


# Intersectionality and violence against women in covid-19 pandemic times: dialogues and possibilities


## Interseccionalidade e violência contra mulheres em tempos de pandemia da covid-19: diálogos e possibilidades

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### Abstract

This essay discusses the relations between violence against women and social isolation during the covid-19 pandemic, based on the dialogue between the theoretical contributions of intersectional studies and those of the Institutional Movement, using Gilles Deleuze's philosophy of difference. Social isolation in the pandemic appears both as an analytical framework and as an intersection category, which can be understood as an *event* in the context of institutionalism. This entails, therefore, to envision intersectionality from the post-structuralist perspective. This study sought to open spaces for discussion based on contributions from the field of Collective Health, ranging from health to social and human sciences, reflecting on the expanded concept of health in its several different interfaces. From this perspective, the direct causal link between social isolation and violence against women was displaced by a social-historical-political analysis that articulates the singular, micro-social and the macro-social contexts, unveiling the inequalities and violence already experienced.

**Keywords:** Violence Against Women; Domestic Violence; Intersectionality; Pandemics.

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## Resumo

Este ensaio tem como objetivo problematizar as relações entre a violência contra as mulheres e o isolamento social durante a pandemia de covid-19, a partir do diálogo entre os aportes teóricos dos estudos interseccionais e as contribuições do Movimento Institucionalista, por meio da filosofia da diferença de Gilles Deleuze. O isolamento social na pandemia comparece como operador de análise e categoria de intersecção, o que pode ser compreendido como *acontecimento* no contexto do institucionalismo. Trata-se, portanto, de vislumbrar a interseccionalidade a partir de uma perspectiva pós-estruturalista. Busca-se viabilizar a construção de espaços de problematização, a partir das contribuições que vão desde a saúde até as ciências sociais e humanas, campo extenso e diversificado da saúde coletiva, refletindo a própria concepção ampliada de saúde em suas inúmeras interfaces. Por meio dessa perspectiva, buscou-se deslocar a relação de causalidade direta entre o isolamento social e violência contra as mulheres, fazendo uma análise sócio-histórico-política que articule o micros social, singular, com o contexto macros social, a fim de descortinar desigualdades e violências já experimentadas.

**Palavras-chave:** Violência contra a Mulher; Violência Doméstica; Interseccionalidade; Pandemias.

## Introduction

*I decided that it is better to scream... [...] Silence is the real crime against humanity.*  
(Mandelstam, 1983, p. 42)

Violence against women is a phenomenon that has gained great national and global repercussion in the context of the covid-19 pandemic, which affects us all, but has struck different groups of people in different ways, deepening existing inequalities. Initial data show that the pandemic has devastating social and economic consequences for women and girls, and may even reverse the limited progress made in gender equality and women's rights (UN, 2020).

Since the introduction of social isolation measures to prevent the covid-19 spread, four billion people worldwide are staying at home (UN, 2020). With much of the world under quarantine, we begin to hear reports that one of the effects of the pandemic is the increase in violence against women, especially domestic violence perpetrated by intimate partners, as many women are now 'trapped' at home with their abusers (Violência..., 2020).

Social support decreased with the closure of day care centers, educational and religious establishments, and restriction or reduction of working hours in women's protection services, such as police stations and centers of reference to domestic violence, increasing the risk and vulnerabilities of many women (Machado et al., 2020; Marques et al., 2020). In healthcare, Basic Health Units - especially in more vulnerable communities - and hospitals have prioritized covid-19 cases, which can result in lack of attention to other issues, such as follow-up of pregnant women and patients with chronic diseases.

These data have generated a constant concern among health researchers, as well as in other areas. Some studies and media references, however, when taken in a fragmented manner, may suggest that such spike in violence against women is due to the pandemic, in a direct causal link, emptying any and all analysis of a socio-historical-political perspective of the issues surrounding gender

violence. History is understood as the past that is alive in the present and can be, if it is not already, determining the future, in a perspective that interprets history not as a repetition of facts, but as a reconstruction based on new perspectives and events (Baremblytt, 1996). Violence has historicity and has manifested itself in varied forms. Historically, the barriers imposed by racial and gender inequalities have determined the health-disease-care process of women, particularly black women (Goes; Nascimento, 2012).

