
**GENDER AND FEMINISMS: THEORETICAL-EPISTEMOLOGICAL
CONSIDERATIONS AND METHODOLOGICAL IMPACTS**
*GÊNERO E FEMINISMOS: CONSIDERAÇÕES TEÓRICO-EPIDEMOLÓGICAS
E IMPACTOS METODOLÓGICOS*

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ABSTRACT

The present article analyzes how the relationship between theory and politics takes place in the Brazilian feminist field and how this articulation gains strength in academia, setting up a critical position that is characteristic as a theoretical and methodological perspective. Among its fundamental axes, there are the theoretical-epistemological and methodological concerns, as it is understood that it is not possible to perform feminist science, except from an engaged, politically committed position. Thus, the concept of gender and its impacts on the theoretical and political fields problematizes and analyzes the methodological implications in this context of scientific research. Such analyses enable the deduction that the feminist debate is not separate from that of the scientific field in general, concerning the statute of science and the ways of generating knowledge, as also presented in the field of Social Psychology.

Keywords: gender; feminist theories; epistemology; methodology.

RESUMO

O presente artigo analisa a forma como a relação entre a teoria e a política tem lugar no campo feminista brasileiro e como essa articulação ganha força na academia, criando uma posição crítica, que é característica de uma perspectiva teórica e metodológica. Entre seus eixos fundamentais, estão as preocupações teórico-epistemológicas e metodológicas, entendido que não é possível realizar a ciência feminista, exceto de uma posição politicamente comprometida. Assim, o conceito de gênero e seus impactos sobre os campos teóricos e políticos problematiza e analisa as implicações metodológicas neste contexto de pesquisa científica. Tais análises permitem a dedução de que o debate feminista não é separado do campo científico em geral, relativo ao estatuto da ciência e das formas de geração de conhecimento, e também presente no campo da Psicologia Social.

Palavras-chave: gênero; teorias feministas; epistemologia; metodologia.

Introduction

The feminist project consists of a political field/ social movement, which started in a more organized way in the west at the end of nineteenth and beginning of twentieth century with the struggle for equality in civil, political and educational rights, previously reserved only for men. The mark of this period is suffragism. In the 1960s and 1970s, the movement resurged, especially in the USA and France, claiming equal rights and denouncing male oppression (feminism of equality), on the one hand, and on the other, giving visibility to specificities of the female experience,

generally neglected (feminism of difference and of otherness). In the 1980s, the movement stirred up the paradox between equality and difference, due, among other elements, to internal conflicts arising from the singularities of the groups (blacks and lesbians, for example). The paradox of equality and of difference (and not of inequality and of sameness/identity) has occupied current discussions in the feminist movement more and more intensely, because strategic coalitions are necessary in order for a political platform to be agreed upon and carried out.¹

Simultaneously with the movement, the feminist project set up a theoretical-epistemological field,

which presents diversified trends according to different critical traditions. It is possible to identify in it, among other possibilities, the contributions of Marxist theory, of the studies of patriarchy, of psychoanalysis in its largest schools (British and French), and of the post-structuralist and post-modern schools. These last ones emphasize the matter of difference, of subjectivity and of the singularity of experiences, conceiving that subjectivities are produced discursively. Each of these trends question the ways of producing scientific knowledge, denouncing the impossibility of maintaining the belief in neutrality, as well as other assumptions and rules of the positivist paradigm.

From these brief considerations, we will attempt to explain how the relationship between theory and policy gains strength in feminism in academia, setting up the critical position that is characteristic.² Among its fundamental axes are theoretical-epistemological and methodological concerns, because it is understood that it is not possible to perform feminist science except from an engaged, politically committed position.³ The concept of gender, its limits and possibilities, demonstrates well the (in)tense nature of this position.

Gender and its impacts in the theoretical and political fields

The concept of gender, in its historicity, holds an important place as an example of the articulation between the theoretical field and the social movements of the twentieth century. Nurtured by Anglo-Saxon feminism, the concept had the goal of overcoming the biological functionalist bias of the concept of sexual role, as well as visualizing the unequal nature of relationship between the sexes. This example, keeping its specificities, demonstrates well, in our view, the still existing tensions in the academic discourse that works with an “apparent dichotomy” between what is produced theoretically and its political impact. The clashes in the feminist academic field happen in two fundamental movements: (1) one internal to the field, in the relationship between feminist academic output and the others; and (2) another that occurs in the displacement of internal tensions to academia to the (in)tense and dense dialogue with the feminist movement and government policies. Gender instead of the terms “woman” and “women” still causes distrust among some feminist segments that fear the emptying of the political force of the concept.

