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ABSTRACT

This research addresses the challenges of institutionalizing a gender perspective in Brazilian public universities, considering the current political and educational challenges. The qualitative study is based on the experiences of feminist women researchers who work in the field of Gender Studies and Education and teach in Pedagogy programs. The methodology involves semi-structured interviews with four professors, identified through the Directory of Research Groups in Brazil maintained by CNPq. The data highlight concerns regarding university education in promoting changes related to gender and sexuality issues. They also emphasize the strength of academic feminism as a practice of resistance and the production of counter-policies, fostering critical reflection on inequalities and violence.

Keywords: University Feminism; Teacher Education; Gender; Feminist Pedagogy.

RESUMO

Esta pesquisa aborda os desafios do processo de institucionalização da perspectiva de gênero nas universidades públicas brasileiras, considerando os desafios político-educacionais dos tempos atuais. A pesquisa qualitativa tem como base as experiências de professoras pesquisadoras feministas que atuam na área dos Estudos de Gênero e Educação e são docentes em cursos de Pedagogia. A metodologia envolve entrevistas semiestruturadas com quatro docentes, identificadas por meio do Diretório de Grupos de Pesquisa no Brasil do CNPq. Os dados destacam a preocupação com relação à formação universitária na promoção de mudanças relacionadas às temáticas de gênero e sexualidade. Destacam, ainda, a força do feminismo universitário como prática de resistência e produção de contrapolíticas, promovendo o questionamento das desigualdades e violências.

Palavras-chave: Feminismo universitário; Formação docente; Gênero; Pedagogia Feminista.

INTRODUCTION

In this article, we give visibility to the formative and academic experiences of feminist professors from Brazilian federal universities, placing their perspectives at the centre of the analysis. We highlight the protagonism of these women, reaffirming their strategic role in resisting inequalities, producing feminist knowledge, and building a more democratic university. The study highlights their contributions to the inclusion of gender relations in the university space, while problematizing how these themes are developed amidst contemporary political disputes.

The work is grounded in a master's thesis that analyses the challenges of inserting a gender perspective into initial training in Pedagogy courses. In this context, it seeks to understand such challenges based on the experiences of feminist professors linked to the field of Gender Studies, working in Pedagogy courses at public universities, located through the CNPq Directory of Research Groups in Brazil. By privileging the voices and experiences of these professors, the study aims to understand the configuration of current challenges and disputes surrounding the insertion of the gender debate in the university training context, highlighting the strategies and struggles mobilized for its consolidation.

It is, indeed, worth noting that, in the current ultraconservative context, there is an intensification of efforts to silence debates that question power relations, contributing to the maintenance of the status quo, hierarchies, and inequalities, bringing many current barriers and challenges. Therefore, it has become fundamental to reflect on the role of the public university and on the insertion of this theme in teachers' training. To highlight the protagonism of these women, who reaffirm their strategic role in resisting inequalities, in producing feminist knowledge, and in building a more democratic and plural university.

The university, as a social institution, expresses the structure and functioning of the society in which it is embedded. Since its origin, it has been configured as a publicly legitimized social practice, endowed with relative autonomy from other institutions, and organized by norms, values, and principles that guide its internal functioning (Chauí, 2003). In this sense, the debate on gender reaffirms the importance of occupying this institutional space, questioning naturalizations, and problematizing established knowledge, assuming a commitment to the construction of a more democratic society.

Based on a theoretical framework anchored in Gender and Feminist Studies (Yannoulas; Vallejos; Lenarduzzi, 2000; Buquet Corleto, 2016; 2020; Sardenberg, 2020; Corrêa; Parker, 2021) and Latin American Studies (Biroli; Machado; Vaggione, 2020; Femenías; Silva; Silva Filho, 2021; Morell; Arancibia, 2023; Gago, 2024), the research articulates different analytical perspectives, enabling a critical reading of gender relations in the university context and highlighting the tensions that permeate its insertion into teachers' training.

