge, the awakening of the critical consciousness that can promote the feminine collectivity is produced, in search of the visibility of their demands, by means of political participation.

Supported by Freire, Eggert and Márcia Silva (2012) state that "[...] we learn about the importance of historicity, the context of who learns and the ways in which methodologically the generating themes help the subject read the word and the world" (p. 53). It is in this spirit that we intend to analyze educational practices in the investigative process of our theme, which is

¹ The idea of working collectively on a text is always a challenge. This text is the result of various workshops, debates and exchanges between the authors, with an awareness of metaphors from handicrafts. The warp, shuttles and threads of the weaving emphasize the idea of our feminist studies, participatory research and (auto)biography.

² Naming the female and male authors is a methodological choice that seeks to problematize the utilitarianism in the presentation of the theories studied. Beyond the ideas, we are dialoguing, through their writings, with men and women who, at their time, proposed analyses that challenge us today and have become references for new research and new theories.

craft production, and all the involvement of women in this subject. We observe that feminism has contributed to the production of criticism, both of liberal politics and also of Marxism, for example. From one end to the other, feminist theorists have broken down the theories produced in the androcentric tradition and increased the analysis from the point of view of women's experience, from within the feminist movements.

Margarita Pisano (2004) skillfully deconstructs the production, reproduction, and maintenance, always reinterpreted, of a patriarchy sustained by "new" theoretical and scientific arguments and, thus, recentralizing the triumph of masculinity. We cannot fail to register, although it is not the object of this article, another current issue that concerns the borders produced through the many gender identities. What does it mean to be identified, to be born a woman and to be under the constant condition of **being someone else's and for others**, as Marcela Lagarde y de Los Ríos (2005) point out? We can also question: what does it mean to be designated as a man at birth and not recognize oneself in this designation? Regarding this debate, we suggest Beatriz Paul Preciado (2011), who, like Judith Butler (2004) and André Muszkopf (2012), sees in the *Queer* concept the analysis of sexualities and the many compositions that can become the strange in us – the human being –, which today allows itself to think beyond the borders of heterosexuality.

On the same scale, the issue of race/ethnicity is considered from an intersectional perspective with social class. This is a debate that arises, with increasing force, from the direct expression of marginalized, invisible Black and indigenous women often still "revealed" through the research of white women.

Using the analogy of weaving, the text we have on the screen and in our hands has, in its development, three threads that weave the piece. The piece is considered, in this context, as a fabric that embraces the ways of doing teaching, extension, and research in the space of those who design and coordinate investigative proposals, but also supervise graduation and specialization final papers, dissertations, and theses. These three threads cannot be viewed as separate. For this reason, the word "weft" has a real basis in the experience of artisanal weaving and the production of different types of handicrafts, a theme we have been researching for almost a decade.

This article is the result of experiments woven, over the last five years, in meetings produced by the Research Groups to which the authors are connected. It is also the result of extension projects and research, coordinated by the authors, as well as being marked and traversed by several ongoing and concluded orientations. It has the mark of craftswomen from the cities of Alvorada/RS, Pelotas/RS and Pinheiro Machado/RS, as well as of craftswomen who are currently deprived of freedom in the prison system, in the city of Porto Alegre/RS.³ Our path is to reflect on the mesh woven in the act of "*making think*" research. In this way, the text is drafted in the plural, because it is done singularly in the collective. This production represents a reunion between the authors, materialized in their post-doctoral studies, and engenders a writing that presents founding concepts from feminist studies, participatory research, and autobiographical research.

In weaving, we have artifacts that determine craft production: the spinning wheel, the spinner, the warp and the loom. The warp is the preparation of the threads to be placed on the loom. The weaver counts the threads and calculates the size of the piece, based on the dimensions and quantity of the threads. She then threads them thread by thread into the loom's warp comb, making the warp. At the same time, she prepares the shuttle, which is the weaving needle in which the thread is wound, and then passed through the threads at the base of the loom, creating the textile weft. Interpenetration is a technique of putting a new thread that is not knotted, but goes to a part of the weft when, after being beaten by the comb, it returns to the same direction from whence it came, with another thread that interpenetrates next to that one. This composition is what, for us, the authors, determines the completeness of each of these three fields, which, when interpenetrated, give shape to a drawing in the research we have produced. The technique serves as inspiration for our intellectual-artistic work, generated in the encounter of feminist studies, participatory research, and autobiographical research. Below are our notes on each of these "threads".