The relationships between knowledge and power discussed by Michel Foucault (1985), and later developed by theoretical feminists such as Judith Butler (2003), Chantall Mouffe (1999a, 1999b) and

Rosi Braidotti (1997) serve as a foundation of the debate about the tension in the constitution of policies and theories.⁴ In this sense, both access to academia as a result of actions of the political movement, and the actions of the movement, are processed making use of scientific-academic references. The former, on the one hand, in the sense of inclusion of women, on the other, as concerning the problematization of a certain mode of thinking and doing science seen as “phallogocentric”, that is, a male way – and not necessarily a production of men as an uninformed look could understand it (Gergen, 1993; Scott, 2002). Regarding the latter, using the concept of gender in the arena of social movements, including the feminists, was not processed consensually and unanimously. There was tension in many points of debate, but one seems quite relevant to the analysis proposed here: the different interpretations that different social actors assign to the analytical and political capability of the notion of gender in a rather costly desideratum to the social movements linked to feminisms: problematizing as the gender hierarchies can be recognized as relationships of oppression, as in the hierarchical set, one of them is oppressed. For this, it would fit the concept of gender to translate the denaturalization of the classification process and the hierarchical values that are structured on maintaining the inferiority of some social segments to others.

This correlation also points to a criticism directed to the origin and constitution of the feminist theoretical field itself, developed by Joan Scott (1995, 2002), which argues that the only possibility of making a history of feminism is through a feminist history. In this way, the reflection is headed towards the existence or nonexistence of a feminist science and a feminist epistemology, one of the specificities of the feminist debate in academia.

In a text considered classic by feminist researchers in Brazil, Scott (1990) defines gender as constituent of social relations and the primary way of signifying power relations. The same author, in an interview with Miriam Grossi, Maria Luiza Heilborn and Carmen Rial (1998, p. 116), says that there is no properly feminine subjectivity, but a subjectivity “created for women, in a specific historical context, of culture and politics”, so that:

[the speech of gender difference] not only refers to ideas, but also to institutions, structures, everyday practices, and also to rituals and to everything that consists social relations. Speech is an instrument of ordering the world, and even not preceding social organization, it is inseparable from it. Therefore, gender is the social organization of sexual difference. It does not reflect the primary biological reality, but it constructs meaning from this reality. Sexual

difference is not the originating cause from which social organization could be derived. It is, rather, a moving social structure that must be analyzed in its different historical contexts. (Grossi, Heilborn, & Rial, 1998, p.115)

In the wake of this post-structuralist perspective, which understands the subject as discursively produced, fragmented, ephemeral, moving, Donna Haraway (1995) states that

Gender is a field of structured and structural difference, in which the tonalities of extreme localization, of the intimately personal and individualized body, vibrate in the same field as the high-voltage global issues. The feminist embodiment, thus, does not deal with the fixed position in a reified body, female or other, but one of nodules in fields, inflections in orientations and responsibilities by the difference in the fields of material meaning – semiotic. (Haraway, 1995, p.29)

The historicization of the concept of gender and of the studies about women that preceded them shows a theoretical-epistemological diversity that includes, as previously mentioned, the Marxist traditions, the studies about patriarchy and the British and French psychoanalyst schools on the variations that are inherent. More recently, the post-structuralist perspective gained voice allowing the complexification and the more consistent problematization of fixative essentialist inheritances that mark the debates on the political subject of feminism. On this path of the concept in a field whose origin is given in the studies about women, performed by women and for women, the tension is still evident, as it adds and synthesizes the differences it also determines positions in the contemporary scenario. If there is the concern to “incorporate” the logic of the subordinates, simultaneously there is the criticism of the Cartesian logic still hegemonic in the scientific field.

Nowadays something important has happened in the field of gender studies, whose impacts are felt in the context of debate about the uses of gender in the political arena: the theoretical agenda of some of these studies shifts from the analysis of inequalities and power relations between social categories (men, women, gays, heterosexuals, blacks, whites) to the questioning of the categories themselves, problematizing its rigidity, its segregation, its limits. Thus the studies are concerned with understanding the inter- and intra-category game of power as less-binary and more multifaceted processes.

