



Revista de Administração Contemporânea

ISSN: 1415-6555

ISSN: 1982-7849

Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Administração

Onuma, Fernanda Mitsue Soares; Oliveira, Aline Lourenço de; Amâncio, Júlia Moretto

Raízes da Exaustão de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Brasileiras:  
Contribuições do Materialismo Histórico Dialético

Revista de Administração Contemporânea, vol. 27, no. 5, e220138, 2023

Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Administração

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/1982-7849rac2023220138.por>

Available in: <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=84076252006>

- How to cite
- Complete issue
- More information about this article
- Journal's webpage in [redalyc.org](https://www.redalyc.org)

redalyc.org

Scientific Information System Redalyc

Network of Scientific Journals from Latin America and the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal

Project academic non-profit, developed under the open access initiative

Theoretical Essay

# Roots of the Exhaustion of Brazilian Working Women: Contributions from Dialectical Historical Materialism

Raízes da Exaustão de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Brasileiras: Contribuições do Materialismo Histórico Dialético



Fernanda Mitsue Soares Onuma\*<sup>1</sup>  
Aline Lourenço de Oliveira<sup>1</sup>  
Júlia Moretto Amâncio<sup>2</sup>

## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** in this essay, we analyze the roots of the exhaustion of Brazilian working women from the point of view of the dialectical historical materialism method. We investigate the exhaustion in terms of physical, emotional, and mental fatigue of Brazilian working women by using the concepts of social reproduction and dependent capitalism to reveal that women's overtiredness is not a novelty inaugurated by the COVID-19 pandemic. **Thesis:** even before this global health crisis, the overload of work, inside and outside the domestic space, was already a reality for Brazilian women. We suggest that super-exploitation, essential to dependent capitalism, implies a growing intensification of the working time of Brazilian women workers, at the same time that dependence relegates them to the task of internal and external social reproduction in globalized capitalism. **Conclusions:** the rupture with these processes demands the radical transformation of the current social order and economic system, for which the political organization to demand payment from the state for reproductive work is an important step in the social battle against the depletion of women.

**Keywords:** time; dependent capitalism; social reproduction; women.

## RESUMO

**Objetivo:** neste ensaio, analisamos raízes da exaustão de trabalhadoras brasileiras como realidade anterior à pandemia da COVID-19 a partir do método do materialismo histórico dialético para articularmos o conceito de reprodução social à teoria marxista da dependência de pensadores brasileiros. **Tese:** a partir dos conceitos de reprodução social e capitalismo dependente, apontamos como mesmo antes desta crise sanitária mundial, a sobrecarga de trabalhos, dentro e fora do espaço doméstico, já era uma realidade para mulheres brasileiras. Sugerimos que a superexploração, essencial ao capitalismo dependente, implica a intensificação crescente do tempo de trabalho de mulheres trabalhadoras brasileiras, ao mesmo tempo que a dependência nos relega a tarefa de reprodução social interna e externa no capitalismo mundializado. **Conclusões:** a ruptura com estes processos demanda a transformação radical da ordem social e sistema econômico vigentes, para a qual a organização política para cobrança de pagamento pelo Estado ao trabalho reprodutivo é passo importante no combate ao exaurimento de mulheres.

**Palavras-chave:** tempo; capitalismo dependente; reprodução social; mulheres.

\* Corresponding Author.

1. Universidade Federal de Alfenas, Instituto de Ciências Sociais Aplicadas, Varginha, MG, Brazil.  
2. Universidade Federal de Lavras, Departamento de Administração e Economia, Lavras, MG, Brazil.

**Cite as:** Onuma, F. M. S., Oliveira, A. L., & Amâncio, J. M. (2023). Roots of the exhaustion of Brazilian working women: Contributions from dialectical historical materialism. *Revista de Administração Contemporânea*, 27(5), e220138. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1982-7849rac2023220138.en>

**Published as Early Access:** November 08, 2022.  
**Assigned to this issue:** September 21, 2023.

**Note:** This text is translated from the original Portuguese version, which can be accessed [here](#).

JEL Code: B51, J16, O54.

**Editor-in-chief:** Marcelo de Souza Bispo (Universidade Federal do Paraíba, PPGA, Brazil)

**Guest Editors:** Ludmila de V. M. Guimarães (Centro Federal de Educação Tecnológica de Minas Gerais, Brazil)

Deidi Maca (Universidad Santiago de Cali, Colombia)

Josiane Silva de Oliveira (Universidade Federal de Goiás, Brazil)

Janaynna de Moura Ferraz (Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil)

Luiza Farnese Lana Sarayed-Din (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

Andrea Poletto Oltamari (Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil; Universidade de Lisboa, SOCIUS, Portugal)