Such an approach allows an understanding of, not only structural challenges, but also the strategies and forms of resistance built within academic daily life, especially regarding the institutionalization of the gender debate in teachers' training courses (Buquet Corleto, 2016; 2020; Sardenberg, 2020). The frameworks contribute to problematizing the university as a space in dispute, in which political, epistemological, and training projects confront one another, revealing limits, advances, and possibilities for the consolidation of the gender debate (Biroli; Machado; Vaggione, 2020; Gago, 2024). At the same time, they offer subsidies for the construction of pedagogical practices committed to social transformation, guided by principles of equity, justice, and recognition of differences (Femenías; Silva; Silva Filho, 2021; Morell; Arancibia, 2023).

The dialogues among Gender Studies, Feminist Studies, and Latin American Studies strengthen the proposed analysis by broadening the understanding of the processes of institutionalizing gender in higher education, reaffirming the importance of a critical, politically situated, and socially committed teachers training. This reflection becomes even more relevant given the Latin American political scenario, marked by the advance of neoliberal and neoconservative agendas that impact the educational field and intensify disputes around gender issues.

The tense negotiations and clashes over gender discussions in teachers training bring about many current barriers and challenges. In this context, the notion of "gender ideology" is configured as a political strategy aimed at delegitimizing feminist agendas and mobilizing moral panics. In the educational field, such offensives are expressed in attempts to censor public policies and weaken discussions on human rights (Vianna, 2018). These onslaughts have been challenged by resistance within the academic and social spheres, which reaffirm the university as a strategic space for critical production and the defence of democratic practices.

The article is organized into five parts. The first, titled “Gender Studies, feminisms, and the women of academia,” presents the social and intellectual contributions of gender studies, situating epistemological perspectives of feminism. It problematizes the processes of naturalizing gender relations, articulating them to teacher training and highlighting the need to deconstruct prejudices and discrimination. The analytical potentiality of gender is emphasized, showing its contributions to understanding the contradictions of the patriarchal system, as well as unequal power relations. The second part, “Contributions of Latin American Feminist Pedagogy,” addresses the theoretical-political intentionality of a critical pedagogy for deconstructing hierarchical logics, showing its contributions to problematizing multiple forms of violence and domination. The third part presents the methodological procedures adopted in the study, the data collection and analysis procedures, focusing on understanding the meanings of the participants’ experiences and narratives, prioritizing listening to the transformative potential mobilized by the professors. The fourth part, “Feminism to unveil prejudices in universities,” presents analyses that provide important clues regarding the challenges of inserting the gender debate into the university training context. It reveals the loopholes and strategies built to ensure this debate. It highlights the resistance strategies and commitment of these professors, especially in the face of situations of prejudice and violence, pointing toward the construction of training actions that reaffirm the political, educational, and social role of the university. Finally, the fifth part, “Efforts toward the non-reproduction of gender violence in the university context,” reveals a fundamental dimension: the connection between theory and practice, showing how foundational it is to denounce the gender violence that permeates educational experiences, as well as within the social relations experienced in this context.

The analyses contribute to understanding and unveiling the presence of conservative and anti-gender normative political discourses in the transnational arena, enabling the construction of educational strategies aimed at confronting sexist, patriarchal, and heteronormative logics that permeate both society and educational institutions.

1. GENDER STUDIES, FEMINISMS, AND THE WOMEN OF ACADEMIA

Despite being historical agents, women were systematically excluded from official records, resulting in partial narratives of history. They were kept away from the production of symbolic, philosophical, scientific, and legal systems, which contributed to the construction of knowledge marked by male perspectives. Recognizing these contradictions, feminist researchers triggered transformation processes, seeking to alter their position in a society historically structured by patriarchy (Lerner, 2019).

The construction of a gender perspective demands a historical understanding of feminist struggles and the processes of rendering women invisible in official records and spaces of knowledge production. Starting in the 1960s, with the strengthening of feminist movements, these structures began to be contested more intensely. Feminist struggles not only claimed civil and political rights but also questioned the production of knowledge, denouncing the invisibility of women and the exclusion of their experiences in science (Scott, 1995). Studies from the 1980s pointed to the need for academic production to problematize relations between the sexes, rather than limiting itself to the centrality of a privileged subject. The feminism of the so-called second wave expanded the debate, incorporating theoretical discussions and contributing to the consolidation of the concept of gender as an analytical category (Scott, 1995; Rago, 1998).