From this perspective, this essay, written in the context of collective health, seeks to break the monopoly of the biomedical discourse while criticizing the generalization of scientific knowledge, foraying into the social and human sciences to help understand issues that go beyond the limits of each 'disciplinary field,' such as the phenomenon of violence against women.

By studying the violence against women based on hermetic and homogenizing models that disregard the historical process of gender violence and the singularities involved therein, we risk generating totalizing truths, based on binarism and fragmentations. Many of these women could thus be silenced by scientific, academic and media discourses, crossed by stances full of certainties and generalizing ideas, sources of stigmatization and prejudice.

This challenging moment requires us to describe such complex reality, which includes recognizing the many forms of female oppression and their aggregate vulnerabilities, to examine the various dimensions that women participate in during the covid-19 pandemic. We seek to escape from essentialist discourses and universalist statements that imprison women in structured models, which may end up justifying the discrimination and violence they suffer on the basis of a 'feminine essence.'

Our study relies thus on intersectionality references, which date back to the origins of the black feminist movement, to bring important contributions and give visibility to identity processes from an analysis that is not limited to a set of characteristics or identification markers of specific groups and identities, but rather one

that captures the procedural and dynamic nature often made invisible in diversity and plurality discourses, which can lead many women to feel excluded from their groups.

In this essay, intersectionality is understood based on studies by Kimberle Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins, Suzanne Knudsen, among other authors, as a theory that analyzes how "social and cultural categories intertwine. The relationships between gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, class and nationality are examined at different levels, to explain the various inequalities that exist in society" (Knudsen, 2006, p. 61).

To this intersectionality-based analysis we incorporate the Institutional Movement (MI) framework; developed in France, in the 1950s and 1960s, Institutionalism is expressed by several movements that proposed objective and subjective ruptures to the identity and vertical logic present in institutions, seeking to value difference and singularity based on a relational, non-hierarchical concept of power. Here, we will draw, mainly, upon contributions by Gilles Deleuze and his philosophy of difference, and on Gregory Baremblytt's works. Besides criticizing the centralized universal knowledge dominated by the expert, figure that alienates people from the possibility of managing their own lives, the IM questions the existence of a single and immutable subject in all societies, denouncing that there are no natural demands or needs - they are all produced by the dominant interests. It focuses on the processes of subjectification that generate free subjectivities - revolutionary and establisher of difference - or subjected ones, which unconsciously submit their desire to reproductive organisms, such as the State and the capitalist market, resulting in repetition (Baremblytt, 1996).

Deleuze's (1998) philosophy of difference focuses on diversity, plurality and singularity, and on the dissolution of boundaries between subject and object that are in constant relation, transformation, and (re)creation. The author proposes a philosophy that is neither universal, nor a totality composed of isolated parts, defending the renewal of thought based on

the arts. Difference is within the self: to become different from the thing itself; it is not about reducing diversity to a common element between the parties, but understanding difference as multiplicity and creation, pure *event*.

Therefore, instead of adopting the term “women,” in “violence against women,” as an identitarian concept, which generalizes, reduces and limits, we use it as a differential category, allowing us to visualize various singularities, multiplying meanings, establishing a rhizomatic, horizontal relationship, moving flows, of a **becoming woman** in constant transformation before encounters with others (people and events) (Barbosa, 2020).

For Institutionalism, the best public policy will only be effective if all subjects adhere to it. Based on this theoretical reference we can create reading fields to describe the dynamics experienced by women in a non-hierarchical, nonlinear way, understanding the pandemic as an event, that is, “the appearing moment of the absolute new, of difference and singularity” (Baremblytt, 1996, p. 146).

Considering our trajectory and involvement with the topic, and recognizing the various theoretical possibilities and limits, this essay focuses on the dialogue between intersectionality and Institutionalism in addressing a little explored topic in health, which can contribute to possible actions for the prevention and promotion of women’s health in situations of violence that articulate the local - singular (microsocial) - with representations and forms instituted in a broader context - social (macrosocial) -, favoring the analysis of socio-historical-political implications by the collective.