**Reviewers:** Two reviewers did not authorize the disclosure of their identities.

**Peer Review Report:** The disclosure of the Peer Review Report was not authorized by its reviewers.

**Received:** June 23, 2022

**Last version received:** September 15, 2022

**Accepted:** October 14, 2022

# of invited reviewers until the decision:

|                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> round | 1 | 1 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> round | 1 | 1 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

## INTRODUCTION

Work during the COVID-19 pandemic was investigated by studies that focused on the potential of remote work in Brazil and the world (Góes et al., 2020), social inequalities related to remote work, with regional and gender cuts (Góes et al., 2021), and the work of women who perform paid domestic activities (Pinheiro et al., 2020). Articulating work, gender, and race, female fatigue during the pandemic was also the object of analysis, pointing to an increase perceived by women in their physical and mental fatigue in the period due to the 'invasion' of the work 'outside' the home into the domestic environment: with the necessary social distancing to control the advance of the COVID-19 pandemic, 71% of Brazilian women interviewed said that the pandemic affected their mental health more than other people with whom they live (Bianconi et al., 2020).

In common, studies on work during the pandemic period point out that inequalities between men and women were not inaugurated but intensified by the pandemic (Bianconi et al., 2020; Góes et al., 2021; Pinheiro et al., 2020), suggesting that the roots of women's exhaustion during the COVID-19 pandemic does not depend upon the global health crisis itself. However, this context only opened up a reality already well known in Brazil and the world: the unequal division of domestic work between men and women and the accumulation of functions that women perform due to the sexual division of work that relegates them to care activities or reproductive work.

All work called 'productive,' performed 'outside' the home, has a base: reproductive work. Domestic work or care work is carried out in people's homes and guarantees the production and sustenance of life in common, without which there would be no living people working, consuming, and producing (Moreno, 2020). It is physical, mental, emotional, and sexual work performed mainly by women with precarious or non-existent remuneration (Federici, 2019). Although essential for the maintenance of societies, because not remunerated, it has reduced social status in a society governed by capitalist logic in which the exchange value exceeds the use value of all goods, including human labor (Marx, 1867/1999).

The low social status given to housework mirrors those who mostly perform it, women. They are seen as 'inferior' beings because they mainly perform an activity that is socially undervalued; their bodies, minds, emotions, and ideas are also socially assumed to be of lesser value (Federici, 2017; 2021). Brazilian society presupposes, therefore, the recognition of the sexual division of labor that is relegated mainly to this reproductive work. However, women, heterogeneous, plural human beings,

cannot be reduced to a supposedly essentialist vision that defines in general lines what is 'to be a woman' in Brazil.

Acknowledging the scientific mistake of trying to generalize specific experiences of groups of Brazilian women to all women in the country, we decided to analyze the social structures that engender and reproduce the functioning of capitalist society through the scientific method of dialectical historical materialism.

Dealing with themes related to 'women' means revealing the formation of political identity in the process of social agents who, although present plural identities and different degrees of economic exploitation, have in common the fact that the capitalist global economy organizes society under the patriarchy (Salleh, 2018). As marginal observers of this capitalist and patriarchal system, women can conduct their analysis from an epistemologically distinct point from their male peers. Although they can reproduce patriarchal socialization, they have the potential to question hegemonic views due to their very existence and their everyday experiences in a patriarchal society that sees women in an essentialist and marginal way (Harding, 2016).

However, have women in the field of administration made use of this resource of analysis of structural issues involving women's work (Harding, 2016; Salleh, 2018) and made their epistemic contribution as questioning analysts of the capitalist system? Based on the bibliometric analysis, Souza et al. (2021) mapped studies in administration on women. They found 76 articles published between 1980 and 2018 in national journals of the highest strata of the Capes Qualis (Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel). The authors also found that only 26% (20 articles) were considered critical.

The qualification of 'critical' followed the criterion that the article questioned the roots of inequalities between men and women based on the material conditions of capitalist production (Souza et al., 2021). However, even the 'critical' articles naturalized gender oppression by not problematizing labor relations in capitalism.

The critique of capitalism finds space in different epistemological approaches, one of which is that of Marxist studies, which, although heterogeneous, are based on the same scientific method, dialectical historical materialism. As one of the foremost classical scientific methods (alongside Durkheimian functionalism and Weberian comprehensive sociology), we chose to question whether the analysis of Marxist feminists would be in use in the field of administration. However, as Salleh (2018) suggests, the materialist approach to dialectical history present in theoretical perspectives of Marxist feminisms such as ecofeminism and the theory of social reproduction

inscribe the rupture with postmodern idealisms by linking the capitalist trajectory to a concrete and embodied policy of social control.

Inspired by the potential for criticizing the capitalist patriarchy that our position as Brazilian women provides us, we propose in this essay to answer the question: how to explain the exhaustion of Brazilian workers? If we are exhausted, what is behind it? What are the possible structural roots of all this physical and mental exhaustion? Applying the scientific method of dialectical historical materialism to inscribe this reality in the material and historical basis that shapes it, that is, Brazilian dependent capitalism and its relationship with social reproduction both in Brazil and in the countries that occupy a privileged position in globalized capitalism.

