

Women Weavers Recognising Their Craftwork

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Abstract: This article analyses experiences of craftsmanship within a group of women weavers. It looks at the process of mastering the art of textile-making amidst the tensions of a creative act, living on the margins and striving for recognition. The research methodology aims at closing the gap between researchers and the researched. The theoretical-methodological arguments are based on participatory research combined with the feminist perspective of giving visibility to the women's history, which involves an act of research done as (self-)formation. Participant observation, discussion groups and talking circles allowed the collection of material for the analysis of the experiences. We came to the conclusion that the researchers and the women weavers (the researched) produce an aesthetics at a point of interface between their art studio and education environments, whereby women artisans were inspired to see their work from another perspective and recognise their craftwork, and they were challenged, along with the students as well as the professor, to think about teaching and learning in youth and adult education through handcrafted work. In this process, we come to elaborate a feminist hermeneutics.

Keywords: Art studio, handcrafted work, visibility, feminist hermeneutics.

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This text is one of the outcomes of the studies conducted with a group of women artisans in the Municipality of Alvorada, in the metropolitan area of Porto Alegre, capital of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, from 2008 to 2016.¹ It is a collaborative research,

¹ The study was funded by Catholic denominational Community Universities: of Jesuit denomination, i.e. the University of the Sinos Valley (Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos) – UNISINOS; and of Marist denomination, i.e. the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul) – PUCRS. It also received federal funding from the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), through the Productivity Grant Program (Bolsa Produtividade). This article was expanded and refined, this time making use of another, previously published article as its basis. See Eggert 2016c.

like all the other ones conducted by the author and her research group, allowing for an epistemological opportunity to produce knowledge jointly with the participants with whom it was conducted. In the field research phase, we paid regular visits to see the women, these being instances of participant observation. Moreover, this is a longitudinal study about the teaching and learning processes taking place in these women artisans' everyday life. The women weavers we worked with enjoy a marginal social status, have a low level of education and in their everyday life struggle to meet the needs of their families. In this article, I will present a description and analysis of three events that we planned and experienced with these women weavers with a view to understanding how their weaving production processes unfold. This implies, mainly, to consider the ways they perform and recognise the merits of their craft of weaving. These events took place at different times and provided different perspectives on what was going on. The times included: a) the initial instance of approachment that generated perceptions about the act of creating and making woven pieces; b) carrying out a handcraft-creation project based on a reading of the Alvorada reality; c) an exhibition of handcrafted items, including taking photographs of the pieces and their authors.

In 2010 and 2011, beside participant observation, two talking circles were held in order to focus on these women weavers' non-recognition of the merits of their own work, as well as the possibilities of recognizing it in the juxtaposition with another traditionally female work, namely teaching.² With this in mind, we proposed to the women weavers—in January 2010—that they should try to teach their craft of weaving to a group of students from the University of the Sinos Valley, UNISINOS, and get some experience with teaching in the process. Over the course of two days, three pedagogy students, one master's degree student and the researcher learned to weave, making each two pieces on the loom. The whole process was filmed by the group and, later on that year, a 7-minute micro-documentary was made (Felizardo 2010). The title *Quando professoras aprendem a tecer* (*When Teachers Learn to Weave*) clearly juxtaposes practices of teaching and weaving. Also in 2010, two collective interviews were conducted using the discussion group methodology based on the work of Ralf Bohnsack and Wivian Weller (2006). Two groups of women weavers were formed, with three women in each one. The collective interview centred on the key question how they, as weavers, perceived their own work and craft in the art studio. One of the most significant aspects that emerged in these two discussion groups was that the women weavers realised they were overly settled in just producing pieces designed by their master artisan and owner of the art studio, Vera Junqueira.

² Occasionally, whenever the topic of handcrafted work was being underrated, we, the researchers, associated this with the idea that their work was similar to that of their early childhood and primary education teachers, i.e. a type of work that is hardly recognised and, therefore, invisibilised.

But they also acknowledged that Junqueira encouraged them to make an effort to overcome their creative dependence. With that information highlighted as a guiding topic, we proposed to the weavers they should carry out what we called a handcraft creation project. The handcraft creation proposal was developed from June 2013 to January 2014. Together with Vera Junqueira, who is also a visual artist, we put forward the creation of handcrafted pieces by making photographic records “related to what bothered these women most, what they considered ugly about the town of Alvorada”. The photographs were taken with their own mobile phones, then printed; and these served as “inspiration” for the creation of their own handcrafted pieces.