The influence of feminism marked the incorporation of women into the university, questioning their social and subjective condition of oppression, and proposing discussions on different themes related to their interests. The emergence and development of Women's Studies and, subsequently, Gender Studies mark a process characterized by teaching and research activities in the fields of Social and Human Sciences in the 1970s and 1980s (Grossi, 2004).

Such studies played a fundamental role in the academic context by questioning the supposed neutrality of science and showing that knowledge is produced in specific historical and social contexts. From the 1970s onward, the concept of gender gained centrality in Brazilian research by demonstrating that differences between men and women are culturally constructed, being later expanded to include multiple identities and question the gender binarism (Piscitelli, 2009).

Thus, we can assume that Gender and Feminist Studies are potentially relevant for disconnecting from lenses that universalize social relations, as they understand the relations between the sexes, the meeting of subjects within the scope of culture, the symbolic, and representations. The gender perspective allows for an understanding of both the historical exclusion of women and the contemporary challenges of their insertion into academia. At the same time, it highlights that the advances achieved are the result of social and political struggles, and not of spontaneous concessions. They also bring innovative contributions to higher education institutions, since they serve as a fundamental source for the implementation of public policies (Buquet Corleto, 2020). Considering that academic entities specialized in gender studies contribute to thinking about social problems that require attention from public policies, among other dimensions.

In this process, the presence of feminist women in the university becomes a fundamental element for the transformation of science (Yannoulas, Vallejos and Lenarduzzi, 2000; Buquet Corleto, 2020, Sardenberg, 2020). Upon entering as researchers and professors, they begin to question established paradigms and produce new theoretical contributions committed to female emancipation. Feminist knowledge emerges from this movement, articulating subjective transformation and changes in social spaces. Their presence in higher education institutions thus contributes to innovation and scientific excellence, highlighting the importance of expanding female participation in these spaces.

The challenges of academic-scientific feminism in Brazil imply not only raising awareness, articulation, and cooperation with different groups of women, civil society, and government bodies, but they also demand a process of constant struggle to guarantee legitimacy in university academic development (Sardenberg, 2020).

Articulating the history of feminist struggles with the presence of women in the university makes it possible to understand that the production of knowledge is directly related to the power relations that structure society. Incorporating this perspective into the academic debate, in the context of teacher training, implies not only recognizing inequalities but also promoting educational practices committed to their transformation, contributing to the construction of a more plural, critical, and democratic science.

2. CONTRIBUTIONS OF LATIN AMERICAN FEMINIST PEDAGOGY

By casting a glance at women's movements in Brazil, as well as in other Latin American countries, it is possible to identify how Latin American feminism broke out through movements of female demand and awareness, in political organizations, study centres, and non-governmental organizations, trying to overcome and question the current political, cultural, religious, and economic condition.

When problematizing the insertion of gender in the field of university training, we can identify possible articulations among public policies in Latin America. Studies reveal how Latin America has been going through very fierce political moments and tensions that point to the dismantling of centre-left governments, marked by instability and the resurgence of religious conservatism and neoliberalism. Although it gathers varied ideological profiles and material interests, the right wing that takes over the state apparatus ignores human rights policies and international treaties (Biroli, Machado and Vaggione, 2020).

The specificities of Latin American struggles bring ramifications, since they present other characteristics distinct from European and US feminism (Femenías; Silva; Silva Filho, 2021), which despite their geographic and economic-cultural differences, also carry voices and demands that unite based on certain shared experiences. With the advances of feminist actions in Latin America, women's rights were expanded in all countries, which more recently underwent a breakout of post-colonial feminists, characterizing a renewed wave of Latin American feminisms.

Currently, feminism is the most important global movement in terms of theoretical innovation, social intervention, political action, and democratic resistance, within which it has accentuated fissures in power relations, inequalities, and gender hierarchies on an international scale (Ballestrin, 2020). The reaction to explicitly articulated anti-feminist and misogynistic discourses, as well as the rehabilitation of the violent authoritarian extreme right, is proof of this. Latin American feminism, as an important and theoretically innovative movement, solidifies the intention and discussion of this research, which seeks a theoretical deepening of Critical Feminist Pedagogy and the broadening of dialogue on gender discussions in teacher training courses within the context of Latin American countries.