The thread of feminist studies

Feminist Studies make up the first thread wrapped around a shuttle, and the color of that thread is lilac. Experience, for the world of women, woven by them [by all women and, to a greater degree, by women conscious of the struggle for dignity and autonomy, thus feminists], has almost always been simultaneous, fragmented and precarious. The concept of experience carries to the debate of feminist theories a necessary legacy for the history of humanity, since the maintenance of human life has largely passed through the unpaid, under-recognized, and exploited work of a woman.

The way we approach these studies goes back to the reading of historians such as Michelle Perrot (2007), and theologians such as Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1995) and Rosemarie Ruether

³ In the different women's groups in the aforementioned cities, various handicraft production techniques were experienced/observed, through research and extension activities.

(1993); not without first seeking the reading of the texts of Black women, such as Angela Davis (1983), Maya Angelou (2013), and Conceição Evaristo (2013), who manage, through historical research, literature, and poetry, to produce the visibilization of the experience of Black women. We have the meridian awareness that these women have other stories, far less known and much more difficult to tell.

What happens in women's bodies provokes other narratives, other ways of presenting the quotidian, still not very visible in the web of theorization, in the world of authorial scientific production. Historically, most women have been invisibilized. Perrot (2007) portrays the history of women without history and establishes a more attentive look, in research in this field, for other records, which began to gain historiographical value, after the movement called the *Annales* School. This movement radically changed the vision regarding the possibilities of doing historical research, from the second half of the 20th century on, in Europe. It is possible to relate this methodological shift to what happened in Latin America at the same time, experienced through Participatory Research in the Popular Education and Liberation Theology movements. Undoubtedly, it was an effervescent time, in which multiple social movements pointed to new horizons that produced other concepts.

And it will be in this context, with the heritage of the 19th century women's political movement and the recognition of women as protagonists of themselves in the quest for the vote, that the feminist movement was consolidated in the 20th century. It created confrontation and uneasiness in everything that seemed harmonious. It challenged the assumption that each and every woman knew her "place" and that, in silence, they lived in subordination and subservience when they were not part of a segment they dominated. The feminist movement has broken this harmonic silence and expanded into complex developments of new theories.

Currently, we can analyze the records produced throughout history and find, among them, those that prove the participation of women in the reinvention of knowledge, resulting from the feminist struggles, which were distinct in each country and time. The way we have learned by means of a single story, focused on the interests of economic elites, was extremely harmful and de-potentializing for the authorship of women who, throughout history, have had their experiences and knowledge silenced, as Perrot (2007) has shown. It should be noted that, even as part of the economic elites, women's lives and their possibilities for action were historically restricted by social conventions that determined certain behaviors. Certainly, for those who made up the popular groups, invisibility had a double mark: being a woman and poverty. When they were Black, race was also a factor. The uncomfortable presence of the feminist movement, throughout the 20th century and, subsequently, the 21st century, provokes different ways of thinking and breaking with determinations that have curtailed the existence of women in various social groups.

Sandra Harding (2007) asks, "What would a theory of human knowledge look like that built on the insights of these characteristic contemporary movements?" (p. 167). Pisano (2004) attempts to understand how feminist theorists have sought to create a systematic in scientific theoretical production in order to increasingly share what originates from women's lived experiences.

Our understanding holds towards what Eggert (2006) states, when she says that "[...] there must be knowledge to be systematized, based on the act of giving meaning to women's activities" (p. 226). That is why the lilac thread of this shuttle infers the first "interpenetration", because we believe that in the "[...] undervalued knowledge of women, and undervalued by women themselves, there is the possibility for recreating and making knowledge visible and, consequently, building other spaces and forms of power" (PERROT, 2006, p. 226). With this, we assume that there are multiple knowledges and ways of expressing them, as well as different ways for them to be accessed.

This thread aims at acknowledging women's lives in all aspects, and the methodology is not merely an instrument of collection and analysis. We believe that it is a commitment to "research with", to qualify processes through constant exchange and return to the researched field. It is to pay attention to what Eli Bartra (2008) calls improving the living conditions of women, and especially poor women, from an intersectional gender perspective.