Finally, in 2015 and 2016, both the pieces and the photographs related to the city, which inspired the pieces, as well as photographs of the artisans themselves and their craftworks were displayed at two handcraft creation project exhibitions held in academic venues. One exhibition at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul – PURCRS, and another at the Federal Institute of Rio Grande do Sul – IFRS, in Alvorada.

In this article, I will develop arguments for the research methodology based on dialogue and education **with** women. It means that a study is carried out together **with**, and is presented to women weavers as part of a process where they, along with the research group, analyse collected data. This also raises a challenge of revisiting what we come to understand under production of knowledge with women who, in this case, have a low-level education. These women are marginalised within the education system to a great extent, as their life conditions—in terms of social class, race and gender—limit their opportunities of schooling. Epistemologically, we base our arguments on feminist and Southern political thoughts, i.e., feminist theories and the conception of Popular Education in Latin America.

Methodological approach and its foundations

The methodology of this research is based on a participatory research methodology developed within the Popular Education movement conceived by Paulo Freire.³ Participatory research is also closely linked with Participatory Action Research (PAR)

³ The Movement of Basic Education (MEB) was a movement that was launched in the 1960s and produced pedagogical arguments based on the Brazilian reality. Through the works of Paulo Freire and many other social groups and leaders, it came to shape up what today, in the history of Brazilian education, is called Popular Education. It was a movement of struggle for an education that was dialogical, more horizontal and less banking-model-like (the latter designates the traditional education system demanding only a rigid school content through a strict pedagogy brought by modern education models from Europe). An education that should consider the reading of reality as the starting point for education to be processed **along with** students, rather than **about** them.

in Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America and also in Brazil, where Portuguese is spoken (Streck, Brandão 2006). In addition to this methodological debate, we also derive inspiration from auto/biographical research (Josso 2004, 2010) and feminist theoretical presuppositions (Gebara 2000; Spivak 2010). These are theoretical-methodological aspects that frame a debate emerging from the South. The “epistemologies of the South” that Boaventura de Souza Santos proposes (Souza Santos 2014) provoke us into thinking about life on the margins, the lives of women from lower classes, in their recurrent attempts at a late schooling with hope for a better job.

The meetings and the interviews took place while the women weavers were working. In other words, we asked them how the work was done, without interrupting the weaving going on in the looms. They showed us how it was done while they talked. All this information was written down, audio-recorded, transcribed and returned to the women weavers. Thus, in this process that might be called a “hermeneutic circle”,⁴ we tried to understand what the weavers do: they weave knowledge for a better future. As things stand, when approaching this empirical reality, the methodology alone contains a mode of reading the world. We are marked by readings we have conducted over the course of our professional formation. Among these readings are qualitative research methodologies founded on the conceptions of Popular Education, feminist theories and decolonialist readings such as that of Catherine Walsh (2013), Gloria Anzaldúa (2000), Danilo Streck and Telmo Adams (2012; 2014). All these readings invite us to ponder on how we interpret what we find in empirical research when we carry it out among people enquiring about our career as professors and researchers of social sciences and humanities. Walsh (2013) and Anzaldúa (2000) challenge us to think of a pedagogy which decolonises our Latin American way of identifying our subservience from the point of view of feminist struggles for black and indigenous women’s dignity. Furthermore, Streck and Adams (2012; 2014) develop

⁴ The Hermeneutic Circle is one of the concepts (re)produced from Eurocentric philosophy in the 1960s and 1970s within the basic ecclesial movements of the Liberation Theology in Latin America. See Edla Eggert (2016) about the influence of philosophical and theological readings of the transit of Northern countries over countries on the South American continent. It is in this context in particular that Mantzavinos (2014) discusses European philosophers and the production of the Hermeneutic Circle since Gadamer. In the 1970s, Latin American intellectuals, among which were Paulo Freire and Orlando Fals Borda, were the exponents who advocated production of knowledge and interpretations from places of real, concrete life of the world of the poor and marginalised. In this very context, women participating in these movements, such as Ivone Gebara and Rigoberta Menchú [a Peace Nobel Prize winner], reclaim the presence and the pursuit of the presence of women in the Hermeneutic Circle of readings of the Latin American World. Popular Education is, then, one of the movements of political struggle to make education understood as a political act of liberation, as long as educators and students seek, through dialogue, the construction of a less authoritarian education committed to social change. Such change is necessary in order to attain a worthier life for historically exploited and oppressed populations, i.e., the indigenous peoples, black people, and traditional peoples.

the argument of the possibility of a dialogue between experiences of Latinas and readings of Paulo Freire.