Conservative actions emerged as a response to advances in the field of gender and feminism. Neoliberalism, directly connected to the downfall of human rights, promotes state anti-feminism as an element of the global ultra-right—that is, a programmatic element translated directly into government policies, grounding biologicist ideas as a way to reinforce Christian Western values (Gago, 2024).

Despite the offenses of neoconservatism in recent years, discourses against such advances are not new. With numerous setbacks in the field of rights, this research seeks to investigate the possibilities of building a Critical Feminist Pedagogy, which proves useful because it allows for an educational praxis that challenges and transforms systems of oppression and inequality, in addition to fostering critical thinking about educational, social, political, and economic structures (Morell; Arancibia, 2023). From this perspective, teacher training can be the key to raising awareness regarding gender injustices around education.

In the contributions of Latin American feminism, teacher training assumes a strategic role. After all, it is necessary to intentionally promote the insertion of gender and sexuality discussions in the university, so as to prepare professionals capable of facing various forms of discrimination. In the face of neoconservatism in education and its anti-democratic implications, feminist pedagogies, anchored and nurtured by epistemic debates, can contribute their theoretical force and power to transformation in society. These studies reveal the centrality of feminist epistemology in knowledge production, straining patriarchal structures in the university. Such practices broaden the gender debate and dialogue with Latin American experiences, densifying a Feminist Pedagogy, strengthening perspectives capable of problematizing inequalities and intervening in the social and educational conditions that sustain them.

3. METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This article is based on research conducted using experiences and narratives, which compose the strategy for listening to the lived experiences of feminist professors working in universities, to foster the construction of critical thinking and emancipatory and democratic educational practices for education.

It highlights the contributions of Joan Scott (1995; 1998) by bringing forward the possibilities of exploring experiences, as well as recognizing the historical construction of struggles, to reflect on the insertion of gender in initial teacher training and in the construction of pedagogical interventions. Understanding experience as the reconstruction of memory and as processes through which subjects are created, the research sought to understand the challenges of inserting gender into initial teacher training in Pedagogy courses, as well as seeking to think about the challenges of the process of institutionalizing the gender perspective.

The selection criteria focused on professors working with courses on gender in Pedagogy programs at Brazilian federal universities who also act as researchers in the field of Gender and Feminist Studies. Selection occurred based on availability and openness to dialogue about the research topic. Based on the survey of research groups and consultation of CVs through the Lattes Platform, we considered certain issues: a) performance in Pedagogy courses; b) possession of bibliographic productions in the field of education and gender; c) updated CVs regarding undergraduate teaching performance. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, and through the interviews, it was possible to capture the experiences, values, opinions, aspirations, and motivations of the interviewees, according to the criteria and interests of the investigated topic.

The research was conducted in compliance with the ethical principles governing research involving human beings, having been previously approved by the Research Ethics Committee (CEP) of the Federal University of São Paulo (Unifesp). The participating professors received information regarding the research objectives, methodological procedures, potential benefits, as well as the risks involved, and consented to participate in the study by signing the Free and Informed Consent Form (TCLE). To preserve anonymity, participants received pseudonyms of feminist activists whose emancipatory ideas marked history, such as Frida Kahlo, Patrícia Galvão, Leila Diniz, and Virginia Woolf. This choice configures a tribute to these women, with no direct relationship to the identity of the professors. The interviews took place via

digital platforms, overcoming geographic barriers and allowing for the inclusion of different state realities. The profile of the interviewees is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 | Characterization of research participants

Pseudonyms	Region of Brazil	Program in which she Teaches	Age	Teaching Experience	Level of Education
Patrícia Galvão	South	Pedagogy and Teacher Licensing	60	34 years	PhD in Education
Leila Diniz	South	Pedagogy and Teacher Licensing	60	39 years	PhD in Education
Virginia Woolf	Southeast	Pedagogy	47	22 years	PhD in Education
Frida Kahlo	South	Pedagogy	50	23 years	PhD in Education

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The interview responses provide clues about the challenges of inserting gender into teacher training, through questions such as their training path and how they approached gender and feminism debates, gender in the curriculum grid of the universities where they work, in the courses they teach, in the university as a whole, in their research, and in research at the university, and impressions of gender in current times. The data were analysed in light of the theoretical frameworks.