From the method of dialectical historical materialism, it is not possible to deal with the exhaustion and tiredness of people, especially women, within a capitalist society taken in abstract terms. Instead, we understand women's generalized physical, mental, and emotional fatigue through the theoretical lenses of work as a commodity and the sexual division of labor, which relegates to women the responsibility for reproductive work, guaranteeing the functioning of a dependent Latin American society. By doing so, it performs functions of stock of cheap food, raw materials, and labor within an economic system inseparable from a social order that sustains and reproduces it on a world scale.

We organized this essay as follows: after this introduction, we deal with work as a capitalist commodity to discuss working time in capitalism from the Marxist theory of dependence. By doing so, we explain the intensity of time of work in Brazil from the concept of super-exploitation to then relate the theory of social reproduction to the working time of Brazilian women workers in capitalism. Lastly, we present our final considerations, in which we point out possible structural roots of the tiredness of Brazilian women and indicate a possible way out of this problem, according to Marxist feminism: state payment for domestic work.

## THE SUPER-EXPLOITATION OF WORK IN DEPENDENT CAPITALISM: WORKING TIME FOR THE BRAZILIAN WORKING CLASSES

The work called 'productive' by Karl Marx is directly related to the valorization process, whose objective is the direct production of surplus value. The production process incorporates both predominantly manual work and those in which intellectual work prevails (Amorim, 2013).

Amorim (2013) states that misinterpretations about *Grundrisse* confused the historical materiality of modes of production with the physicality of goods. This misinterpretation led theorists to claim that intellectual work (non-material or immaterial) would be the driving force of contemporary societies. In this sense, they ignored that information and knowledge would also be subject to quantification regarding working time.

This type of analysis ignores that working time is a measure of value and, therefore, has no value on its own (Amorim, 2013). Instead, the possible quantification of this measure comes from the relationship between the exchange values produced in an average social time spent in production, considering the historical stage of development of the productive forces (Amorim, 2013). Therefore, creating available time is directly related to reducing necessary work time (Amorim, 2013).

In the *Grundrisse*, Karl Marx's analysis of the subordination of working time to free time refers to the limit of capital. However, unlike what authors such as André Gorz supposed, it does not correspond to the automatism of capitalism that, due to its technological development, would allow a reduction in the necessary work time (Amorim, 2013). Only with the end of capitalism and its replacement by socialism will it be possible to transform everyone's time into free time for their development.

Until then, productive work remains the material basis of wealth production. However, some consider that the exchange of working time for money occurs in the service provision sector as a representation of value. As Amorim (2013) explains, in services, money is exchanged, in the form of income, for a service so that the money exchanged, in this case, does not enter the production cycle as capital.

The expansion of capital includes cheapening the workforce by reducing the work necessary for production as strategies for local, regional, national, and international spatial reconfigurations (Amorim, 2013; Marx, 1867/2013).

Consequently, the understanding of working time presupposes not only the historical and material reality of the powerful nations of capitalism but also its 'opposite,' its other side, which we follow from the contribution of the Marxist theory of dependence in the analysis of Brazilian scientists.

From this perspective, there is no history of the development of the capitalist system, on the one hand, and a history of the economic underdevelopment of regions such as Latin America, on the other hand (Bambirra, 2019; Fernandes, 1976; Marini, 2017; Santos, 2018). The dependence that marks capitalism in Latin America

is a two-way street: not only do underdeveloped countries depend on foreign technologies and capital, but also, were it not for the looting and spoliation of peripheral countries throughout the process of capitalism formation, currently developed nations as those on the European continent would not have achieved economic, social, and technological advances (Fernandes, 1976; Ribeiro, 2000).

The critique of dependency theory shows that fundamental problems in Latin America: marginalization, economic stagnation, preservation of the agrarian structure, poverty, socioeconomic inequalities, and limits to its development, for example, are intrinsic to the very process of world capitalist industrialization (Marini, 1973/2005; Santos, 2018). Brazil entered capitalism via colonization, which implied the consular-managerial character of the local bourgeoisie, whose gains were small compared to those obtained by the ruling classes of the Portuguese metropolis (Fernandes, 1976; Ribeiro, 2015). Moreover, this process implied that the dynamic nucleus of the Brazilian economy, the agro-export sector, closed in on itself, given the limits imposed by the external control of the activity (Fernandes, 1976).

Two historical landmarks stand out in the Brazilian academic literature for understanding the dependent character of the country's economy: the process of import substitution and the next stage of industrialization after the end of the World War II (Bambirra, 2019; Fernandes, 1976; Marini, 2017; Santos, 2018). The process of import substitution is fundamental for understanding the dependent character of Latin American and, more specifically, Brazilian capitalism. The imperialist market crisis in the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had as its main consequence for Brazil and other parts of Latin America the development of the industry to supply the domestic demand for non-durable consumer goods (Bambirra, 2019; Furtado, 1971; Marini, 2017; Santos, 2018).