Ultimately, what is wished is that knowledge, translated as the order of modern times, and what has been called the age of knowledge, translates the experience thought by women themselves in their contexts and realities. And, regarding Latin American women, there are several particularities. Francesca Gargallo (2007) argues that, in Latin America, little has been discussed about the fact that, on this continent, 90% of the original population died at the beginning of the implementation of a strong process of westernization. This is strongly reflected in the construction of a Latin American feminism, because "[...] pocas mestizas se reconocen en su historia, prefiriéndose occidentales que indias, blancas que morenas, genericamente oprimidas que miembros de una cultura de la resistencia"⁴ (GARGALLO, 2007, p. 17). This reinforces the European colonialism in Latin America and feeds deep scars that materialize on a continent that is mostly Catholic, with a market economy subordinate to other countries and that is structured on

⁴ "...few people of mixed race recognize themselves in its history, preferring westerners to Indians, whites to brunettes, generically oppressed people rather than members of a culture of resistance"

social relations based on patriarchy, racism and discrimination of all kinds. Concerning the strong process of westernization, Gargallo (2007) states that:

Para el feminismo latinoamericano es muy difícil de construir su occidentalidad, porque ésta se impuso como sinónimo de un mundo tecnológicamente moderno y legalista que hasta las socialistas querían alcanzar. Sólo desde el análisis de la pobreza y la desigualdad como frutos de un colonialismo capitalista que necesitaba, y sigue necesitando, de la contraparte pobre de la riqueza de su lugar de origen y expansión, el feminismo latinoamericano se plantea hoy la necesidad de liberarse de la perspectiva del universalismo cultural occidental, y su construcción determinista: la organización de géneros sexuales, masculino y femenino, bipolares, binarios y jerarquizados para que el trabajo gratuito de las mujeres descansa en una naturaleza invariable, construida desde la cultura.⁵ (p. 22)

As such, in order to overcome this situation, revisiting our own history is imperative to recognize the colonization process that dominated and subjugated Latin America. And, at the same time, we must include in this problematization the configuration of gender itself, as a constitution that takes place in historically situated social life. Only in this way can we advance in a process of building a Latin American feminism.

Women from the peripheries and rural areas, for example, have been partners in our research and present us with a series of challenges in terms of considering their educational processes, which, to a great extent, are situated on the margins of formal education opportunities. School, for many of them, still does not meet their needs for training and education, since they make up a group that was, for a long time, excluded from this or that space. However, even when the return to formal education is again considered, it takes a significant amount of time for most of them to recognize themselves as capable of facing up to education.⁶ Specifically, due to the condition pointed out by Lagarde y de Los Ríos (2005), for those who are incarcerated, because they become exemplars of behaviors that deviate from what is expected for the existence of women: that they be good, honest, well-behaved, discreet, of someone and for others. The inmates, who are locked up in prison, have their learning experiences permeated by the restriction of their bodies and their constraints, which is also reflected in the reinforcement that their capacities are limited to the marks that the accusation made against them imposes (thieves know how to steal; can they do anything else? Is it possible for there to be transformation?) in the disbelief, by a significant portion of society, in their possibilities beyond crime. However, we may perceive that learning and teaching with women, in general, traverses their gender status, translated into a marked and curtailed body. In this case, Lagarde y de Los Ríos (2005) also points out that women are “all prisoners, all captives” (p. 641), calling attention to the fact that there are imprisonments widely experienced in a patriarchal society. This statement inspires us to understand that, in order to recognize themselves as learners and educators, all women need to achieve their physical and social freedom, in the multiple senses that this achievement can represent.

The thread of participatory research

The social movements that took place at the end of the 1950s, and that resisted during the various military dictatorships throughout Latin America in the following decades, provided pedagogies that were reread and recreated in the midst of contingencies, under high levels of oppression. The provocation for popular participation, in order to produce dynamics for the resolution of problems and needs in the communities, generated what we call participatory methodologies, among them, participatory research, named as such in the Brazilian context.

The presence of readings from the materialist-dialectical field was mixed with humanist readings, permeated by Liberation Theology, soaked by the experience of the basic ecclesial communities (BECs). The basic ecclesial communities (BECs) were responsible for socio-political formation, especially from the 1960s to the late 1980s. The theological motivation, based on the arguments of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), stimulated the production of liberation

⁵ For Latin American feminism it is very difficult to construct its Westernness, because this was imposed as a synonym of a technologically modern and legalistic world that even socialists wanted to achieve. Only from the analysis of poverty and inequality as fruits of a capitalist colonialism that needed, and still needs, the poor counterpart of the wealth of its place of origin and expansion, Latin American feminism today poses the need to free itself from the perspective of Western cultural universalism, and its deterministic construction: the organization of sexual genders, male and female, bipolar, binary and hierarchical so that the free work of women rests on an invariable nature, constructed from the culture.