In our research, we work with interpretations produced in Latin America by feminist theologians through South-with-the-North, South-South, and South-North dialogues (Souza Santos 2014). We are also inspired by theological re-readings by Wanda Deifelt (2004) and Ivone Gebara (2000), women theologians from the South who read women theologians from the North, such as Elizabeth S. Fiorenza (1992) and Rosemary Ruether (1993). We are influenced by readings that have contributed to us realising that there is an awareness of exclusion, of our tradition, of women, of ourselves, and the recognition of alternative traditions of knowledge production (Deifelt 1994; Eggert 2016).

We did an interpretation of the reading of classics in the area of education by relying on the steps of feminist hermeneutics taken by women researchers and Bible theologians: 1. doubting; 2. remembering; 3. imagining; 4. pronouncing (Fiorenza 1992; Eggert 1999); and we realised that this hermeneutics enables us to run our research and also to yield lessons we are after. In this context, it is important to single out one particular event: 20 years ago, in February 1995 at the Latin American Meeting of Women Biblists in Bogotá, Colombia, exegete scholars came up with significant epistemological changes. For that group at the meeting, (1) the body is a hermeneutic category; (2) subjects and their everyday stories form the hermeneutic process; (3) there is a hermeneutics of deconstruction and reconstruction, and, (4) it is possible to produce a hermeneutics that questions the concept of biblical authority (Cardoso, 1996). In Latin America, we tend to produce theology in a different manner, and moreover, based on the experience of Freire-inspired Popular Education, we expanded our approach in order to advocate other ways of knowledge production. Following Renate Gierus (2006), we assert that there is always an individual and collective memory that can be visibilised when we recount an inclusive history within histories in the plural. We want to distance ourselves from the single history which paralyses us (Adichie, S/D). If we add to this mode of knowledge production the arguments of black and indigenous men and women, we will reach a more profound complexity and other conceptions. That is what Renato Noguera (2016) points us to, i.e., that the humanities are causing an earthquake shattering our old certainties, certainties based on what we were taught by natural sciences, which used to be our model of doing science. As a result of our following the methodological steps of 1. doubting, 2. remembering, 3. imagining, and 4. pronouncing (Fiorenza 1992) in the context of our empirical research with the women weavers, I will outline how the methodological learning with them unfolded. Moreover, we accept as feminist hermeneutic foundations precisely what the group of Bible theologians defined in the above mentioned meeting in Colombia in 1995: the body can be considered

a hermeneutic category; subjects and their everyday stories form the hermeneutic process; hermeneutics can be deconstructed and reconstructed; and, finally, it is possible to produce a hermeneutics that questions the concept of authority in the humanities. The authority that is being questioned here is the conviction that “the” truth rests on the side of science.

All these arguments produced from within Brazilian realities aggregate many experiences by groups of women engaged in social struggles and also in academia. Therefore, methodologically, there is the necessity of recognising and embracing the directions progressively opened by the first Brazilian feminists and, more recently, by Guacira Lopes Louro (2010) in education, Ivone Gebara (2000) in theology, and Marcia Tiburi (2002, 2015) in philosophy.

Hermeneutic possibilities by means of handcrafted production

With regard to the context of handcraft production in Brazil, 85% is produced by women who are marginalised and invisibilised, without a face and without their signature under the works they produce. The women participating in this study, which was committed to constantly submit and present its results back to them, are



Photograph 1: Invisibility (Photograph by Amanda M. Castro, 2010).

stubborn fighters who make up this context.⁵ Only one of them completed secondary education, while three did not even complete primary or secondary education.⁶ Three have children; of these three, two educate and support their children on their own. The third one is a grandmother; she lives with her husband and, whenever possible, helps out her daughters by looking after her grandchildren. One woman is single and has no dependents. The women's ages vary from 25 to 52 years old. Their worldviews are very heterogeneous. One of them is strongly influenced by the Christian Pentecostal tradition, while others are more connected to experiences within the Catholic tradition or do not really identify with any religious tradition.