The industry that developed in Brazil over the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was the result of the confluence, although subject to disputes, of interests from industrial and agrarian sectors (Marini, 2017). Through the political game known as 'populism,' markedly Bonapartist (as it also happened in Argentina), the 1930s were marked in the country by what Marini (2017) calls an 'antagonistic coalition.' According to this, the industrial bourgeoisie regimented the imaginary of the urban working classes to defend the implementation of a heavy industry producing intermediate goods, durable consumption, and capital. Although this seems to indicate the triumph of industrial interests, the end of World War II showed that the tensions of interests between the industrial and Brazilian agrarian lands were only fleeting.

The post-World War II period consolidated the expansion of multinational monopoly consortia resulting from a complex process of industrial centralization in the United States of America (USA). It also highlighted the peripheral integration of Latin America into hegemonic capitalism (Bambirra, 2019). In this period, imperialist expansion transformed the previous focus of colonial-export enclave to openly subtract surplus value created within each national economy, increasing the concentration of capital in more prosperous countries (Marini, 2017; Santos, 2018).

Therefore, the most significant contribution of this Latin American role to global capitalism was to enable the process of capital accumulation in more powerful countries. Thanks to this process, richer countries depend more on increasing the capacity of work in these nations than on the exploitation of their workers, shifting the axis of their process of accumulation of production from absolute surplus value to relative surplus value (Marini, 1973/2005).

The exploitation of workers became essential in developing production relations in Latin American countries and other dependent nations (Marini, 1973/2005). The region continued to offer industrial raw materials and food to the population of more powerful countries. As a result, these began to increase their urban population employed in the industrial and service sectors. The industrial development of more affluent countries would not be possible without Latin American dependent capitalism. Therefore, it was essential to supply both industries and the homes of their growing working class, which would be impossible without specialization in the dependent countries' primary economy (Marini, 1973/2005).

The ruling classes of dependent countries, incapable of preventing the loss of relative surplus value in international trade, compensate for this loss at the level of their domestic production, increasing labor exploitation (Marini, 1973/2005). To compensate for the loss of relative surplus value in the international market, the dominant classes of dependent countries increased the intensity of work and not their productive capacity, prolonging working time. Another mechanism for increasing this relative surplus value was reducing the working classes' consumption to increase the appropriate surplus labor time (Marini, 1973/2005).

To explain this process, the author distinguishes productivity from the increase in relative surplus value (Marini, 1973/2005). In productivity, the capitalist gets a worker to produce more in the same period (Marini, 1973/2005; Marx, 1867/1999). However, this does not imply an increase in value generation. The degree of surplus

value is not measured by the increase in the production of goods but by the degree of exploitation of the workforce, measured by the relationship between surplus labor time and necessary labor time (Marini, 1973/2005).

The overexploitation of the workforce in dependent capitalism (Marini, 1973/2005) explains why we do not observe, either in the present material conditions of Brazil or in the future, the possibility of reducing the working time for the country's working classes. Overcoming the overexploitation of work implies breaking with the roots of the problem: capitalism (Bambirra, 2019; Fernandes, 1976; Marini, 2017; Santos, 2018).

In the following section, we complement the contributions of the Marxist discussion on the overexploitation of work as an obstacle to the reduction of working time in dependent capitalism with reflections on the role of women in social reproduction.

## SOCIAL REPRODUCTION AND WOMEN'S WORKING TIME IN CAPITALISM

As we have presented, dependent capitalism ensures profit and social reproduction in more prosperous countries (Federici, 2021; Marini, 1973/2005). The use of the workforce, of both men and women, is configured based on the structure of social and economic formation (Saffioti, 1969/2013). In the case of societies based on private ownership of the means of production, whether pre-capitalist or capitalist, the use of the workforce occurs differently between men and women (Saffioti, 1969/2013).

In capitalism, racism, sexism, and other forms of social hate disguise the economic roots of sociocultural determinations such as poverty and other social inequalities (Saffioti, 1969/2013).

It is not enough to recognize that social classes, racial relations, and gender relations enable capitalism's functioning: but it is necessary to define such relations and their properties, as in intersectional studies (Kergoat, 2010). In this sense, Kergoat (2010) and Hirata (2014) mapped the vast field of intersectional feminist studies, investigating how English- and French-speaking authors articulate class, race, and gender oppression differently.

The first recognized studies were published between the 1970s and 1980s (Hirata, 2014; Kergoat, 2010). However, with the publication in 1969 of the book "*The woman in the class society: myth and reality*" originated from her doctoral thesis, Heleieth Saffioti, a Brazilian Marxist feminist, already anticipated the theoretical perspective of social reproduction, which gained greater notoriety in recent years.