In this way, gender as a category of analysis allowed for an understanding of differences constructed historically, socially, and culturally, implying the questioning of essentializations and naturalizations of social relations, being, therefore, a powerful lens for analysis. The following analyses reveal the disputes in the university arena for the institutionalization of the debate. It points to the need to professionalize with autonomy and critical capacity, revealing their commitments to the recognition and elimination of inequalities and violence, through the insertion of a feminist and gender epistemology in the university training context.

4. FEMINISM TO UNVEIL PREJUDICES IN UNIVERSITIES

Research indicates the expansion of gender studies from the 2000s onward, strongly influenced by social and political contexts, especially regarding the increased production of theses and dissertations produced in higher education institutions. However, despite this growth, a mismatch is still observed between academic production and its institutional recognition, in which processes of trivialization and theoretical prejudices persist, even given the relevance of the fields of education and gender studies for promoting social and educational transformations (Unbehaum, 2014; Cesar, 2025).

The institutional culture of universities has deeply anchored traditional meanings, in which the masculine and the feminine oppose each other through fields of knowledge, hierarchies, and spaces. When questioned about the challenges of inserting gender into universities, the professors warn of a scenario of persistent inequality and hierarchy. In this context, higher education institutions end up reproducing an organization in which men and women occupy distinct roles, sustained by the sexual division of labor and the unequal valuation of disciplines (Buquet Corleto, 2016). This structure often results in the marginalization of women in spaces of power and recognition, hindering their participation on equal terms. Such gender asymmetries become evident in the narratives of the professor-researchers:

> "The director is a man, the campus head is a man, the department head is a man. In positions that have a gratified function, that make extra money, men are placed there." (Interview with professor-researcher Virginia Woolf).

> "They look at us and say: 'so, you research women?' I feel very resentful about the lack of knowledge, including from professors; it's a resistance that borders on the surreal. Because it's a lack of knowledge. So discussing questions of gender and race is as if it were nothing. So I feel very saddened. This is very sad." (Professor-researcher Patrícia Galvão).

> "I've already heard a colleague say, 'oh, but a woman's place, we already know.' It's a perception, and he is a post-doc, so we realize that regardless of education, there are issues that still pass heavily through common sense in people's voices." (Professor-researcher Patrícia Galvão).

The statements problematize the reflections of gender inequality within the scope of relations in the university, pointing out how access to educational and scientific resources is still not equal for men and women, possessing a status of exception based on a different and unequal logic (Buquet Corleto, 2016). Research reveals that gender assessments carried out in Latin American universities

can help unveil inequalities, for example, in the unequal distribution of positions and courses, helping to inquire into structural issues of gender within the university: a model that begins in the family space, the nucleus on which the sexual division of labor and the differentiated roles between women and men are sustained, and is systematically reinforced by educational institutions, acting as key elements for the daily reinforcement of gender roles and stereotypes (Buquet Corleto, 2016).

Studies with gender assessments also reveal how gender studies can contribute to problematizing and deconstructing persistent historical inequalities between men and women inside the university, such as the concentration of men in certain courses and women in courses and careers "said to be feminine," with lower professional valuation and limited social recognition, which are also challenges to be thought about (Unbehaum, Gava and Oliveira, 2020).

When we analyse the barriers faced by professors for gender studies to be recognized in the academic sphere, their words flash a warning about how much the academic institution structured itself on patriarchal rules. Women today make up a significant number in universities and graduate programs; however, a female majority does not mean the end of sexism in academia and the university. On the contrary, the insertion of feminist values is a challenge, and the insertion of the gender theme still happens peripherally (Morais; Carvalho; Rabay, 2014).

Research also points to the emergence of discussions on the female condition and the confrontation of gender violence in the university environment, just as the professors' words show them being treated pejoratively as "womenologists", revealing that gender prejudices are persistent in the academic space (Sardenberg, 2020). They point out, in this way, that gender is a marginalized field in academia, bringing with it prejudice and theoretical and methodological trivialization, and often depending on individual initiatives.