Alvorada, RS, is a municipality comprised in the metropolitan area of Porto Alegre. It has 204,000 inhabitants and is identified as an urban outskirt area (IBGE, n/d). It has 27 municipal schools, 17 state schools (20,000 students in the public education system) and 6 private schools, among which there are two early childhood education schools and a higher education institution. In 2014, a Federal Education Institution (IF) was established in the municipality as a result of the federal government's public policies. It is in this educational context that we situate the art studio as a non-school education setting.

We conducted a series of activities with the women weavers in order to visibilise the modes of technical work they produced at the art studio. The weaving creation project was born out of three discomforts: the first one was an awareness that Vera Junqueira's atelier is not acknowledged outside the city of Alvorada. The second concern was that people living in Alvorada are aware the city is known for its negative social aspects and they take violence and precariousness as something common, as a rule. And the third discomfort was that the weavers resisted exercising textile creation, as well as thinking about a way to participate in the management of the atelier which was repeatedly brought up as a challenge to the group during the time we were working on our research at the atelier.

Together with them, we came to the conclusion that it was necessary to think about the fact that their environment is often denigrated, and we came up with the proposal to connect it to the city—by having to face things that bothered them with the help of photography, to transform their view of the city's everyday life depicted on the photos, i.e., to choose some of them to think about the creation of textile pieces, to create a re-reading—to make pieces inspired by the photographs they chose; to “unweave bad things about the city”.

⁵ Of the eight women I met when I first visited the art studio in 2008, four were still there by the end of 2010, and now, in 2016, three remain; in busier periods, the fourth woman weaver returns. The art studio used to receive many orders, the main source of which was Italy, where woven items were resold in fashion fairs in Milan. The work made by the women weavers at the Vera Junqueira art studio has a fine finishing. See www.verajunqueira.com.br.

⁶ In Brazil, compulsory free education takes nine years since 2010.

Every weaver used her own mobile phone to capture the images, which were then color-printed on A4 paper sheets, totalling 78 prints. All this material was on constant display to be primarily analysed in the mornings. The images provoked thoughts about the city of Alvorada, and, at the same time, the urge to create original pieces. After that the photographs were put in a box at the art studio. Whenever the women wanted, they could resume talking among themselves about which images they would use and what they would create based on them. All of this was done while the weaving work continued uninterrupted.⁷ The pieces were made during the second half of 2013, and presented to the research group in late 2013 and early 2014.

In our conversations during two meetings, we could see how the photographs of the shabby places in Alvorada prompted the way they observed their surroundings, so they tried to change it by making new handcrafted pieces. At that stage, there was no political debate about changing the reality of those surroundings, but rather changing the way of seeing that reality by means of a creative action, and allowing themselves to think about their choices of places and their view of them. This action proposed by us as researchers was in a way an act of provocation. But that is what happens when we start interacting and connecting **with** the people in the reality we are investigating. Therefore, a certain reality was looked at, photographed, and from the moment a printed photograph showed scenes of everyday life, an exercise of imagining something based on that reality was set in motion. Creative action was the challenge they shared and experienced for the duration of at least two months. By the time the pieces were ready, these women always spared some time for their individual creative work apart from other projects.

When the pieces were ready, we scheduled a meeting for the weavers to talk about their creations and the process they had experienced. We held two meetings, one at the art studio, and the second at the University, which other women artisans and researchers attended as well.

⁷ This simultaneous aspect seems significant to me when we think about these women's experiences. The experiences in these women's daily routine, work and lives, almost always seem like a bundle, all of it so very mixed up that we almost have the feeling that nothing has been accomplished. Apparently, it is a discontent in relation to everything that has been standardised by a systematisation of another order, i.e., that of the world of men's experience, which was standardised as an ideal and was culturally produced. Men's everyday life, devoid of the disruptions caused by tasks of caring, was the life that provided a basis to define, both in theology, philosophy and later in science, the model of what systematics should be: all in good time and in the right place. This was not the legacy experienced by women. Jean Jacques Rousseau noted this well in 1761, when he wrote *Emile or On Education*, the fifth chapter of which defines the ideal Sophie to his Emile. That is, among others, that from a tender age, girls should be interrupted when they were concentrated in some game or play, simply because thus, by adulthood, they would already have grown used to the many tasks required to run a household (Rousseau, 2004, p. 535).