⁶ The educational experience of women from the popular classes with little schooling, called functional illiterates, features Black women to the greatest degree. The proposal of the Lula and Dilma governments, from the center left of Brazil, between the years 2003 and 2015, created access alternatives for the formal education of these women, through National Programs that started in the North and Northeast Regions, called Mulheres Mil. All this effort to structure public policies to decrease the high incidence of illiterate women is again paralyzed, due to the parliamentary and legal coup experienced by President Dilma Rousseff, in the year 2016, and with the victory of Jair Bolsonaro, in the 2018 elections. Therefore, having been paralyzed, it signals the deepening of the abyss in which once again these women, most of them Black, have been kept.

theology, originating from grassroots experiences. In other words, it was a contextual and critical theology, supported by interdisciplinary readings, mostly sociological and economic. The Bible was read with reference to the life of the poor people. In circles of novenas and bible studies, they made and ate the bread in the sharing of knowledge. Leonardo Boff, Clodovis Boff, Gustavo Gutierrez, Carlos Mesters, Juan Luis Segundo and Ivone Gebara, for the Catholic tradition, and Rubem Alves, Richard Schall, for the Protestant tradition. On liberation theology from a Catholic perspective, see Battista Mondin (1980), and on revolutionary Latin American Protestants, see Joanildo Burity (2011).

The exercise of conjuncture analysis was done by professionals coming, most of the time, from Sociology courses and committed to a change of posture: from subservience to civic awareness [conscientiousness] This reality marked an era for more than two decades.

According to Maria Teresa Esteban and Maria Tereza Tavares (2013), Popular Education is recognized, in this context, as an action proposal for civic awareness produced in different places, both in public schools and in social movements. It has been produced in the margins, since the time of the resistance to the 1964 dictatorship, and to a great extent it still is, in the present time. "And why?" we might ask ourselves. We venture to say that, to a great extent, it refers to the fact that, throughout these 30 years of post-dictatorship, schools have made the slow movement of recognizing themselves as (re)producers of a knowledge that is barely committed to change and to breaking with times of curtailing freedoms (to learn, to teach, to demand, to criticize...). When we suggest that Popular Education is a pedagogical action towards civic awareness, we are referring to the conscience of the people who live in a country that, since its inception in the history of modernity, has been demeaned by violence and oppression. From the 500 years of history officially narrated, we have the paltry account of 30 years of democratic openness.

And so, participatory research (originating from Popular Education experiences) is the red colored thread, the color that recalls the blood of the people who were killed in the fight for freedom and of so many others who were tortured, added to the Indigenous and Black blood that, in colonial and imperial times, had their lives banished in the name of exploiting the land and their labor force. Nowadays, it is essential to remember this time, which, for some, is fiction, and, for others, has already passed. However, for Juliana Borges (2018), the realities experienced in the Brazilian peripheries, the Black genocide in the slums, and mass incarceration elucidate that those times are not remote; they were just reinvented and repackaged. Today, at the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century, Brazil is still living in times of prohibition, curtailment of freedoms, and subjugation of its people.

From the resistance movements in different contexts, we will arrive at academia, which, through intellectuals who dialogued with the population from grassroots communities, made it possible to reflect on methodological processes of knowledge production. It is in this niche that we will find texts that are now considered classics of research in this field, such as the book organized by Brandão (1981), entitled *Pesquisa Participante* (Participatory Research), which presents a chapter by Paulo Freire and another by the Colombian Orlando Fals Borda (1981), authors who underpin understandings about Popular Education. It is important, however, to highlight that women have also systematized and analyzed methodological aspects of participatory research. They were: Maria Ozanira Silva e Silva (1986), Justa Ezpeleta (1984) and Marcela Gajardo (1986), who were protagonists in this methodological experience. In a more contemporary way, and in a dialogue between organized groups of social movements and academia, we will find men and women involved in producing debates and new possibilities in the *Grupo de Trabalho Educação Popular* – (Popular Education Working Group - GT 06, from the *Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação em Educação* (National Association of Post-Graduation in Education - ANPED).

As far as women are concerned, Popular Education provides important contributions in the sense of identifying the construction process of feminist pedagogical thought. This is based on the pedagogical production of Popular Education and on feminist studies. Cláudia Korol (2007), Luz Ochoa (2008) and Moema Viezzer (1987) are examples of feminist pedagogical productions in the field of Latin American thought, helping to build a pedagogy and a Feminist Popular Education.