We focus, thus, the women who place themselves at these intersections, restoring them as subjects of the multiple entanglements in these **with-others**. Social isolation in the pandemic thus appears both as an analytical framework and an intersection category, which can be understood as an *event* in the context of Institutionalism. This entails, therefore, to envision intersectionality from the post-structuralist perspective (Ferraz; Tomazi; Sessa, 2019).

In this context, this essay discusses the relations between violence against women and social isolation during the covid-19 pandemic, understood as *event*, based on the dialogue between the theoretical contributions of intersectional studies and those of the IM, using Gilles Deleuze’s philosophy of difference, to unveil inequalities and violence already experienced.

## Violence against women: intersectionalities and difference

*To be black without being just black, to be a woman without being just a woman, to be a black woman without being just a black woman.*  
(Carneiro, 2011)

Intersectionality in its interface with Institutionalism is proposed here as a common thread for analyzing the female oppression that intersects the violence against women. Such perspective engenders a reflection on how the axes of oppression intersect and potentiate each other, since, from an analytical point of view, it allows us to identify social issues, capturing their structural consequences and the dynamics of complex intersections between the various axes of subordination, seeking to denaturalize the instituted (constituted).

Intersectional studies gained notoriety from Crenshaw’s feminist formulations, in the 1970s and 1980s, created as a theoretical device that sought to focus and value black women’s positions in the civil rights laws and movements in the United States, questioning the universality of patriarchy as a system of domination and bringing a consensus that women’s human rights should not be limited to situations in which their problems resemble those experienced by men, which hid the bodily and sexual experiences of black women, marginalizing them as women and reducing them to their race. This notion of intersectionality refers to the dimensions of empowerment and disempowerment, the latter referring to how racism, patriarchal relations, class oppression, and other possible axes of

power and discrimination create inequalities (Assis, 2018; Costa, 2013; Crenshaw, 2002; Ferraz; Tomazi; Sessa, 2019).

Despite the relevance of Crenshaw's works, tracing the origins and influences of intersectional studies is a delicate task; the field is heterogenous and its initial reflection has been (re)signified by several important authors from the black feminist movement (Moutinho, 2014).

Despite being an established field for more than three decades, some authors claim that studies on intersectionality give the impression that 'everyone' develops intersectional work, although there is little consensus on what intersectionality actually means (Ferraz; Tomazi; Sessa, 2019).

In this essay, intersectionality is understood from a metaphor of avenues intersecting, where the several axes of power - that is, race, ethnicity, gender and class - constitute the paths that structure the social, economic, and political terrains, and through which the dynamics of disempowerment move. According to Crenshaw, "racialized women are often positioned in spaces where racism or xenophobia, class, and gender meet. Therefore, they are subject to being affected by the heavy traffic flows in all these roads" (Crenshaw, 2002, p. 177).

According to data from Ligue 180, channel that receives reports of violence against women, the quarantine enforced by state and municipal governments as a means to contain the covid-19 spread caused an increase of approximately 9% in the number of calls made. The National Human Rights Ombudsman Office, of the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights, reports that the daily average between March 1st and 16, 2020 was 3,045 calls received and 829 complaints registered, against 3,303 calls received and 978 complaints registered between March 17 and 25 (Coronavírus..., 2020).

Data from the São Paulo Security Department, released on April 15, 2020, show that femicide at home doubled in the state capital during quarantine. A survey conducted by the Public Prosecutor's Office of São Paulo, in turn, showed that requests for emergency protective measures

made by women increased by 29% in March compared to February of the same year. Moreover, the number of flagrant arrests for violence against women (murder, threat, coercion, false imprisonment, injury, rape, etc.) also increased from 177 in February to 268 in March 2020. Given this context, the reduction in the number of police investigations and cases in this period, for the deadlines in court were at first suspended until the end of April 2020, is noteworthy (FBSP, 2020).