The institutionalization of gender through the offering of courses is also a strategy pointed out by the professors. However, they reveal how advances for the insertion of these courses move in a slow direction and require a lot of energy and persistence, demanding efforts to include the gender course in the curriculum of the Pedagogy program. In this sense, thinking about the place of gender in the university also means looking at the symbolisms present around this dispute, delimiting knowledge that is legitimate and knowledge that is not. Which forms of knowledge are valid, and which voices are authorized in the weave of its elaboration.

> *"It has this implication, insofar as I have an available slot that I offer. So that's the issue, it is not a mandatory course. We have the loss of not having a mandatory course, which does not guarantee that everyone who graduates from that program went through this course; it doesn't guarantee it, no matter how much we keep up this struggle effort to offer it whenever possible, so more people can benefit from the discussions." (Interview with professor-researcher Frida Kahlo).*

> *"I am the one who makes it permeate into my content for the didactics course. In the syllabus, gender is not present, not even in the syllabus of teacher licensing programs, let alone in pedagogy. They are extremely traditional syllabi because they were organized a long time ago; only now is the PPC [Pedagogical Course Project] being revised because we were, let's say, 'set up' in every sense: structural, didactical, curricular, so the syllabi are extremely traditional." (Interview with professor-researcher Patrícia Galvão).*

> *"I was the one who named the course, created the course as an optional one, and then I kept insisting in department meetings, putting it on the agenda for it to become an elective and to enter the Pedagogical Project of the program. There was a professor who told me: 'you leave, and then what happens?'" (Interview with professor-researcher Virginia Woolf).*

> *"It spent two years circulating in meetings. After two years of me passing it on the agenda, I said, 'Professor, please, the request for the inclusion of my elective circulated for the first time at the same time as yours. You've been teaching this elective since when?' He said, 'for three semesters.' I said, 'well, the gender elective is not included in the workload, and it has already passed three times in meetings. What is it that is happening here?'" (Interview with professor-researcher Virginia Woolf).*

The professors point out attempts to impede the inclusion of gender as a course present in the Pedagogical Project of the Course, or attempts to place the debate into other sporadic, superfluous formats, with suggestions to hold only seminars. The experiences and narratives reveal great resistance from the teaching staff to commit to the importance of the theme, using different arguments not to include gender—a concern that seems to be central for the professors, but not in the political project of the institution:

> *"I was the one who named the course, created the course as an optional one, and then I kept insisting in department meetings, putting it on the agenda for it to become an elective and to enter the Pedagogical Project of the program. There was a professor who told me: 'you leave, and then what happens?'" (Interview with professor-researcher Virginia Woolf).*

> *"It's different, for example, no one is going to say that a pedagogy course shouldn't study childhood, shouldn't have science methodology... But, when it comes to the discussion of gender... we hear 'ah, can't it be a topic in the syllabus?', 'can't it be discussed in the form of seminars?' as if gender were superfluous." (Interview with professor-researcher Leila Diniz).*

We can see inside the university institution the presence of conflicting opinions, attitudes, and projects that express divisions and contradictions of society. The accounts reiterate the persistence of structural barriers that still need to be overcome. The statements insist that it is

necessary to reaffirm the legitimacy of gender as an important field of study because there are still many arguments permeated by androcentric marks.

> *"If the university is not the space where these discussions are observed and initiated, when the profession and teaching practice begin, these discussions won't happen. So it is paramount that the university gives visibility to this, which is foundational to professional relations, children's relations, educational relations in the institutions where these students whom I am contributing to training today will work." (Interview with professor-researcher Frida Kahlo).*

> *"Gender is still a marginal field too, not always recognized as relevant; in my context, the research or research themes with more relevance are those of policies. Those have a status, and gender research is marginal. Here at the university, gender studies are associated with the 'post-modern.' There are prejudices in the university regarding gender issues." (Interview with professor-researcher Frida Kahlo).*

The statements further reveal the need for a sensitive and critical training in the face of gender inequalities and violence. These are challenges configured as an issue for education, since it is considered strategic for confronting inequalities. In this sense, the professor-researcher also calls our attention to creating strategies to legitimize the gender debate, narrating how she organized and occupied spaces outside the university, creating and strengthening her support networks and collective work to potentiate the discussion inside the university space as well.