Korol (2007), coordinator of the gender sector of the Argentine popular education group *Pañuelos en Rebeldía*, synthesizes the alliance between feminism and Popular Education, although she recognizes that the process of a feminist popular pedagogy is not only for women, but also makes visible and denounces the most diverse oppressions. Para Korol (2007),

it is a way of considering a pedagogy of the oppressed men, women and others offended in different ways by the capitalist, patriarchal, racist, homophobic, imperialist, violent culture; a pedagogy that allows us to become subjects of our own march, of its course, the renewal of its goals and of the forms and rhythms that we choose to walk. (p. 17)

For Korol (2007), feminism is not a limit for Popular Education, but, on the contrary, it represents an opening and expands the possibilities. From feminism, the author identifies guiding elements, such as the criticism of patriarchal capitalism, the questioning of androcentric culture, the deconstruction of binary categories, the search for horizontality and autonomy, the valorization

of dialogue in political practices and the denunciation of the ordinances that seek to discipline the field of resistance to domination (KOROL, 2007).

Ochoa also points out some challenges to be faced in a process of building a feminist pedagogy, such as: the search for a necessary link between pedagogy and epistemology; the creation of a new language and universes of meaning that overcome androcentric and sexist language; the pedagogization of conflict and power; the incorporation of the generational issue; the fostering and expansion of research development in the area; the expansion of public policies for women; and, also, attention to the necessary reflection and action in a context of globalization (OCHOA, 2008).

In Brazil, the experience of women who amalgamated Popular Education and feminist studies gave rise to the defense of a Feminist Popular Education (Tereza MOREIRA; VIEZZER, 2017).⁷ As pointed out by Korol (2007), the feminist popular educators in Brazil intended to broaden the understanding of Popular Education that they were experiencing in the communities, due to their involvement with women's issues (struggle against poverty, collective organization in "Mothers' Clubs", family and domestic violence...), and not to restrict it. The dialogue with Latin American and Caribbean women, in particular, but also in other parts of the world, enabled Viezzer and other feminist popular educators, in the 1980s, after returning from exile, to dialogue, albeit with some difficulty, with leftist groups that were emerging in Brazil. Moreira and Viezzer point out that the discussion of gender, originating from Feminist Studies, was conceived, at the time, as a possible abandonment of the category of "[...] 'working class', as if this were a monolithic piece, constituted by people without sex, without age, or color..." (MOREIRA; VIEZZER, 2017, p. 266). The synthesis of the struggle undertaken by feminist popular educators in Brazil in the 1980s, who were pioneers in the debate on Women's Human Rights after the military dictatorship, points to some "marks" of Feminist Popular Education:

[...] the processes of individual and collective self-awareness [...], the construction of pedagogical perspectives appropriate to Feminist Popular Education [...], training as a political exercise of women [...], systematic action to politically influence towards equity and gender justice [...] and] the affirmation of "women's assets", understood as knowledge, abilities, ideas, resources that women have and that can become sources of sharing, of exchange, helping them to move away from a focus on weaknesses, [...] to create new situations that lead to a better quality of life (MOREIRA; VIEZZER, 2017, p. 268).⁸

These "marks", which we may consider presuppositions, resulted in the fact that Feminist Popular Education is based on an international scope, starting from the claims of women who opposed the generalizing analyses of working class experiences. And these "marks" were, in good measure, incorporated in research and productions linked to Popular Education. Our suspicion, however, is that little of this theoretical and methodological material was published. We suspect that concepts were reserved and/or made invisible.

The autobiographical research thread

Regarding the (auto)biographical process, Eggert and Silva (2012) state that "[...] those who narrate build a style and a study around their narrative, analyzing their formative processes" (p. 53). We follow intertwined with this possibility, because we understand that the word is our working tool. What we have sought is to reflect on the experiences that women live as ways of telling their life stories, knowledge that has been forgotten in the world of pedagogy. It is a methodological dimension that seeks to perceive the formative process as part of the life trajectory of the people involved in an investigation. In research-training, based on Josso (2007; 2010), the (auto)biographical is perceived as one of the requirements for us to have sensitivity in listening to the other. Observe and bear in mind that, when researching life stories, we produce analyses based on narratives that are also ours. In this way, we trigger, both in the interviewee and in ourselves, the ability to listen to ourselves and, by doing so, we awaken the (self)listening.

Also, according to Christine Delory-Momberger (2003), biographies, as a set of representations that people make of their own lives, have an educational character, because the way they construct what they do in the most diverse social spaces, such as family, school,

⁷ The cited work offers a good synthesis of the activism of Moema Viezzer (Brazilian sociologist, feminist and environmentalist), through the Rede Mulher de Educação (Women's Education Network), a feminist NGO based in São Paulo, founded in the early 1980s. It was from this campaigning work, in dialogue with other feminists, that the concept emerged. The systematization of experiences with women in Brazil and in other Latin American and Caribbean countries is a benchmark for comprehending Feminist Popular Education as a theoretical, methodological and political reference for the analyses conducted by these pioneers.