Heleieth Saffioti uses the image of the 'knot' as an explanatory metaphor (Motta, 2018), anticipating the inseparability between class, race, and gender oppressions that gained space from the vision of Cinzia Arruzza's unitary theory and offering an instrument of popular education (Freire, 1983) to feminist movements. The unitary theory understands that the oppressions related to class, race, and gender do not correspond to autonomous systems endowed with particular causes but are integral parts of capitalist society. Through a long historical process, capitalism has been dissolving forms of social life that preceded it (Arruzza, 2018).

In Saffioti's (1969/2013) analysis, the inequality of rights between men and women and the tradition that subjects women under the yoke of men are inseparable, and their origin refers to the production of material life in pre-capitalist societies, whose productive core was the family. The monogamous family, which demands strict chastity and fidelity from the wife, is related to the concept of wealth concentration via private property. Patriarchy is, therefore, a historical product of the material need for the accumulation and transmission of wealth by men, as Engels (1976) clarifies, and not an adjective for an ideology or power structure separate from capitalism (Saffioti, 1969/2013).

Karl Marx's (1867/1999; 2013) analysis already pointed to the intrinsic relationship between the work that produces the goods and the reproduction of the working classes. Social reproduction expands these analyses by pointing out that, although specific conditions influence how capitalism presents itself in each location, capitalism presents certain invariances. These invariances, such as production relations, have slowly and never fully absorbed certain portions of the population (Arruzza, 2018; Federici, 2017; Saffioti, 1969/2013).

To justify this non-absorption of population contingents to capitalist productive relations, ideologues of the capital resort to natural factors such as sex, ethnic/racial characteristics, and sexual identity as 'escape valves' that work to divert the focus of the working classes of the class structure. The result is a simulated relief of social tensions generated by the very logic of the capitalist mode of production (Saffioti, 1969/2013).

Using these 'escape valves' masks the fact that, since all people are commodities in the labor market, men also sell more than just their labor power. Capitalist appropriation goes beyond surplus value (Falquet, 2008). Their bodies, minds, image, commute time to and from work, and the time spent caring for their appearance at work (clothing, personal hygiene, and makeup, for example) are also non-remunerated plus-values used by capitalists revert to performance at work (Falquet, 2008).

In addition to these issues that also affect men, specific social oppressions fall on women. Added to this is the overload of reproductive work and a physical factor that operates as an additional element: the possibility of motherhood for part of women (Souza-Lobo, 1991/2021). For the Brazilian Marxist feminist Souza-Lobo (1991/2021), the experience of motherhood is an essential point for discussing gender inequalities concerning work.

Motherhood shows that we live in a society that is not 'neutral' but sexual. Implicitly, men are allowed not to exercise paternity, as the period of paternity leave is negligible (five days), while the unequal division of domestic work and the existence of 'places/activity' of father and mother are normalized. In the traditional family model, it is up to the man to provide financially; thus, he is supported to invest in his career and work, neglecting care activities. Meanwhile, women seek to reconcile family and professional life, thus becoming dependent on public sphere actions such as daycare centers, playgrounds, and full-time schools. However, this is not a priority agenda for governments, which leaves children and women without support and alternatives in choosing between a career and a child (Souza-Lobo, 1991/2021).

In addition, the absence of a broad, secular, and non-moralistic debate on women's sexual and reproductive rights is a way of imposing motherhood without demanding that fatherhood be assumed and exercised with commitment and responsibility. When they find themselves without support in the face of the responsibility of gestating, giving birth, caring for, and educating a human being until adulthood, women perform pregnancy termination procedures that are very risky to their well-being and can be judicially penalized. The negligence of the state in the face of this agenda shows connivance with a significant number of deaths and emotional and socioeconomic problems faced by women from various social strata, with black and poor women being the most significant victims (Goes et al., 2020).

For these reasons, the demand for payment by the state for reproductive work grows within feminist movements worldwide. As a recent example, in Argentina, the payment of pensions for mothers was approved (Universo On-Line, 2021) as well as the legalization of abortion in 2020 (Watson, 2020), critical feminist achievements in the capitalist periphery.

Federici (2019) defends the capitalist state's payment for reproductive work performed by women in homes. The author recognizes that the salary for domestic work is revolutionary, a form of anti-capitalist struggle. Its strategy is to give visibility and value to reproductive work, a fundamental basis for the origin and maintenance of capitalism, by producing and maintaining the workforce responsible for producing all wealth in capitalism (Federici, 2019). Furthermore, by forcing capital to restructure social

relations more favorably for women, the author understands that payment for reproductive work will contribute to favoring the unity of the working classes (Federici, 2019).