The descriptions of each one of the weavers were recorded and transcribed, and then we conducted some analyses about how each perceived her own work. Mud puddles, storm drains and garbage were transformed into scarves and cushions in colours and textures that redefined the chosen scenes. In this article, I present an analysis based on the production of pieces by three weavers named Débora da Silva Martines, Suzane Navarro, and Jaine Navarro.

Débora da Silva Martines's creations were the following: A scarf in dark brown shades to show the mud in the street when it rains, containing threads picked one by one, in an exercise of identifying shade over shade, as well as a cushion inspired by a storm drain where objects were thrown in and burned. She told us that the "inspirational" storm drain was old, and when the suggestion came up to enlist ugly and negative things about the city, she immediately thought of it, as it had been there for a long time.

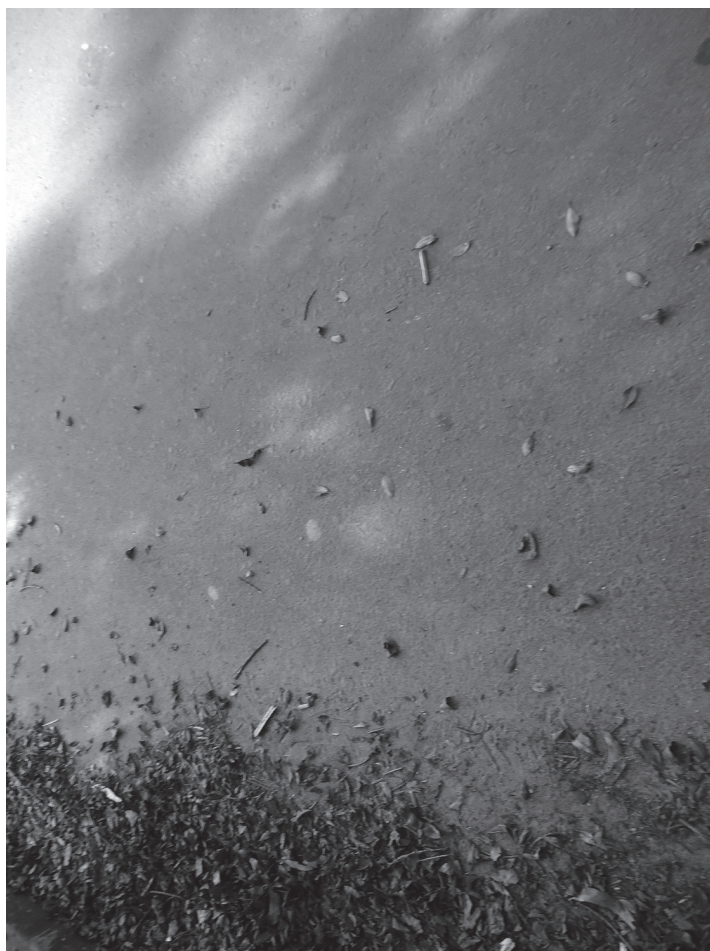
I think it's really ugly and the cushion is more or less that. Like, it is derived from it, that's why I put this white color as if the thread was irregular, to say that it's from dirt, bags, stuff... And on the side, there's the white, to really talk about the garbage, the stuff that's in there, right? Sometimes people burn garbage and it gets black all over, I think the black also stresses this. (Martines 2014, transcription of presentation in January)

Acknowledging the shabby reality in the city by looking around, photographing and analysing photographs sparked a lot of indignation, but in this case the proposal was to come up with a creative response. More specifically, a craftwork made employing weaving and threading techniques. At other moments, we may still see different actions spurred by the dialogues that took place in the art studio. Or, at least, this was the aspiration of the teacher committed to thinking about social change in educative places. And in our eyes, the art studio is also a place to think about citizenship. We identified in the women weavers' descriptions a sense of indignation and critique of the lack of care about the city streets and neighborhoods, in general. The question that emerged was: What to do about that? In the life of the art studio and of the women weavers, the focus was on conceiving change through creative work on individual pieces, but would it be possible to conceive it in connection with places denounced as ugly and bad?