These data generate noise that causes discomfort and can legitimize understanding that violence against women is a **natural** and **normal** response to moments of crisis. Reason why we must try and dialogue with intersectionalities and differences, by problematizing the phenomenon of violence against women in times of pandemic, which enables an analysis capable of reconnecting fragmented knowledge, resonating some questions: which women is the data disclosed about? Which women are experiencing this violence? Which daily lives are immersed in constant conflicts? Is the pandemic responsible for the violence and its increase?

Just as the metaphor of intersecting paths refers to dynamic forces coming from different directions, the concept of intersectionality also refers to the dynamic character of discrimination and disempowerment caused by different axes of power. Categories such as race, class and gender cannot, therefore, be thought of and analyzed in isolation, they are inseparable and interdependent (Costa, 2013).

A central topic to be discussed within the intersectionality debate is the meaning of "woman," which must consider economic, political, cultural, physical, subjective, and experience factors. In this perspective, intersection means multiplicity and, when discussing "being a woman," for example, one must consider issues of race, sexual orientation, gender identity, among others, to refute traditional historiography and the hierarchization of knowledge (Ribeiro, 2017).

Importantly, seeking unity in "being a woman" risks excluding bodies that deviate from the culturally instituted default and erasing possible violence within the feminisms

themselves, due to other violence that women may suffer, such as those related to gender, class, race, poverty, health, and other markers that are quite intertwined in state violence (Dell’Aglío; Machado, 2019; Werneck, 2016).

One must also understand the concept of gender beyond binary categorization, valuing the existing intersections between different markers (gender, race/color, schooling level, social class, health, among others), which can only be understood in an articulated manner in the interactions between the possible differences and inequalities present in distinct social experiences, collectively and individually.

Thus, when it is reported that violence has increased among a certain social group during the pandemic, we must reflect on how the complexities intrinsic to the categories are intertwined, seeking to overcome dichotomy and polarization and question the perspective from which the analysis performed starts, since writing and speech are territories of struggle and resistance. Otherwise, we risk stigmatizing certain groups, erasing singularities, privatizing a demand that is actually immersed in a much larger and complex context, and exempting the State’s responsibility.

Intersectionality is directly linked to the demands of the black population and social movements, especially the Black Women’s Movement. Among them are those related to health, that is, for more and better access to the health system, even participating in the processes that generated the Health Reform and created the Brazilian Unified Health System. But despite having contributed to the design and development of a universal public health system that has equality, integrality, equity, and social participation as its main guidelines and principles, this presence, in itself, “was not enough to include, in the new System, explicit mechanisms to overcome the barriers faced by the black population in access to healthcare, particularly those brought on by racism” (Werneck, 2016, p. 536).

This reasserts the importance of intersectional debates in the current scenario, on the basis that markers “are not understood in isolation, nor do they propose a mere addition of discriminations,

but rather, one embraces the complexity of intersecting discriminatory processes and from there seeks to understand the specific conditions that result from them” (Kyrillos, 2020, p. 1).

The intersection between gender and other categories, in this essay, are thus understood as analyzers that allow us to problematize vulnerabilities and welcome singularities since, based on the philosophy of difference, this problematization entails searching for other meanings for the pandemic as an *event*, and analyzing violence against women as a process that produces “lines of flight that undo essences and meanings in favor of a more intensive matter where affections take place” (Krahe; Matos, 2010, p. 5). It is precisely from the visible expression of these singularities that difference is thought of as a possibility of enstrangement and territory of struggle to question the production of homogenizing and naturalized meanings in society.

In a study conducted in a reference center for women in situations of violence in Espírito Santo, the professionals stated that most users were black and brown-skinned, justifying this data by the fact that many of them were underemployed heads of household, lived in low-income neighborhoods, and had little schooling, which made them more vulnerable to violence. This example may suggest a ‘natural’ causal link between violence and black women, who would always be poor and illiterate, erasing the diversity within these groups, which hinders a more accurate analysis of the mechanisms that operate inequalities in society, such as patriarchy, sexism and capitalism (Barbosa, 2020).