In summary, if for specific fractions of the working classes in wealthier countries there seems to be a reduction in working time, as already pointed out by Heleieth Saffioti, dependent capitalism promotes double imprisonment of women: by the deterioration of working conditions outside the domestic sphere, resulting from the loss of rights in labor reforms, the emergence of new forms of precarious formal work without social protection and the expansion of informal work, as well as the absence of redefinition of domestic tasks within the home (Saffioti, 1969/2013).

## CONCLUDING DISCUSSIONS

How can one explain the exhaustion of working women in Brazil? In our essay, we seek to show that it is necessary to remember that, in a capitalist society, dealing with the exhaustion resulting from the insertion of women in the labor market implies remembering the (apparently) obvious: if there is a market, there are trading goods, namely, the people who work. Nevertheless, unfortunately, it is not that obvious because the scientific field of administration in Brazil seems to ignore that markets imply the circulation of goods. The low use of the dialectical historical materialist method or even of Marxist concepts such as merchandise and time of work on academic articles in the area illustrates that.

The experiences of women in the country and the exhaustion they experience are plural because, as women, we are also distinct and complex people. Therefore, we chose to deal in this essay with structural issues to the capitalist society in which we live, as these cross us, although with different consequences in functions of characteristics such as our sexual orientation, experience or not of motherhood, skin color, gender identity, ethnic origin, class condition and socioeconomic characteristics, age, adequacy of image, behavior, and body to prevailing aesthetic, moral standards, and conditions of physical accessibility (given the ableism).

As social reality is highly complex, we approach it from what concrete reality (because material and historical) allows us through dialectical historical materialism. In this essay, we investigated structural aspects at the roots of the exhaustion experienced by Brazilian women workers before and during the pandemic context: the work of women in Brazil, marked by the dependent character of national capitalism and reproductive work seen as primarily the responsibility of women.

As working women, we sell our productive capacity in the labor market for remuneration. Occupying the role

of social reproduction for the wealthiest nations on the globe, Brazil is a country that is part of world capitalism in a dependent way. This dependency means that the country provides food, raw materials, and cheap labor to the working classes and bourgeois, respectively, of the countries that occupy a central position in world financial capitalism.

At the same time, dependence via the international division of labor in world capitalism establishes unequal exchange between dependent and richer countries (we exchange soy for microchips). In Latin America and other capitalist societies marked by dependency, national bourgeois classes cannot compete with the foreign bourgeoisie to increase their capital accumulation through the technological improvement of the national industry. As a result, in short, the solution found by the Brazilian ruling classes to accumulate capital was to intensify the time duration of work of the proletarian classes via the super-exploitation of work.

Being part of the class that lives from their work in Brazil means being a super-exploited person whose workday needs to be intensified (especially in periods of crisis of world capitalist accumulation, such as the one faced since before the COVID-19 pandemic). For women, reproductive or domestic work guarantees an extra workload in a journey marked by overexploitation. The disaggregation of working classes by racism, sexism (Saffioti, 1969/2013), and, we add, xenophobia, ableism, fatphobia, hatred of LGBTQIAP+ people, and other forms of social phobia lead to collective myopia. They operate capitalist social control by applauding the supposed 'merits' of the national and foreign bourgeoisie. Such 'escape valves' (Saffioti, 1969/2013) (re)create forms of passivation of the working classes in such a way that social ills take on the appearance of results of characteristics or supposed individual 'choices' and not of the functioning of capitalism itself, understood as a world social order and economic system.

By relegating to women this mechanism of social reproduction, the bourgeoisie established that women became responsible for all reproductive or domestic work, free of charge. In times of accumulation crisis, in which the speculative rage of the owners of capital turns to the public resources of the state, previously destined to the social cost of the reproduction of the working classes, the advancement of misogynist discourses as a bourgeois political strategy makes perfect sense.

The state no longer funding social reproduction through public social policies does not mean that the social reproduction of the working classes is no longer important. On the contrary. It means that in the face of a crisis of world accumulation in which incremental gains via productive and financial activities are in decline, usurping state money is a quick way to guarantee the maintenance of gains and the standard of living of the ruling classes. It is necessary, however, that women assume social reproduction free of charge. Hence, the intensification of hate discourses aims to relegate Brazilian women, without cost to the state, to the domestic work that guarantees social reproduction.

Hence the revolutionary character of the political organization of society in the struggle for state payment for domestic work: by giving visibility to reproductive work as a service provided to the capitalist state for the benefit of the ruling classes, the social myopia that misogyny would be 'natural' and not instrumental to capitalism is broken (Federici, 2021). Breaking with sexism as an 'escape valve' can be a first step toward strengthening the union of the working classes, which may also begin to question other forms of social segregation, such as racism and classism, which benefit only the holders of capital. We are exhausted, but we need to 'nip it at the roots' instead of looking for palliative solutions that keep intact the capitalist structures that exhaust us so much.