There also seems to be an agreement between several scholars such as Stuart Hall (1999), Manuel Castells (2000), Anthony Giddens (2002), Boaventura

de Souza Santos (1989, 2002), about the importance of feminism concerning the weakening of patriarchal models that dictated rules of social and political organization, as well as performing positivist science. For Hall (1999, p. 8), for instance, “the modern identities are being ‘decentered,’ that is, shifted or fragmented,” from structural transformations that modern societies have been undergoing. These transformations are mostly the effect of a series of ruptures in the discourses of modern knowledge, among them those operated by feminism, both theoretical and political.

In the search for another model, another epistemology that led the studies, Haraway (1995) attempts to define the differentiated space that feminism occupies within science:

Feminism loves another science: the science and the politics of interpretation, of translation, of stuttering and of the partially understood. Feminism has to do with the sciences of multiple subjects with (at least) double vision. Feminism has to do with a critical view, consequently with a critical positioning in a non-homogeneous and gender-marked social space. (Haraway, 1995, p. 31)

Haraway (2004) also argues that the value of an analytical category is not necessarily annulled by the critical conscience of its historic specificity and cultural limits. The definitions of gender acutely frame the problems of cultural comparison, of linguistic translation and of political solidarity. It can be stated that the studies on gender and feminists are always positioned from a political point of view and, thus, do not share the positivist belief that advocates neutrality, as well as splitting the subject and object of investigation. On the other hand, in a feminist light, subject and object identify themselves and neutrality is replaced by engagement.

Haraway (2004) also states that the social constructionist researchers argue that the ideological doctrine of scientific rigor and method, as well as the underlying epistemology, were created to sustain an alienating scientific practice that distanced us from our own objects. From this point of view, comes the radical argument that science is eminently rhetorical, being nothing more than the action of relevant social actors and that the knowledge created by them is a path to a desired form of objective power. The author herself indicates that “all knowledge is a condensed nodule in an agnostic power field” (Haraway, 2004, p. 11). Science becomes an objectionable text and a field of power. The content is the form, and the form in science is rhetorical which creates social artifacts and creates the world by means of actual objects.

Feminism does not escape from this constructionist criticism, although it has in its favor the fact that, since the first proposals, it has opted for studies that emphasize politics, transcultural translations, the subjugated and partially understood. The work presented by Haraway (2004) is one that accommodates embodied objectivity, and also defines: “feminist objectivity means, simply, localized knowledge” (Haraway, 1995, p. 18). The promise of objectivity would not be the search for a position of identity with the object, but a partial connection. It is not possible to be in all positions, or entirely in a privileged position for the observation of the scientific object, and this applies to the subjugated (or privileged) categories as in the case of studies on gender, sexuality, race, territory and class.

The partial knowledge, which stands against total relativism, is discoverable, critical, supported by the possibility of network connections, called shared (or interdisciplinary) talks in epistemology. It is precisely in partial perspectives that there is the possibility of an objective, firm and rational critical evaluation (Haraway, 1995). For the author, the matter of science for feminism regards objectivity as positioned rationality

the junction of partial views and of wavering voices in a collective subject position that promises a vision of means of continued finite embodiment, of living within limits and contradictions, that is, views from somewhere. But not just any partial perspective suffices; we should be hostile to the easy relativisms and holisms, made of addition and subsumption of parts. (Haraway, 1995, p. 34)

Other important authors within feminism came to take a position in this debate, and the present article is heir to this feminist tradition of methodological questioning, as its intention is a politically engaged criticism and a critical feminist exercise (Butler, 1998; Nicholson, 1990; Strathern, 1995, among others). If post-modernism finds some resonance in social theory, it is exactly in the fact of bringing the criticism that should be understood as the science itself and the philosophy end up also being instruments of power themselves, and this may be what is actually found in the effort of refusing the set of criticisms elaborated within this intellectual rubric (Butler, 1998, p. 15).⁵

The political field is necessarily constructed by the production of a determining exterior. In other words, the domain of politics is built by means of the production and naturalization of the “pre” or “non” political. At the same vein, Judith Butler (1998) suggests a distinction between the constitution of a political field that produces and naturalizes this

constitutive exterior and a political field that produces and becomes contingent on the specific parameters of this constitutive exterior (Butler, 1998, p. 13). This concept brings a transformation to the political struggles, as it shifts them to the constitution of that which is political, being especially important to feminist concerns due to the political foundations (“universality,” “equality,” “the subject of rights”) having been built by racial and gender exclusions by a fusion of politics and public life which makes the private pre-political (Butler, 1998, pp. 13-14).