Gender, therefore, is constituted and represented differently according to where women are within the global power relations - which takes form through economic, political, and ideological processes -, and these “differences” are constantly articulated, but cannot be understood as a **direct link from one to the other**, for the meaning attributed to a given event varies from one individual to another, it is singular (Brah, 2006). In this sense, one must perceive gender as a relevant analytical category and intersectionality as the theoretical perspective

that dialogues with the subjective experiences of women in situations of violence in the context of the covid-19 pandemic (López, 2013).

Based on this understanding, everyday gendered social relations - from domestic work and child care, underpaid jobs and economic dependence, to sexual violence and the exclusion of women from key centers of political and cultural power - gained new meaning as they left the realm of absolute truth to be examined and confronted (Brah, 2006).

The institutionalist perspective is thus consistent with intersectional studies since intersectionality is understood in a rhizomatic manner, that is, structures in webs that branch off in a non-hierarchical way, as crossroads, as points of contact between lines, elements and categories, as vectors and nodes that connect and disconnect, and where the concrete intersections, hierarchies and elaborations are not predetermined, constantly changing and varying in potency, reflecting their amorphous and expansive character (Ferraz; Tomazi; Sessa, 2019).

In practice, intersectionality draws attention to the challenge of uncovering the structural and dynamic consequences of interactions between two or more axes of subordination, which deals specifically with how racism, patriarchy, class oppression, and other discriminatory systems create basic inequalities and structure the relative positions of women, races, ethnicities, and classes, among others (Assis, 2018).

As such, issues related to women, particularly black women, should not be homogenized, since this is a diverse category and concerns the type of society we seek to build.

Regarding the link between racism and vulnerabilities, Carneiro (2011) points out that:

the utopia pursued by black women consists in seeking a shortcut between a blackness that reduces the human dimension and the hegemonic western universality that negates diversity [...]. Achieving equal rights means becoming a full human being, full of possibilities and opportunities beyond their condition of race and gender. This is the ultimate meaning of this struggle.

In a pandemic context, besides social isolation, one must think about the historical isolation of women who has been suffering multiple violence, invisibilities throughout time, rooted in the production of subjectivities subjected to the capitalist mode of production (Baremlitt, 1996).

Thus, depending on the context, the notion of intersectionality can be used not only to analyze effects of oppression and disempowerment, but also to analyze political mobilization (Costa, 2013).

Despite the enormous contributions of intersectional studies, Moutinho (2014, p. 201) warns that one must “understand the logic of combined subjections reigning in the analyses as a process of construction and naming: the construction of subjects and the naming of forms of exclusion are part of this scenario of making policies and constructing rights.”

We seek thus to broaden the intersectional perspective, dialoguing with contributions from the philosophy of difference, relying on the production process of free and revolutionary subjectivity, in an effort to unveil women’s diverse experiences during the pandemic, amidst a society informed by capitalism, racism, and sexism, among other markers, without restricting this analysis to a mere overlapping of oppressions, generating noises that may silence the voices of the subjects involved.

## The pandemic as an event and analysis trigger: noises and silences

*We will not ask therefore what is the sense of the event: the event is sense itself. (Deleuze, 2015, p. 23)*

Violence against women does not begin with the pandemic and, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), its causes are founded on historical and social factors, such as gender and economic inequality, structural sexism, among others (WHO, 2012). By considering the increase in violence against women, especially domestic violence, as one of the effects of the pandemic, one risks privatizing a social issue. Social isolation by itself does not cause violence, but it has the

power to highlight the experiences of these women, emphasizing the historically constructed and naturalized inequalities.

Intersectional studies have contributed and continue to contribute to making the noises surrounding violence against women heard. But as important as describing them is interrogating what these noises muffle and silence: how does violence affect different women in the country? Why is violence customary in some bodies more than in others? Would domestic violence be restricted to a particular race/ethnicity and/or social class? Why is it so? How do the different markers/intersections affect the production of subjectivity in contemporaneity? If preliminary data show an increase in violence against women during the pandemic, what can one “read” or “hear” about this phenomenon by understanding the pandemic as an **event** and not as a direct cause? What consequences can this reading have on public policies related to violence against women? These will be the possible contributions when adding the institutionalist references.