## REFERENCES

- Amorim, H. (2013). O tempo de trabalho: Uma chave analítica. *Educação Em Revista*, 28(3), 503–518. <https://doi.org/10.36311/2236-5192.2015.v16n01.07.p81>
- Arruzza, C. (2018). Funcionalista, determinista e reducionista: O feminismo da reprodução social e seus críticos. *Cadernos Cemarx*, 10, 39–60. <https://doi.org/10.20396/cemarx.v0i10.10920>
- Bambirra, V. (2019). *O capitalismo dependente norte-americano* (4th ed.). Insular.
- Bianconi, G., Leão, N., Ferrari, M., Zelic, H., Santos, T., & Moreno, R. (2020). *Sem parar: O trabalho e a vida das mulheres na pandemia*. [https://mulheresnapandemia.sof.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Relatorio\\_Pesquisa\\_SemParar.pdf](https://mulheresnapandemia.sof.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Relatorio_Pesquisa_SemParar.pdf)
- Engels, F. (1976). *A origem da família, da propriedade e do Estado*. Editorial Presença.
- Falquet, J. (2008). Repensar as relações sociais de sexo, classe e "raça" na globalização neoliberal. *Mediações - Revista de Ciências Sociais*, 13(1/2), 121. <https://doi.org/10.5433/2176-6665.2008v13n1/2p121>

- Federici, S. (2017). *Calibã e a bruxa: mulheres, corpo e acumulação primitiva* (1st ed.). Elefante.
- Federici, S. (2019). *O ponto zero da revolução: trabalho doméstico, reprodução e luta feminista* (1st ed.). Elefante.
- Federici, S. (2021). *O patriarcado do salário* (1st ed.). Boitempo.
- Fernandes, F. (1976). *A revolução burguesa no Brasil: Ensaio de interpretação sociológica* (2nd ed.). Zahar.
- Freire, P. (1983). *Pedagogia do oprimido* (15th ed.). Paz e Terra.
- Furtado, C. (1971). A polarização desenvolvimento-subdesenvolvimento: o dualismo em escala planetária. In *Teoria e política do desenvolvimento econômico* (4th ed., pp. 295–302). Editora Nacional.
- Goes, E. F., Menezes, G. M. S., Almeida, M.-C. C., Araújo, T. V. B. de, Alves, S. V., Alves, M. T. S. S. B. e, & Aquino, E. M. L. (2020). Vulnerabilidade racial e barreiras individuais de mulheres em busca do primeiro atendimento pós-aborto. *Cad. Saúde Pública*, 36(1). <https://doi.org/10.1590/0102-311X00189618>
- Góes, G. S., Antonio, J., Martins, F., & Do Nascimento, S. (2020). Potencial de teletrabalho na pandemia: Um retrato no Brasil e no mundo. *Carta de Conjuntura - IPEA*, 47, 1–10. <https://www.ipea.gov.br/cartadeconjuntura/index.php/2020/06/potencial-de-teletrabalho-na-pandemia-um-retrato-no-brasil-e-no-mundo/>
- Góes, G. S., Martins, F. dos S., & Nascimento, J. A. S. (2021). O trabalho remoto e a pandemia: o que a pnad covid-19 nos mostrou. *Carta de Conjuntura, Ipea*, 50, 1–16. <https://ipea.gov.br/cartadeconjuntura/index.php/2021/02/o-trabalho-remoto-e-a-pandemia-o-que-a-pnad-covid-19-nos-mostrou/#:~:text=Para%20novembro%2C%20o%20contingente%20de,9%2C6%25%20em%20outubro>
- Harding, S. (2016). 5. What is feminist epistemology?. In *Whose science? Whose knowledge?* (pp. 105–137). Cornell University Press.
- Hirata, H. (2014). Gênero, classe e raça: Interseccionalidade e consubstancialidade das relações sociais. *Tempo Social*, 26(1), 61–73. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0103-20702014000100005>
- Kergoat, D. (2010). Dinâmica e consubstancialidade das relações sociais. *Novos Estudos CEBRAP*, 86, 93–103. <https://doi.org/10.1590/s0101-33002010000100005>
- Marini, R. M. (2005). *Dialética da dependência*. Expressão Popular. (Obra original publicada em 1973).
- Marini, R. M. (2017). *Subdesenvolvimento e revolução* (6th ed.). Insular.
- Marx, K. (1999). A mercadoria. In *Marx: Os Pensadores* (pp. 57–86). Nova Cultural. (Obra original publicada 1897)
- Marx, K. (2013). A jornada normal de trabalho. In R. Antunes (Ed.), *A dialética do trabalho II: Escritos de Marx e Engels* (1st ed., pp. 11–18). Expressão Popular.
- Moreno, R. (2020). Pistas para entender e enfrentar o capitalismo digital. In *Capitalismo digital, comunicação e construção de movimento: trilhas feministas* (pp. 49–70). Sempreviva Organização Feminista.
- Motta, D. C. (2018). Desvendando Heleieth Saffioti. *Lutas Sociais*, 22(40), 149–160.
- Pinheiro, L., Tokarski, C., & Vasconcelos, M. (2020). Vulnerabilidades das trabalhadoras domésticas no contexto da pandemia de Covid-19 no Brasil. *Nota Técnica / IPEA Disoc*, 75, 19. [http://repositorio.ipea.gov.br/bitstream/11058/10077/1/NT\\_75\\_Disoc\\_Vulnerabilidades\\_das\\_Trabalhadoras\\_Domesticas.pdf](http://repositorio.ipea.gov.br/bitstream/11058/10077/1/NT_75_Disoc_Vulnerabilidades_das_Trabalhadoras_Domesticas.pdf)
- Ribeiro, D. (2000). *O processo civilizatório: Etapas da evolução sociocultural*. Companhia das Letras; Publifolha.
- Ribeiro, D. (2015). *O povo brasileiro: Formação e o sentido do Brasil* (3rd ed.). Global.
- Saffioti, H. (2013). *A mulher na sociedade de classes: Mito e realidade* (1st ed.). Expressão Popular. (Obra original publicada em 1969)
- Salleh, A. (2018). A tecnociência pós-moderna e o trabalho de cuidado. *Cadernos Cemarx*, 10, 175–196. <https://doi.org/10.20396/cemarx.v0i10.10926>
- Santos, T. dos. (2018). *Socialismo ou fascismo: o novo caráter da dependência e o dilema latino-americano*. Insular.
- Souza-Lobo, E. (2021). *A classe operária tem dois sexos* (3rd ed.). Fundação Perseu Abramo; Expressão Popular. (Obra original publicada em 1991)
- Souza, M. D., Ferraz, D. L. D. S., & Ferraz, J. D. M. (2021). As mulheres conforme a administração: Uma ciência para a manutenção da opressão e da exploração? *Revista Eletrônica de Ciência Administrativa*, 20(3), 509–534. <https://doi.org/10.21529/recadm.2021018>
- Universe On-Line. (2021). *Argentina garantirá aposentadoria para mães por cuidados aos filhos*. UOL Notícias.
- Watson, K. (2020). *Argentina abortion: Senate approves legalisation in historic decision*. BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-55475036>