One criticism that is generally made about a supposed feminist science is that in the traditional philosophical categories the matter is more ethical and political than it is actually epistemological. Haraway (1995) notes that the problem is like having, simultaneously, an explanation of radical historical contingency about all knowledge postulated and all cognizant subjects, a critical practice of recognition of our own “semiotic technologies” for the construction of meaning, and a serious commitment with faithful explanations to a “real” world (Haraway, 1995, p.15). And, even still, being able to maintain an attitude that, at least, remains within what is considered to be embodied objectivity, without missing the points that seem to be spread off from western societies, which still maintain oppression of women in many circles.

According to Rosi Braidotti (1987), sexualization and the embodiment of subject are the main notions of what would be called “feminist epistemology” as they are the concepts that would provide the conceptual tools and specific perceptions of gender that govern the production of feminist thought. This argument was only possible with the removal of the initial analyses of the feminine condition centered on the woman, which takes women as its empirical subjects, until it reaches the relational view of gender. With it the first feminist criticisms of science and of epistemology also emerge, initially proposing the idea that there are many androcentric distortions in the scientific process. As feminist studies themselves were not framed within a classical structure of science, one of its first (and greatest) works was to elaborate a criticism based on its assumptions. Therefore, as already mentioned, criticisms to the masculine are initially developed, and to scientific objectivity, as well as to positivism.

From the articulation between political activism and academic work, in the process of reacting “against a male-dominant pseudo order” (Neves & Nogueira, 2003), psychological science has assumed significantly, although not consensually (Burman, 1998; Harding, 1990), a position of claiming equality between sexes in the theoretical productions and in psychological

interventions. As the Portuguese researchers Sofia Neves and Conceição Nogueira (2003, p. 45) state, “in seeking guiding principles in feminist assumptions, feminist Psychology positions itself unequivocally in an actively anti-sexist line of action, sustaining that men and women and their concerns and experiences are equally valuable and important in the eyes of scientific knowledge”. In this sense, feminist Psychology – little known in the Brazilian and Latin American context, but active in the United States (Chrisler & McHugh, 2011), in Canada (Austin, Rutherford, & Pyke, 2006) and in some European countries, such as Portugal (Neves & Nogueira, 2003; Saavedra, 2010), Spain (Ubach, 2008) and England (Burman, 1990, 1998; Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 2001) is positioned unequivocally in an actively anti-sexist line of action, sustaining that in the eyes of science both the experiences, and the values, concerns and experiences of men and women should be equal. Thus, feminist psychology not only offers understanding of the “feminine condition,” but also of other classification systems that generate oppression such as race, sexual orientation, class among others (Neves & Nogueira, 2003).

As an effect, saying that there is a matrix of gender relations that establishes and sustains the subject is not saying that there is a matrix that acts in a singular and deterministic way to produce the subject as its effect. The construction of this subject may not be framed only in the form of “speech constructs the subject” because this consists of a simple reversion. If thus maintained, constructivism is reduced to determinism and implies the abandonment or shifting of human agency. Construction is not limited to a subject nor its act, but to a process of reiteration whereby both “subjects” and “acts” come to appear. There is not power that acts, but simply a reiterating action which is power in its persistence and instability (Butler, 1993).

Butler (2003) thematizes the forms of “subjection,” thinking through Foucault, for whom “the legal systems of power *produce* the subjects that they subsequently come to represent” (p. 18). This double action of production of subject is exactly what establishes the legal language as the primary *locus* of representation, and, therefore, it is clear how the “subject” of feminism itself is discursively built within this logic. This thesis, however, presents some problems of practical order, as “the political construction of the subject proceeds linked to certain objects of legitimation and exclusion, and these political operations are effectively hidden and naturalized by a political analysis which takes legal structures as its foundation” (Butler, 2003, p. 19).

The subject of feminism would then be overwhelmed by the very structure in which it seeks emancipation. This idea of subject seems to be heavily based on an *a priori* ontological possibility via the liberal State. However, besides this dimension, the term “women” still implies a common identity, a postulate which has been criticized, mainly because gender (and therefore, not necessarily woman) not always being in a coherent or consistent manner in different historical and social contexts, besides there always existing the establishment of inter-relations “between gender and racial, class, ethnic, sexual and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities” (Butler, 2003, p. 20). Butler argues that the speech of gender identity is intrinsic to the fictions of heterosexual coherence and that the feminism needs to learn to produce a narrative legitimacy for a whole range of “non coherent genders”.