In articulating intersectional studies and the philosophy of difference, the pandemic does not constitute a causal link for the increased violence against women, but becomes an analyzer, an **event** that highlights a field of power struggles between the micro- and macrosocial, making visible what is naturalized by the institutions so that it can be put under analysis.

The pandemic is therefore understood as an *event*, employed as an analyzer, capable of bringing forward naturalized issues in the force-field constituted between the pandemic and violence against women. According to Rodrigues, Leitão and Barros (1992, p. 42), an analyzer is:

a social event or movement that appears to us, unexpectedly, condensing a series of forces, as yet dispersed. In this sense, it performs the analysis by itself, like chemical catalyst.

For Deleuze (2015), the **event** is always problematic, problematizing, as it inquires, questions and unsettles. To write, to think, is not to represent realities, but to produce

realities, to intervene in reality, transforming and singularizing it. Meaning (sense) crosses three planes, following first a denotation, which refers to concepts, names and enunciations, especially regarding the different markers and the evolution of concepts, recognizing the dynamic process of redefining intersections. In this process of re-conceptualizing the pandemic as an **event**, we must consider the inclusion and naming of violence against women as a structural, pre-existing practice, which is unveiled before the pandemic **event**, contributing to denaturalize the thought that conflates violence as a direct response to the installed health crisis. It is necessary and challenging to recognize violence against women as a invisible pandemic that acts in the shadows and silences in the midst of covid-19, and to ensure that their rights are respected, essential factors to strengthen prevention, response and recovery efforts (Violência..., 2020).

Then, meaning is revealed as a manifestation, evidencing desires, beliefs and basic values. In this plane, the indicators of ‘increased’ violence against women in times of pandemic need to be questioned, since the construction, use and analysis of violence indicators are influenced by the political use one makes of the category and discourses about the phenomenon of violence, according to different social contexts.

In this context, the existence of a chronic underreporting of forms of domestic violence prior to covid-19, where less than 40% of women in situations of violence sought any kind of help or reported the crime, and of these less than 10% sought police help, stands out. The current pandemic context, with greater limitations in women’s access to telephones and help lines and interruption and/or reduction in public services such as police, justice and social services, has pointed to greater discrepancies in the current estimated status of women in situations of domestic violence (Violence..., 2020).

Finally, sense appears in the plane of nonsense, of signification, which is **another**, is the encounter of bodies producing movement, perception and affections, and creating vibrations and singularities. Based on this idea, one can reflect



on society's difficulty in welcoming singularities or those women who "escape" the established standards, as they represent a challenge for maintaining the status quo that serves the means of production. When society fails to incorporate these deviant patterns by turning them into commodities based on a logic of systems, it decides to let them die or kill them through mechanisms built in more or less deliberate ways. As a result, wars, violence against women, lack of care and institutional violence, racial/ethnic prejudices arise, which interpenetrate public policies that end up legitimizing inequalities.

For institutionalism, there is no universal and immutable subject in all societies with only variations in development. What exists are processes of subjectivity production that reproduce or not identical or similar subjects, according to the dominant standards. Men and women enter social processes determined by desiring forces, ways of thinking/acting that they do not control or know (pleasure, suffering) - the inner subjective mechanisms. Via this mechanism that permeates all institutions, large organizations at the service of the State and the capitalist market capture the deviant forces, that is, women who behave outside the established models, through an anti-production that results in the destruction of everything that is unique and new. This reproduction of the same is one of the most common forms of capitalist exploitation that results in the expropriation of each woman's power to act, making self-management of her own life impossible (Baremblytt, 1996).