## Authorship

### Fernanda Mitsue Soares Onuma\*

Universidade Federal de Alfenas, Instituto de Ciências Sociais Aplicadas

Avenida Celina Ferreira Ottoni, n. 4000, Padre Vitor, CEP 37048-395, Varginha, MG, Brazil

E-mail: fernanda.onuma@unifal-mg.edu.br

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7392-2191>

### Aline Lourenço de Oliveira

Universidade Federal de Alfenas, Instituto de Ciências Sociais Aplicadas

Avenida Celina Ferreira Ottoni, n. 4000, Padre Vitor, CEP 37048-395, Varginha, MG, Brazil

E-mail: aoliveirah@gmail.com

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3259-1066>

### Júlia Moretto Amâncio

Universidade Federal de Lavras, Departamento de Administração e Economia

Trevo Rotatório Professor Edmir Sá Santos, Universidade Federal de Lavras, CEP 37203-202, Lavras, MG, Brazil

E-mail: julia.moretto@ufla.br

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3378-4054>

\* Corresponding Author

## Copyrights

RAC owns the copyright to this content.

## Funding

The authors reported that there was no financial support for this work.

## Plagiarism Check

RAC maintains the practice of submitting all documents approved for publication to the plagiarism check, using specific tools, e.g.: iThenticate.

## Authors' Contributions

**1<sup>st</sup> author:** conceptualization (equal); data curation (equal); formal analysis (equal); investigation (equal); methodology (equal); resources (equal); supervision (lead); validation (lead); writing – original draft (lead); writing – review & editing (equal).

**2<sup>nd</sup> author:** conceptualization (supporting); formal analysis (supporting); investigation (supporting); project administration (supporting); resources (equal); supervision (equal); validation (supporting); visualization (supporting); writing – original draft (supporting); writing – review & editing (supporting).

**3<sup>rd</sup> author:** conceptualization (equal); formal analysis (equal); investigation (supporting); methodology (supporting); project administration (supporting); resources (equal); supervision (equal); validation (supporting); visualization (supporting); writing – original draft (supporting); writing – review & editing (supporting).

## Conflict of Interests

The authors have stated that there is no conflict of interest.

## Peer Review Method

This content was evaluated using the double-blind peer review process. The disclosure of the reviewers' information on the first page, as well as the Peer Review Report, is made only after concluding the evaluation process, and with the voluntary consent of the respective reviewers and authors.

## Data Availability

RAC encourages data sharing but, in compliance with ethical principles, it does not demand the disclosure of any means of identifying research subjects, preserving the privacy of research subjects. The practice of open data is to enable the reproducibility of results, and to ensure the unrestricted transparency of the results of the published research, without requiring the identity of research subjects.