5. EFFORTS TOWARD THE NON-REPRODUCTION OF GENDER VIOLENCE IN THE UNIVERSITY CONTEXT

Prejudices, discrimination, and violence reproduce themselves in the most varied forms and instances, tracing back to gender oppression, including relations in the university. The violence suffered historically and present within the context of relations in the university demands a constant questioning stance from these professors against the reproduction of inequalities. According to them, the university, as a place that exercises a social function, should not reproduce sexist, lesbophobic, homophobic, transphobic, or misogynistic violence because it constitutes a culture of violence and social injustice.

The experiences and narratives of the professors show that such physical, verbal, sexual, and psychological violence does not occur in isolation but articulates and manifests itself recurrently in academic daily life, directly impacting training trajectories in higher education. In this context, it becomes fundamental to analyse the constraints, discrimination, and violence narrated by the professors.

The professors' accounts alert us to the misogynistic and lesbophobic violence and experiences lived by them at the university, exposing situations in the face of prejudices. The professors' experiences uncover the stereotypes and prejudices produced by peers, which target their sexualities—and not only their sexuality—for prejudice inside the institutions.

> *"In the subtlety of a look, everyone learns. I am speaking from an identity point of view, as a lesbian professor, it's obvious that I perceive machismo, homophobia—you perceive it in a look. And I place myself in a field of debate, I am going to express this, and I provoke them to speak. But homophobes are sometimes quite cowardly because, as they have a somewhat irrational argument, they don't choose the field of debate." (Interview with professor-researcher Leila Diniz).*

> *"A professor, when he saw that I was married to a woman, walked into my room and said, 'excuse me, did you notice your voice changed?' I said, 'maybe it's because I'm a dyke (sapatão), right?'. Misogynistic, lesbophobic, coming to talk about my voice? Why am I telling you this? Because imagine processing a course through a department with lesbophobic, misogynistic, and machistic people? Transforming an optional course into an elective, because the elective is a continuation of course X, course Y..." (Interview with professor-researcher Virginia Woolf).*

The statements reveal to us that the inclusion of gender, as well as sexuality, in the teacher training process also requires taking a stand against sexist and LGBTphobic practices and actions that reproduce discrimination in our society. Beyond direct experiences with prejudice, the professors highlight some necessary directions for the debate on gender and sexual violence, revealing that the university cannot neglect and make invisible situations of abuse or gender constraint.

Thus, their different actions are built around the possibility of deconstructing and problematizing such violence as a violation of the rights of students or professors that hinders the collective capacity to achieve quality education. This context can be related to moments such as parties, freshman welcoming events, and social gatherings promoted within the university context, which are also relevant to this discussion:

> *"We had a married student who was the target of extreme domestic violence; the abuser was threatening her with a gun. We gathered from the pedagogy program, set up a welcoming team, looked for a psychologist, looked for a lawyer. Last week the lawyer sent me the result of the lawsuit; the judge ordered his arrest. So this also moves things, this is also important, it's a theoretical and political bond." (Interview with professor-researcher Leila Diniz).*

> *"In our program, it happened through an individual action, and then the professors became sensitized; we joined five professors: 'you do this, you do that,' but it wasn't anything institutional." (Interview with professor-researcher Leila Diniz).*

> *"Today on campus, reports appeared from here in the region, 'my professor is a harasser,' citing this campus unit. Because it came from the outside in, this sensitized the campus director, who called me and said, 'we have to do something,' and I said, 'so let's think about a gender violence observatory, let's make a commission with students and professors.' Look, for you to see the importance, there are two collaborating professors who are going to this commission; tenured professors won't go to the commission, thinking 'ah, discussing that...'" (Interview with professor-researcher Leila Diniz).*

The statements bring very important accounts that show the danger of violence being silenced and treated only at the individual level, but pointing to the need for an approach at the institutionalized level within the university context. Gender and sexual violence need to be problematized in order to build strategies and means to interrupt such discriminatory and violent practices. In this sense, the professors also maintain the social function of the university, since they are committed to safeguarding Human Rights, women's rights, and LGBTQIA+ individuals.