Through Foucault, Butler does not think the rigidity of the body to be totally material, but a materiality rethought as the effect of power. “Sex” would then be that which makes viable and qualifies a body for life within a cultural dominion of intelligibility, “the subject is constituted via the power of exclusion and abjection, one that produces constitutive exterior to the subject, an object exterior, which is, after all, ‘within the subject as its own founding repudiation’” (Butler, 1993, p. 3).

The paradox of subjectivity (*assujétissement*) is precisely that the subject that would resist such norms is itself activated, produced, by them.⁶ In the words of Butler, “the subjection” or subjectivity is not simply a subordination, but also a strengthening and maintenance, an installation of the subject, a subjectivation.” (Butler, 2001, p. 103). It is considered that there is no body outside of power, since the very materiality of the body, in fact, the materiality itself, as Butler states, is produced by and in direct relation to power investments.

The subjection is, literally, the making of a subject, the principle of regulation according to which a subject is formulated or produced. It deals with a type of power that not only acts unilaterally upon a particular individual as a form of domination, but also activates or forms the subject. Hence, the subjection is not simply the domination of the subject nor its production, but designates a certain restriction in the production of the subject, a restriction by which the production takes place. (Butler, 2001, p. 96)

The author understands that “the legal structures of language and of politics constitute the contemporary field of power; consequently there does not exist a position outside this field” (Butler, 2003, p.

22), feminism having the task of formulating within this constituted structure a criticism of the identity categories which are engendered, naturalized and immobilized. The challenge, then, is for feminism to form subjects that do not need their identity as a political foundation, stating that “maybe, paradoxically, the idea of representation will only makes sense for feminism when the subject women is not presumed in any part” (Butler, 2003, p. 24).

In discussing the universality of the term women, Butler (2003) deconstructs the idea of a possibility of unique meaning for the category “woman” or “women”. She ends up addressing the fact that different women or different femininities, somehow, would elicit different kinds of oppression. The author uses this argument against the notion of a universal patriarchy established in every society, since it fails to explain oppression of gender under diverse concrete cultural contexts where it exists. Butler’s idea is of the necessity of working with what she calls “contingent foundations” in feminism (Butler, 1998). In other words, from the entire debate, it is necessary to acknowledge the contingent character of the theoretical constructs themselves and of the analytical categories.

In this scenario of theoretical-epistemological debates, it is possible to identify some of the methodological implications that we delineate as follows.

Methodological implications

Epistemology and methodology are not inseparable entities and the quest for specificity of methods in the feminist studies is present in the arena of debates. The efforts of research on women, gender and sciences developed since 1970, especially in the United States, provide several theoretical, epistemological, methodological and political problems, which were the bases for polemics waged among academic feminists, since that decade until the present. In other decades, different interpretations intersect with as discussions about feminist, gender and science studies. In general, doubts about the polarization between nature and culture, sex and gender, nature and science, equality and difference made moot many questions about limits, autonomy, precedence and distance of each of these poles about the other.

Among the methodological questions posed by a feminist bias (Gergen, 1993), is the rejection of the following assumptions: (1) the independence between scientist and object of research; (2) the “decontextualization” of the material of the field in which it is physically and historically inserted; (3) neutral

theory and practice in value; (4) the independence of “facts” regarding the scientist; and (5) the superiority of the scientist with respect to other people.

When speaking of methodologies and feminisms, therefore, the most important thing is considering some fundamental aspects in every study intended to be feminist. One of them concerns the need of the researcher to be situated in a reflexive form in the process. In this case, one should be aware of the fact that the processes of the production of knowledge are always rooted in the localized histories and experiences (Scott, 1999) of whom wishes to know something and in that which is studied. This means, also, that any feminist investigation must be sensitive to the differences and hierarchies derived from vectors such as gender, generation, social class, race/ethnicity, cultural aspects etc.

In this case, feminism understands that knowledge is always situated, as it also values feminine emotion and experience in the process of understanding.⁷ Feminine research has as a special concern the place of the investigator in relation to the participants and the impact upon them, recognizing that the perspective is fundamental and singular. The common objective is social change, which emphasizes the engaged character of feminist research.