⁸ The authors point out that this synthesis was produced by REPEM (*Rede de Educação Popular entre Mulheres da América Latina e o Caribe* – Network of Popular Education between Women from Latin America and the Caribbean) on the occasion of its 30th anniversary, based on the experiences of the feminist collectives affiliated to it. On REPEM, see <http://www.democraciaycooperacion.net/contenidos-sitio-web/portugues/fidc-370/redes-e-organizacoes/articulo/rede-de-educacao-popular-entre>. Accessed on 01/07/2019.

profession, etc. are constitutive parts of both the learning process and formation. In this way, biographical narratives have a central role, because they materialize and give shape to women's life stories. They form a construction that situates and unites life events as aspects that organize themselves into a meaningful whole, not in a watertight and immutable way, but, on the contrary, in a way that is constantly subject to reconfigurations.

A fundamental aspect to be considered refers to the construction of biographical narratives in the relationship with other people. For Delory-Momberger (2003), "[...] it is a fairly common representation to assimilate our understanding of another's narrative to an attitude of empathy, which postulates our human capacity to share the feelings, emotions, and thoughts of another human being" (p. 59).

According to Franco Ferrarotti (2014), biographical and autobiographical research does not bear the mark of individualism. It produces narratives that make up a complex synthesis of the social fabric and this is what leads us to understand that these methodological choices present us with collective aspects of women's lives and, therefore, can constitute powerful tools for the construction of a process of partnership, awareness, and complicity among women. And, in this way, the production of knowledge recognized, especially by the women themselves, encourages us to emphasize this thread as a plotter for another posture in scientific production. Narrative collectives specialize in meeting to tell and listen to stories, and thus seek the strength to survive and resist in exile, in miserable life, in violence, and in pain. These are stories of the micro that reflect the context, the dimension of the "Pedagogy of the Oppressed." Streck and Telmo Adams (2014) define that the geographical domination of a country, once conquered, produces its permanence through coloniality. The subsidies for this argument are linked to Walter Mignolo (2017) and Aníbal Quijano (2005), who sustain the argument of "engendered coloniality," namely, that which subjugates and dominates in the subjectivity of life and makes us believe that we are not capable, much to the contrary: we need the power of the one who colonized us. Perhaps the Brazilian writer Nelson Rodrigues (1993) illustrates, even more accurately, the consequence of this engendered coloniality, when he presents us with the chronicle "*Complexo de vira-latas*" (The Mongrel Complex), in 1958 (p. 118-119). (Auto)biographical research makes it possible to highlight stories like those of Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), which provoke a thinking beyond the engendering of coloniality, the patriarchal engendering. Anzaldúa (1987), in the telling of her life as a mixed-race woman in the United States, recounts the artifacts of living in the bowels of the colonialist, racist, and patriarchal empire. We agree with her that patriarchal engendering predates colonialism and coloniality. Anzaldúa (1987) says that, from her mixed background, she has always experienced how the original peoples were also marked by patriarchal domination. In other words, before being named Latin America, there was something in common with men from overseas: the domination and exploitation of women. Through her experience as a *chicana*, a look of suspicion shines through regarding the euphoria of wanting and/or thinking that what used to be found here in Mesoamerica were flowers before the Europeans arrived. She was one of those women who impacted academia by the fact that she said/wrote what she felt: "she wrote with her gut"! She calls *mestizaje* (mixture) what she experienced as a poor, lesbian *chicana* in the United States, where she was born and raised, without ever forgetting her roots and her poverty, sexuality, and race/ethnicity marks. Her texts leave us aching, because they list the entrails, the inside, the anger, the hurt. To bring this into the academic texts is to alter the abstraction, the objectivity of distancing, bordering on neutrality.

We cannot discuss coloniality without bringing up the important contribution of María Lugones (2014) who, while recognizing the importance of Quijano's work (2018), went further, coining the term gender coloniality that, according to her, was somewhat made invisible by Quijano, because when he developed the concept of coloniality of power, he used race as a founding element and ignored gender issues.

The thread that fills this shuttle is woven with (auto)biography and has the color green, in a hopeful symbolism of being able to practice science with our small history thought from the power of a dreamed project, to the action of the real bureaucracy, which intertwines us with the platform of the Ethics Committees: the academic life that forces us to fill out forms, to forward authorizations and requests for funding. This weft composes us!