> *"We must have a campaign. If we don't change and don't expose the figures, this will keep perpetuating itself. We started exposing the people who were against the campaign, who mocked the lesbian campaign, who were misogynistic. 'That professor over there? Who keeps harassing students inside his office?' Months later, the professor was dismissed because he harassed female students." (Interview with professor-researcher Virginia Woolf).*

> *"Until last year, we had a group that studied gender violence, which I spearheaded along with a journalist from the university—gender violence inside the university itself. So we prepared posters because the courses regarded as 'more masculine than feminine,' besides being resistant, the region is very conservative, so the students, they even made fun of it, but we didn't let them, we didn't give up. We don't give up, we keep persisting; now, the gender relations lived inside the university, in my university, are extremely conservative. So gender fights all the time in there, but few manage to visualize it, and normally the girls are the first to try to question it." (Interview with researcher Patrícia Galvão).*

> *"Today I coordinate a study at the university about gender violence in the university environment, with a quantitative survey across the three campuses. Because last year there was the rape of a young woman at the university, and the university silences it; the university didn't want to deal with it. Just like hazing (trote), which is extremely violent, sexist, homophobic, and the university doesn't want to look; it creates a silence for that which is screaming all the time. So since they like quantitative data, I send quantitative data so they can understand and interpret these data. It's quite interesting, I did it in partnership with another professor from here in the state; there are data that we don't assume, like the violence, where it happens, and its subtlety." (Interview with professor-researcher Leila Diniz).*

Silencing or omitting in the face of violence perpetuates unequal and discriminatory relations, which go against these professors' principles. They point out that such practices require special structures so that universities can promote and assume their role in eradicating violence. Moving beyond initiatives in programs and extension projects, they require specific structures to prevent, attend to, and punish acts of gender violence. In this sense, their narratives point toward education

for transformation, for the desire for social change, for action. The educational role of the university can be understood, in this way, as that which deploys a commitment to democratic principles, social justice, and human rights.

CONCLUSIONS

The possibilities for thinking in the face of gender as an orientation and strategy for education, based on the experiences and narratives of these women, help to problematize the impasses and gender inequalities socially reproduced, and to value differences within the teacher training context, thinking also about dialogues between educational research and the field of gender in the academic sphere.

The debates linked to inequalities, violence against women, and the gender debate show problems not internalized by social and educational awareness. They are marked by miseducation, and, beyond that, there is an attempt to annul these debates in educational institutions. Training spaces can be important places for education to react, with the objective of alerting to the responsibility and commitment toward building educational processes free from gender stereotypes.

The study reveals that gender is still a great challenge, not only due to the disputes over its insertion into teacher training but also because it implies crossings of social, political, and institutional conflicts. If, on one hand, it was possible to observe a climate of anxiety and insecurity surrounding the gender debate in a scenario that involves gender as an object of dispute in the field of education policy, on the other hand, the debate appears even more fruitful because gender relations are receiving attention, so as to arouse curiosity, with debate and dialogue acting as a way to unveil gender and instrumentalize gender.

The strength and persistence of these women inspire reflection on building a project committed to the gender debate, understood as a process of a cultural, social, and political nature, grounded in historical consciousness and the recognition of struggles, as well as the need to confront and eliminate gender inequalities. In this sense, the research highlights the confrontation of discrimination and, beyond the identified challenges, values teaching experiences that point to concrete possibilities for intervention in training processes.

The actions of these feminist professors toward building critical pedagogies as an instrument of transformation are answers to the setbacks in the educational field and the offensives of dehumanization, which can be understood as one of the challenges of education. They reveal that having the opportunity to discuss gender in the university context allows for the construction of a perspective on issues still hidden by such organizations. Nurturing critical thinking and debate on the need to dismantle sociocultural paradigms and conventional theories of education serves as a tool to combat and prevent gender violence.

Dialogue with these women encourages us to resist tensions of power, showing that not neglecting the first step against gender violence in the contexts where they act in the university is essential. By giving visibility to these agendas, the professors instigate changes and create pedagogical strategies to combat inequalities. They consolidate a feminist and political pedagogy that challenges dominant hierarchies and questions the supposed neutrality of knowledge in search of emancipation.

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