Moreover, in the post-structural understanding of science, the notion of knowledge as a mirror of reality was replaced by knowledge as a social construction, insomuch that it does not refer to the processes of interaction with a dehumanized reality, but implies communication between people and in the change of emphasis in the observation for conversation and interaction. The social studies of sciences, guided in the tradition of social sciences (Gergen, 1993), as well as the social and political factors, cease to be seen as potential external “contaminants” of scientific production, and are treated as effectively constituent factors of scientific practice (Citeli, 2000; Estrada-Mesa & Báez-Silva, 2009).

It can be stated that feminism is a theoretical-political perspective and not a method of investigation, as feminist research uses several methods, some researchers argue that feminist methodologies refers less to the adoption of specific techniques of obtaining information than to the emphasis to aspects of gender and power in the construction of knowledge (Bruschini, 1992). In this case, the view should be the non-sexist, regardless of the method and the procedures, but rather how they are used.

Other researchers such as Rhoda Linton (1997), however, consider the feminist proposals incompatible

with the use of quantitative approaches and standardized techniques. In any event, it is possible to identify a preference in feminist and gender studies for methods and techniques seen as qualitative such as: life stories, action research, ethnographies, case studies, narratives and focus groups. Discourse analysis in its various strands is the flagship, here illuminated by feminist theories.

In this case, we may deduce that the feminist debate is not separate from the debate in the scientific field in general, concerning the status of science and the ways of producing knowledge, such as is also presented in the area of Social Psychology. The challenge of constructing a critical Social Psychology, for instance, may demonstrate the internal shocks in the scientific field that translate the games of power in the struggle for the hegemonic position. Today the area of Psychology still views the gender category with distrust and, often, the works that use it make it synonymous with the variable sex, in an a-critical and a-historical way.

What is at stake here seems to be the epistemological debate, with its methodological derivations. Searching for the *status* of science, Psychology still advocates the principles of neutrality and objectivity, coping with the diversity of positions with difficulty. The contributions of theoretical feminists, however, have gradually been incorporated in the wake of the criticism of positivist science, in order to produce committed and involved knowledge and practices.

Enhancement perspectives on the presented arguments

It is meaningful to acknowledge the perspective of intersectionality in the political-theoretical field. During the 1960s and 1970s women's movements have had their differences exposed, mainly from the positioning of black women who had not been recognized in the middle class and the white elite feminisms. More than just an interrelation between the forms of discrimination, oppression and exclusion, from the standpoint of intersectionality such as described by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 and developed by Patricia Collins (2000, p. 42), it is argued that cultural standards of cultural oppression are brought forth and influenced by society's systems of intersectionality, such as race, sex/gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity, generation, disability. Thus, it may be argued that all those who do not correspond to what is expected/regulated by the "white-ruling elite" are produced as "the other", that is, "domination always

involves the objectification of the dominated; all forms of oppression imply the devaluation of the subjectivity of the oppressed" (Collins, 1986, p. 18). Collins (1990) describes race, class and gender as "interlocking systems of oppression". Kathy Davis (2008) argues that intersectionality standpoint allows conciliation between two other theoretical-epistemological trends in the feminist field which had great importance for the uncentering and problematization of the "women" category: the post structuralist-feminist perspective and the critical feminist theory about the sexism, racism and social class effects. She defines intersectionality as "the interaction between gender, race and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power." (Davis, 2008, p. 68).

Amy Peterson (2006), reflecting upon the intersections of gender, race and disability argues that:

There is a serious need to examine the experiences of individuals within intersecting oppressions. ... doing so will allow a critical examination of how our thoughts and actions may uphold another's subordination. From this perspective the potential for social change lies in understanding the multidimensional nature of oppression. (Peterson, 2006, p. 721)

Besides the importance of black women (including Afro-descendent and native Africans) for the problematization of middle class, western European white feminism, other women were also present, such as Chicanas, Latins, Asians, native Indians, bringing a post-colonial perspective which makes visible the oppression that colonization carried out upon all these groups.