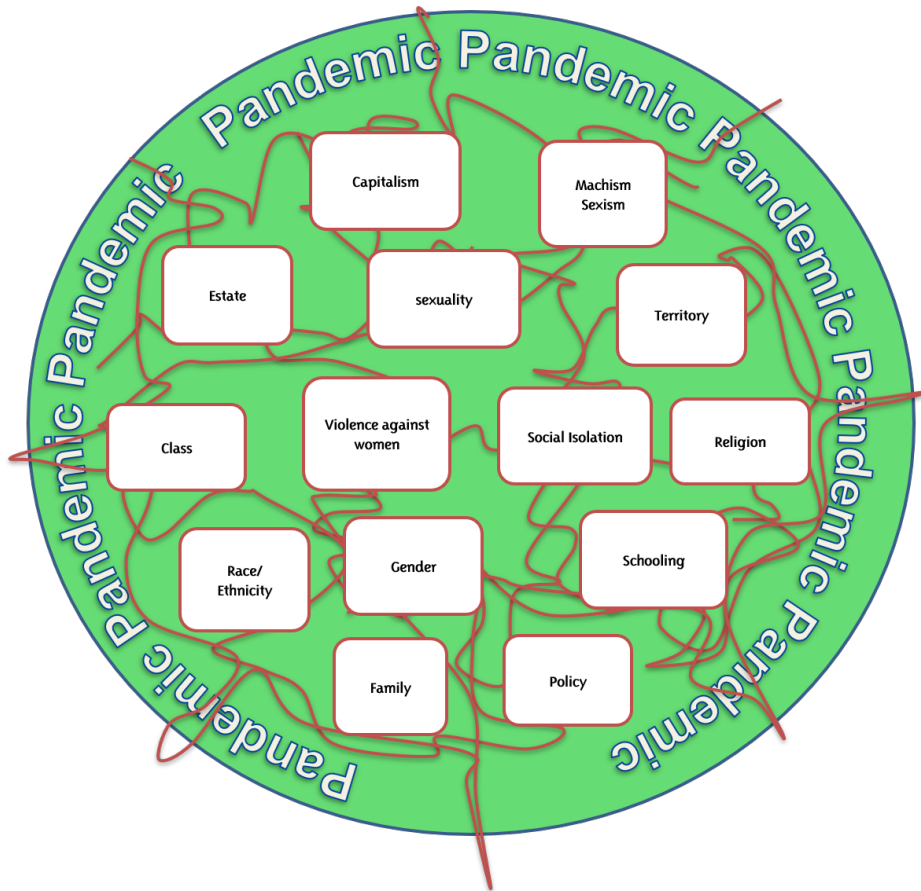
Experience is, therefore, a key concept for understanding intersectionalities and necessary to examine the production of analyzers that can create "lines of flight," surpassing the binary

categorization of the concept of gender and making difference a marker of distinctiveness between collective "stories" and the personal experience inscribed in the individual biography, thus the criticism of generalization and the importance of affirming singularities. Stating that women have experienced an increase in violence in times of pandemic is insufficient to describe their experiences, much less to establish a direct causal link between pandemic and violence. We must ask who these women are and where they are, from an intersectional analysis, considering how the various categories related to them and domestic violence constitute and are constituted in and by hegemonic institutions and structures (Ferraz; Tomazi; Sessa, 2019).

Thus, when we speak of intersectionality as the production of a standpoint by an epistemological position, a structural, collective debate, we are asserting more than individual experiences - these are social conditions that allow or not these women to access places of citizenship and opportunities (Ribeiro, 2017). Although this emphasizes the oppressive, discriminatory, and exploratory dimension of power relations, one must also highlight the dimension of activism and political mobilization brought on by access to experience as an analysis trigger, which can lead to democratic forms of political agency (Brah, 2006).

Reason why our approach in this essay starts from the dialogue between intersectionality and the philosophy of difference, which welcomes the contributions of different theoretical fields that intersect, promoting the transdisciplinary, rhizomatic approach so necessary for studies of Collective Health, favoring a procedural look at violence in the context of the pandemic (Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Reading field of intersections in the context of the pandemic



Source: Production of the authors (2020)

Observing the reading field presented, it becomes clear that the appreciation of differences combined with intersectional studies has the power to produce research from a less fixed and dichotomous perspective regarding diversities. What it proposes is a gaze that grasps the dynamics of change of these categories, as they transform each other and are transformed. Each category is thus destabilized and the focus becomes the process in which they are **being**, that is, are constantly **becoming**, or as Femenías states (2013, p. 20), “the transformation itself becomes the object of analysis, asking about the type of ‘subjects’ or ‘individuals’ we would have to become to inhabit the transformed world.”