The warp receives the weft and produces the "interpenetration"

We use the reference of weaving techniques as a metaphor for our argument that aims to align three threads from the experiences of the "*making think*" of women in the scientific understanding of doing science, in the language of knowledge production. Thus, through feminist epistemology, we lay the foundations of another science and another knowledge, which incorporates and recognizes women's practices (MORETTI; EGGERT, 2017).

We chose to relate the experience of handicrafts from the textile world as a way to indicate choices in language that provoke a certain way of looking. In the art of weaving, the technique of interpenetrating is understood in that which is the production of the weft when there is more

than one thread, on more than one shuttle to be woven. This aspect guarantees the collectivity of the colorful process of the piece, not only by the simple presence of several threads, but by the necessary weft, because without the weft, there is no production. For Áquila Klippel,

interpenetration or interlacing is when two – or more (our addition) – shuttles [a kind of needle] with threads of different colors, in the same trough are run in opposite directions. The shuttle with color A operates only on the left side of the work, while the shuttle with color B operates on the right side. The meeting point of the two shuttles in the center of the loom is constantly changing. The shuttles meet in the center of the loom without crossing each other, for example, with the comb in the top position. The comb is changed and the shuttles return to their respective sides. One of the two shuttles must wrap around the warp that lies between the two rows.

The technique of interpenetration is used as a metaphor to reflect our methodological choice. The warp, that is, the threads fixed in the loom and through which the weft is produced, we call the argument of decoloniality, and the shuttle threads, which make the weft happen, are three in number, presenting colors that outline this experience: lilac – feminist studies; red – participant research; and green – autobiographical research. It is in the passing of navets with the different threads (different theories) in a warp that weaves this movement of coming and going through the comb and the shuttle that rehearses this theoretical-methodological experience of ours.

The “interpenetration” contains the perspective of the three theoretical-methodological “threads” that strengthen the arguments for overcoming patriarchy, colonialism, and racism. The “interpenetration” is made with the compositional warp of women’s experience. In other words, it is not possible to research without considering the ways of producing knowledge committed to the political movement of Latin American women and of the entire world, in the valorization of the knowledge that comes from traditional peoples, which, in this case, can be represented in the practice of spinning and weaving. In this way, we want to make visible here the knowledge of invisible women (of popular groups, Black women, Indigenous women, and imprisoned women), showing that they are producers of knowledge. We question the idea of a single valid and viable knowledge. We subvert this logic and ask questions, such as: Has science taken on board popular knowledge? How open is it to this? In particular, how does science refer to the knowledge produced by women who are part of these groups? Does science incorporate and recognize this knowledge? In what way?

In this context, we provoke with the word that comes from this weaving technique: interpenetration!, which may generate many phallic associations, also marked by violence. Our essayistic search is for resignification. The difference between interlacing and interpenetrating techniques is that, in interlacing, we have the interlacing of the threads of the shuttle, and, in interpenetrating, we have the interlacing next to the warp, keeping each thread in its place.

We problematize academically valid knowledge, historically marked by the invisibility of women’s knowledge. And these knowledges are taken up by the influences of feminist studies, participatory research, and autobiographical research, in our research warp. It is, therefore, a methodology founded based on the collective production of pieces produced, with different groups of women. These are methodological resources in a simultaneous process between making and thinking. In this sense, making and thinking articulate each other and, simultaneously, are symbolic performances of what women have millennially learned as their task. These reinventions aim to present new ways of “feeling-thinking” research with women and not about them. For Silvia Marcos and Carmen Hernández (2013), “feeling-thinking” or “*sentipensar*” is a life proposal and can also be considered an epistemological category, introduced by the Mesoamerican original peoples (MARCOS; HERNÁNDEZ, 2013).

There is an intrepidity in constant processing for those who do not conform. We believe that without insurgency, we do not breathe the boldness of disinformation, of de-education, for decolonization to happen: to think and make things beyond what they wished us to do and what they signed us up for. In order to decolonize, we must understand the entrenched and engendered coloniality. The coloniality engendered in us persists when we “still” maintain in Popular Education the veiled idea that we can consider universality/homogeneity as the generating word, softening the discriminations embedded in the sexism of knowledge production, between a majority of male companions who write in contrast to a majority of female companions who read. We don’t realize that when we write, we quote much more from our male companions than from our own female companions. Often, we still leave out memories, knowledge-generating and knowledge-producing stories experienced by women.