In the field of psychology, Elizabeth Cole (2009) emphasizes the need to elucidate intersectional identities in the field of research so that essentializations as well as generalizations of categories such as race may be avoided, just as attention must be paid as to how different categories mean and relate to one another. Furthermore, it proposes the importance of studies (both quantitative and qualitative) on a multicultural perspective, from the scope of intersectionality, in order to learn the richness and complexities of interactional experiences in different historical and cultural contexts. According to Cole (2009), three questions that psychology researchers must pose themselves as intersectional strategy: (1) Who is included in this category? (2) What is the role of inequality here? And (3) what are the similarities? It is, therefore suggested that an intersectional scope in the research must consider that gender, race, class and sexuality, as well as other markers, simultaneously

affect our perceptions, experiences and opportunities in a markedly stratified society in such dimensions.

On the other hand, it must be noted that many qualitative researches have reproduced, if contradiction-filled, a colonizing discourse of the 'other' and can be a tool of domination which 'others' (Fine, 1994, p. 70). Bel Hooks is also concerned about the danger of the "Other" as she states:

I am waiting for them to stop talking about the 'Other', to stop even describing how important it is to be able to speak about difference. It is not just important what we speak about, but how and why we speak. Often this speech about 'Other' is also a mask, an oppressive talk hiding gaps, absences, that space where our words would be if we were speaking, if there were silence, if we were there. This 'we' is that 'us' in the margins, that 'we' who inhabit marginal space that is not a site of domination but a place of resistance. Enter that space. (Hooks, 1990, pp. 151-152)

Fine (1994) argues that it is necessary to rupture the textual laminations within which Others have been sealed by social scientists, to review the complicity of researchers in the construction and distancing of Others, and to identify transgressive possibilities inside qualitative texts" (Fine, 1994, p.71).

Valerie Purdie-Vaughns and Richard P. Eibach (2008) use the concept of "intersectional invisibility" to argue that people who do not correspond to their group's regulatory ideals are socially, culturally and politically invisibilized (unseen), which have originated from androcentric, ethnocentric and heterocentric ideologies. In this case, precautions must be taken in regard to the conceptual operators we use, as well as the methodological procedures, so that an intersectional approach may indeed be possible.

The introduction to the special edition of the magazine "Feminism & Psychology, Feminist Liberation Psychology", entitled "Whither Feminist Liberation Psychology? Critical Explorations of Feminist and Liberation Psychologies for a Globalizing World", the editors M. Brinton Lykes and Geraldine Moane (2009) state that:

Activist scholars are developing feminist liberationist psycholog(ies) within and beyond the borders of psychology that respond to and incorporate these lived experiences. Through participatory research, pedagogy and community-based workshops, this special issue demonstrates this new praxis. Thus, critical reflexivity and 'just enough trust' enable engagement across differences, creating in-between spaces for dialogue, appreciation, and contestation as well as alliances and solidarity — values for a renewed and transformed praxis of psychology with and for those historically marginalized and excluded

from our theory and practice. (Brinton Lykes & Moane, 2009, p. 283)

Along the same line of reasoning, Gloria Anzaldúa, Latin American writer and theoretical feminist, has been an important voice as she deals with the crossbred conscience in the history of contemporary feminism, which reveals the silencing of unviable and/or subordinated feminism subjects. Anzaldúa brings an epistemological perspective of intersectional difference and relates it to a political proposal of coalition against this subjects' exclusion. The mestizo identity theory is presented as a theoretical-political possibility, and distinctions between capitalist versions and critical versions to a cultural hybridism are emphasized as chicanas' identities, lesbians and queers are redefined (Anzaldúa, 2005).

We regard that any research in psychology with a feminist maxim must take the discussions formerly presented here into consideration, so that no rationality entanglement take place once it operated (and still does operate) in the academic scenario – androcentric, ethnocentric, classism and heterosexist. Finally, we urge that in the field of Psychology, in particular the Social Psychology, we must not elude what Chantal Mouffe (1996) defends as commitment to a radical democracy:

I shall defend that for all feminists engaged on a radical democratic politics, the deconstruction of essential identities must be regarded as necessary condition to an appropriate comprehension of social relations diversity to which principles of freedom and equality must apply. Only when we estrange from the conception of subject as an agent concurrently rational and transparent to itself and also the so-called unity and homogeneity of its group of exposures, only then we shall be in the position to theorize the multiplicity of subordinate relations. An individual may be a holder of such multiplicity and yet dominant on a relation and subordinate on another. Therefore, we may conceive the social agent as being formed by a group of "subject positions" which may never be totally fixed in a closed system of differences, composed by a diversity of speeches between which there is no necessary relation, but a constant movement of overdetermination and displacement. (Mouffe, 1996, p.6)

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