In Suzane Navarro's (2014) observation, the shawl she made has the same characteristics as the shawls they make at the art studio. However, the idea for the individual piece came from the garbage that is burnt in the same street as the art studio. She crafted details using threads with a texture that gave off the impression of loose branches and sticks being burnt with the garbage. It was the piece that pleased

her most, since in her own words, “(...) it was the one I managed to get closest to, you know, I even had this idea about a big cushion, but it was in this shawl that I saw I could do something closer to that dry, burnt garbage, and you know what, whenever I look at it, I remember that garbage, when I am holding the piece, because it turned out so strong, the way I made it, I also feel I tried really hard to imagine it” (Navarro 2014, transcription). The feeling of belonging is the key aspect in the piece created. Describing her work, she is aware she managed to approximate the piece she made to the photographic representation.

Jaine Navarro (2014) analyses her creation, a curtain inspired by some dirt left at the edge of the road by a storm, thusly, “This curtain was inspired by this picture here, and I wanted to make it very real... That’s why I put these little things here, because



Photograph 2: “The Ditch Curtain” (Photograph by Jaine Pereira Navarro, 2013).

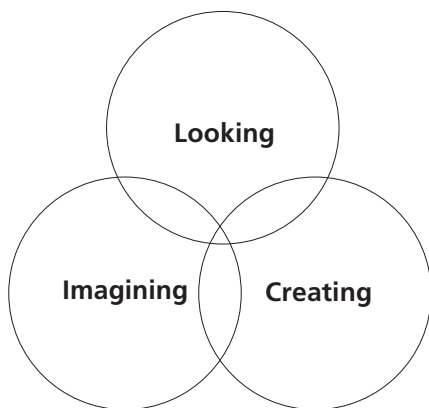
of the fallen branches and sticks there, a lot of things fall down there, so I thought of the curtain. There is a lot of dirt there and I had to put in these threads so they would be almost like those small sticks that lie around in this spot, you know?"

As for the curtain's design, the fringes symbolise the dirt, the sticks, everything that is submersed in the pothole and overflows on stormy days. According to Jaine Navarro (2014), she wanted to give off the idea of something light and, the other weavers and she thought of including small pieces of wood in the curtain, but, in her opinion, that would be too heavy. "I thought it would be too heavy and would turn out differently from what I wanted, so I had to put threads, fringes, and add these little things instead, in the end it turned out pretty good" (transcription from January 2014).

The piece made by Jaine Navarro captured the spirit of what was proposed to the women weavers: to create something from an altogether different perspective. The distanced view in the works inspired by the choices of places that every woman made allowed for, in our opinion, a sense of belonging and recognition of the power of creation. And this grew more and more intense when we proposed to set up exhibitions with the pieces they made and their photographs taken next to their



Photograph 3: The Ditch Curtain by Jaine Pereira, *Rereadings of Alvorada* (Photograph by Suzana Pires, 2016).



craftwork. Thus, the shift from looking at a certain reality to imagining and creating something based on that reality strengthened even further the perception of what was made when the women weavers' pieces and photographs were exhibited.

The first exhibition of the pieces was held at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul – PUCRS. For this exhibition, there was a photography session both with the pieces and the women artisans, if they so wished. Photographer Suzana Pires



Photograph 4: Opening night of the „Women Weavers Challenge EJA“ exhibition (photograph by Suzana Pires, 2016).

talked to all four artisans and this experience and insights added yet another layer of their recognition of the processes of handcrafted textile making.

The exhibition was organised for a class of the pedagogy course at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul, PUCRS. In early May 2016, we presented our research work done in the art studio and arranged, with photographer Suzana Pires, the photography sessions showcasing the pieces and the weavers.

The women weavers were invited to the exhibition opening night and, as was the case in the previous meetings, they got to know another formal education environment. This interface is one of the goals of our research. We observed that it was a learning process for both parties. The school/university learned to see the art studio from another perspective which resulted from the contrast observed.