Besides considering the different effects in which the multiple axes of differentiation are

articulated in historically specific contexts, the dialogue between intersectionality and Institutionalism allows us to envision political actions that can generate processes to deconstruct these inequalities, expanding the possibilities of institutional changes towards the promotion of racial and gender equality (Dell’Aglio; Machado, 2019).

The increase in violence against women appears, on the one hand, as an analyzer of established practices that silence women by reproducing subjected subjectivities. On the other, as a manifestation of the processes of capture in the capitalist system that creates models to be followed by society, which ends up naturalizing and privatizing these processes of violence, generating prejudices and stigmatization.

Thus, the noises of this pandemic understood as an *event* can be discussed in the search for a focus that favors the process where the various intersections and crossings occur and are constituted. We must subvert the categories of analysis, seeking other meanings based on hearing the “silences” that reveal historically constituted, naturalized violence. Since difference is an intrinsic condition to equality, society must give way to the ways of being/living/acting that inaugurate the absolute new, inventiveness, welcoming new ways of life.

## Final considerations for possible (new) beginnings

*[There is no] equality without difference, nor difference without equality. (Femenías, 2012, p. 152)*

This article aimed to problematize the relations between violence against women and social isolation during the covid-19 pandemic, based on the dialogue between the theoretical contributions of intersectional studies and the IM. Social isolation in the pandemic thus appeared both as an analytical framework and an intersection category, which can be understood as an *event* in the context of Institutionalism, allowing to naturalize the instituted.

The philosophy of difference points to the construction of interventional possibilities, which displace and problematize reality by breaking with this historical naturalization of violence against women, giving way to an idea of woman not as a fixed and finished category, but in constant movement and transformation, insofar as *events* affect them, singularize them in a becoming-woman, fluid that carries the possibility of inventing new ways of being/living/acting.

Producing new meanings for the pandemic, understood as an *event*, calls for moving beyond a causal link or segmentation of categories, leading to an analysis using lines of flight, which emphasizes the visibility and expression of singularities by the enstrangement of what is established, instituted. The possibility of

articulating struggles and resistances via these questions and reflections breaks with entrapment in impositions and naturalizations, opening other paths for producing subjectivity in contemporaneity.

From this perspective, we described how social isolation, understood as an intersection, has affected women regarding the violence that oppresses them, by separating people and resources that can help them cope with situations of violence, but above all by the historical (in)visibility of domestic violence fostered by its occurrence in the private space, legitimized by institutions, such as the State, and expanded during the pandemic by the evident decrease in the response capacity of essential women protection services, what may mask the magnitude of this reality. From this perspective, social isolation alone does not cause violence, but when taken as an *event* and analyzer it has the power to bring forward the singularities erased by generalization, unveiling how structural machismo is configured in society by an intersectional analysis that considers the intersections between racial, gender and social class inequalities, arising from the oppressive relations of the patriarchal system historically structured in Brazilian society.

When thinking about the historical phenomenon of violence against women and its worsening under the covid-19 pandemic, the theoretical perspective of intersectionality coupled with Institutionalism exposes how violence is organized in the Brazilian patriarchal society, making way for the process of producing free, powerful and revolutionary subjectivities, building with and for women other possibilities of being/living/acting during social distancing and isolation.

We highlight the importance of valuing singularities and difference, seeking to understand how the various intersectional flows and avenues cross women in times of covid-19 pandemic. By taking a procedural look at the phenomenon of violence against women and its various intersections that are constantly being reformulated, we can devise constant ways of inaugurating new, more creative possibilities, allowing society to generate possible (new) beginnings for men and women.

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### Authors' contribution

All authors designed and outlined the research, wrote the manuscript, performed a critical review and approved its final version.

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