Marina Colasanti (2004), in the fictional story “*A Moça Tecelã*” (The Weaving Maiden) describes a weaver character who, through embroidery, materializes her desires. According to Maria Helena Beluque and Célia Regina Fernandes (2011),

The narrative begins with the image of a girl who, sitting at her loom, is able to produce everything she needs and desires. She weaves the sunrise and sunset, the seasons, the food she needs, and, above all, she does it with great pleasure. Until one day she feels very lonely and decides

to weave a partner. Upon his arrival, the loom is transformed into an instrument for acquiring riches. He asks the weaver to build a luxurious castle with towers, horses, and vaults. Tired of these obligations, the girl decides to return to her original condition and, at dusk, sits down at the loom and unweaves everything her husband has asked her to weave, even her companion. In the end, she finds herself alone in her small house, weaving a new dawn (p. 172).

Concerning the origins of the female weaver characters, we can assert that the act of weaving is historically related to a mostly female activity.

In Greek mythology we find the legend of Arachne, a weaver who challenges a divinity to a weaving contest and, in being better, the character is transformed into a spider; and the woman Ariadne, from the myth of the Minotaur, who guides Theseus out of the labyrinth that sheltered the monster by following the ball of wool that marked the path. In classical literature, in the *Odyssey*, we have the clever Penelope, who weaved by day and unraveled at night, with the purpose of postponing the choice of a new husband and waiting for Ulysses. There is also, in traditional tales, the poor girl who wanted to get married and received help from the spinning ladies, in 'The Three Foolish Women', by the Brothers Grimm; the tale 'Rumpelstiltskin', by the same authors, which includes a character who turns linen threads into gold threads while weaving; as well as the old woman who spun at the top of the tower, whose spindle hurt the young 'Sleeping Beauty', among others. (BELUQUE; FERNANDES, 2011, p. 173-174)

The desire highlighted in the story refers to an idealization of the perfect husband. But, throughout the tale, it becomes apparent how much she has lost her autonomy. Her desires were no longer her own, but those of her husband, who came to dominate the life of this woman, controlling her magic of weaving life. In a beautiful text about textiles and women, for the writer Ana Maria Machado (2003), the act of spinning and weaving was in women's hands until the appearance of the mechanical loom, in 1764, considering that it only became widespread in the first half of the 19th century. This allowed for female domestication, with the confinement of women to the domestic space. But, at the same time, it also made it possible that, with the increase of spinning and weaving, female communities grew, where women spent the day gathered, weaving together, separated from men, telling stories, narrating and exploring words, with power over their own productivity and possessing a certain autonomy of creation. "The symbolic charge of all this was powerful, associating womb and weaving, umbilical cord and thread of life, weft and collectivity in the production of economic surplus" (MACHADO, 2003, p. 182).

Peter Stallybrass (2008) states that thinking about clothing means thinking about memory and also about power and possession. When examining Renaissance England, the author classifies it as a "clothing society," recognizing the basis of the period's economy in textile production. For him, "in a clothing economy, however, things take on a life of their own, that is, we are paid not in the neutral currency of money, but in material that is richly absorbent of symbolic meaning and in which memories and social relations are literally embodied" (p.15).

Final considerations

Thinking outside of coloniality, as well as thinking beyond patriarchy, is the utopia for our research inside and outside of formal educational institutions, be they schools or universities. It is in this sense that blending Feminist Studies, Popular Education, and autobiographical research builds a powerful decolonizing methodological argument. The perception of the importance of women's life-world experiences, gender differences/injustices, and struggles for equality, both in gender, class, and race/ethnicity issues, reaffirms the theme of human dignity and constitutes a creative element of resistance and insubordination.

The "interpenetration" is the search for a fruitful "making think" with women excluded from formal educational processes, but who educate themselves in life, in the daily resistance to gender, class, and race subjugation, and, equally, in the world of work. It is, also, the attempt to understand the singularities through the act of systematizing and narrating, which makes it possible to think of our formative experiences interpenetrated in the decolonizing plot and the awareness of the limits that this experience has already produced. It points to the unprecedented feasible – the decolonization of theory itself – headed by groups of women who are increasingly autonomous and, therefore, readers and writers of the world.

Our academic experiences with women from the popular classes, both from urban peripheries and peasant areas, which already add up to more than a decade of work in these studies, lead us to realize the power of women's trajectories, and the strength of their narratives. Their experiences with handicraft production make visible to themselves (and this is the most important thing) the importance of their "being more", as people who are subjects of knowledge, and that their knowledge is valid, as much as other knowledge that has been denied to them throughout their lives (such as scholarly knowledge, for example). We have noticed how handmade and/or textile production brings women together, and they collectively form and strengthen themselves, in a process that is pedagogical, but also social and political.

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The authors contributed equally.

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BACKGROUND

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