The second exhibition was held in the municipality of Alvorada at the Federal Institute of Rio Grande do Sul – IFRS, which opened shortly before and is situated in one of the city's most violent neighborhoods. The Federal Institute offers secondary and higher education courses for free, as it is a public institution. We also invited a nearby state secondary education school that offers night courses from 7:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. Twice during one month prior to the opening night, we attended classes at this school to present some of the research we conducted. This institution offers primary and secondary education courses for the youth and adults—in Brazil, this education segment is called Youth and Adult Education (EJA).⁸

Conclusion

Research in education can take place in a whole array of environments; and I would stress that this should not remain just a theoretical possibility, it should actually be that way. The handcraft workplace is at once fragmented and invisible. It is a women's place and a place of learning! A women's history, as highlighted by Michelle Perrot (2005), is not the only history, but according to Chimamanda

⁸ Youth and Adult Education is a modality that has existed in the country in very diverse and complex ways over the course of its "five hundred and something years", since it was through Europe's entry into Latin American lands, particularly Brazil, that the culture of literacy and Portuguese language was introduced. We might say that, during the colonisation of Brazil, the Jesuits assumed the task of educating indigenous adults by christianising them and teaching some of them to read and write in order to facilitate evangelisation. It was not until the 19th century, with the first constitution in 1834, when Brazil had become independent from the Portuguese crown, that a movement got under way concerned with providing literacy for poor adults. Under the term poor population one did not mean black groups, as these, being slaves, were not even considered a group entitled to be literate. It was not until the first few decades of the 20th century that campaigns started with the goal of providing literacy for adult populations marginalised by the precarious school systems. See, in particular, Leôncio Soares and Ana Maria Galvão (2005), Maria Clara Del Priori, and Mariângela Graciani (2003).



Photograph 5: „Women Weavers Challenge EJA“ exhibition, 10/26/2016 (photograph by Suzana Pires, 2016).

Adichie (n/d) it is a history which is not always recognised. The stories of women who work in handcraft production in Brazil (and, most likely, the same holds about the whole world) are similar, these women were taught by their environment to think that what they do is not very worthy. In order for this to change, it is necessary to change places, to step back in order to see at a distance what is done and how the work is done and, what is fundamental, to imagine other perspectives in how to recount this history. Far beyond just the weaving work, the art studio is a place of looking at the world and being seen as a woman artisan who also happens to be a producer of knowledge. Personally, we view art studios as places of learning and teaching.

Our research shows that creation can include emulation, but it must also overcome the original model, i.e., make advances towards creation. In handcrafts—but not only limited to them!—one who creates is an author! And being an author strengthens one's autonomy. Therefore, looking, imagining and creating mold the interlocked process of continuous development without an end. To imagine in order to be able to create another perspective. To look in order to be able to imagine another creation. To create in order to see and imagine differently and to make change happen! Conducting a research from this perspective, we identify (to look) a group

of people and conduct a research with them (to imagine), during the encounters we produce knowledge (to create) that questions our own positions and makes us re-think ourselves as well as it makes that participating group to re-think themselves. At times, it is possible to see the consequences of this type of research right away, at other times, the research results in our systematising that knowledge. But there are many ways to conduct a field research employing this feminist methodology.

Moreover, the participatory research brought closer school environments, these having the technology to produce and systematise knowledge, and non-school environments, i.e., environments of manual work and other types of knowledge—in this case, the women’s artisanal technology.

The pedagogical window of opportunity that emerged in this art studio, due to the artisans’ generosity to let researchers enter this place, allowed curiosity to seek knowledge in places where we are often led to believe there is none. Doubting was one of the investigative steps that enabled this shift in attitudes on the part of ourselves and the other people involved. And from that moment on, remembering, imagining and pronouncing were the elements which impelled us to think about what an art studio was and what an art studio might become based on the contingencies that are marked in the artisans’ lives.



Photograph 6: „Women Weavers Challenge EJA” exhibition, IFRS, 10/26/2016 (photograph by Suzana Pires, 2016).



Photograph 7: „Women Weavers Challenge EJA” exhibition, IFRS, 10/26/2016 (photograph by Suzana Pires, 2016).

This way of conducting research reinforces what was discussed in the Latin American Meeting of Women Biblists briefly mentioned at the beginning of this article. When we admit that the body can be a hermeneutic category, and that subjects and their everyday stories form the hermeneutic process, we produce a hermeneutics of deconstruction and reconstruction, possibly hereby producing a hermeneutics that questions concepts given as the only ones and as “the” only truth, which ends up excluding new possibilities and so many other truths (CARDOSO, 1996). It is from this perspective that we carry on asking ourselves whether we are being coherent with the indispensable curiosity that feminist experiences teach us about: to seek other ways of producing knowledge!

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