



What is diversity made of in Youth and Adult Education (EJA)? Understandings from the epistemologies of the South

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Abstract

This article consists of recognizing the diversity of people of Youth and Adult Education (EJA) as a way to give credibility and legitimacy to the knowledge, actions and struggles of socially marginalized groups present in this modality of teaching, but which have been invisible. In this qualitative nature research, we present ways of how knowledge-significations (Andrade, Caldas, Alves, 2019) have been produced in the context of academic research. Theoretically, we use the approach of *Epistemologias do Sul* [Epistemologies of the South] (Santos, 2009, 2012, 2020) and *Colonialidade do Poder* [Coloniality of Power] (Quijano, 2005, 2009), as possible references to better perceive-highlight and build unprecedented-viable (Freire, 2002) to the modality, avoiding the epistemology killing of knowledges and the waste of experiences. We hope that this study enables epistemological turnarounds that result in overcoming one-dimensional categories that have guided EJA's pedagogical and curricular practices.

Keywords: Youth and Adult Education. Diversity. Epistemologies of the South. Coloniality of power.

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Resumo

Este artigo consiste em reconhecer a diversidade dos sujeitos da Educação de Jovens e Adultos (EJA) como forma de credibilizar e legitimar saberes, fazeres e lutas de grupos socialmente marginalizados presentes nessa modalidade de ensino, mas que têm sido invisibilizados. Nesta pesquisa de natureza qualitativa, apresentam-se maneiras de como os *conhecimentossignificações* (Andrade, Caldas, Alves, 2019) acerca da diversidade vêm sendo produzidos no âmbito das pesquisas acadêmicas. Teoricamente, utiliza-se a abordagem das *Epistemologias do Sul* (Santos, 2009, 2020) e da *Colonialidade do Poder* (Quijano, 2005, 2009), enquanto referências possíveis de melhor perceber-destacar e construir inéditos-viáveis (Freire, 2002) à modalidade, evitando o epistemicídio de saberes e o desperdício de experiências. Esperamos que este estudo possibilite reviravoltas epistemológicas que resultem na superação de categorias unidimensionais que têm orientado práticas pedagógicas, curriculares da EJA.

Palavras-chave: Educação de Jovens e Adultos. Diversidade. Epistemologias do Sul. Colonialidade do poder.

¿De qué está hecha la diversidad en la Educación de Jóvenes y Adultos (EJA)? Entendimientos desde las Epistemologías del Sur

Resumen

Este artículo pretende reconocer la diversidad de los sujetos de la Educación de Jóvenes y Adultos (EJA) como forma de dar credibilidad y legitimidad a los saberes, acciones y luchas de grupos socialmente marginalizados, presentes en esta modalidad de enseñanza, pero que han sido invisibilizados. En esta investigación de naturaleza cualitativa, se presentan maneras de cómo se han producido los *conocimientos significaciones* (Andrade, Caldas, Alves, 2019) acerca de la diversidad en el ámbito de las investigaciones académicas. Teóricamente, se utiliza el enfoque de las *Epistemologías del Sur* (Santos, 2009, 2016, 2020) y de la *Colonialidad del Poder* (Quijano, 2005, 2009) como referencias posibles de mejor percibir-destacar y construir inéditos-viables (Freire, 2002) a la modalidad, evitando el asesinato de la epistemología de saberes y el desperdicio de experiencias. Esperamos que este estudio posibilite giros epistemológicos que resulten en la superación de categorías unidimensionales que han orientado prácticas pedagógicas, curriculares de la EJA.

Palabras clave: Educación de Jóvenes y Adultos. Diversidad. Epistemologías del Sur. Colonialidad del poder.

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Introduction

This article is the result of research carried out between March and September 2022. The study consists of recognizing the theme of diversity involving *practitioners-thinkers* (Oliveira, 2013) of Youth and Adult Education (EJA), in the database of the Brazilian Digital Library of Dissertations and Theses (BDTD) and in the Institutional Repositories of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN) and the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) as a way of legitimizing existing groups and knowledge that are at the same time made invisible by the dominant interpretation in the educational field.

By recognizing that the diversity of the world is inexhaustible and far exceeds the canonical monocultural understanding of modernity, we set out with the following question: what emerging meanings are produced by the diversity of EJA's *practitioners-thinkers*? It is important to emphasize that the emerging meanings of diversity, to which we refer, do not form isolated and distinct categories of investigation. On the contrary, they are interdependent and cross-cutting, forming an inseparable whole that creatively resists the



monocultural hegemony of modernity. In this way, there is no meaning expressed by diversity that is not simultaneously political, aesthetic, cultural, ethical and social.

The work is based on an insurgent, decolonial political-epistemological discussion, founded on epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2008); it's also based in Quijano's conceptions of coloniality of power (2005, 2009) and in Santos' epistemologies of the *South* (2009, 2020), for which modern Eurocentric and North-centric thinking has created radical and profound abysses in society, but has not prevented marginalized groups, through social struggles and movements, from also create alternatives for counter-hegemonic epistemic resistance based on principles that point to and converge on what the author calls *Epistemologies of the South* – other social and cultural experiences and practices.

In this way, by associating the pedagogical with the decolonial, we argue how conceptions of diversity, full of complex power relations, can be better captured, understood, and expanded with the *Epistemologies of the South*, linking these conceptions to the EJA, an educational modality that includes people belonging to socially and culturally marginalized groups.

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***Epistemologies of the South* to articulate and expand conceptions of diversity in the EJA**

The topic of diversity in EJA, as well as its meanings, involves investigating modern Western thought, in the forms of European colonialism and coloniality, which has had social, epistemological, political, and cultural repercussions through exclusionary practices, determined by power relations guided by heteronormative, racist, patriarchal, capitalist standards etc.

The discussion carried out by Santos (2009, 2020) proposes a new rationality, which he calls *post-abyssal thinking*, as a counter-hegemonic alternative for resisting and confronting the abyssalities produced by this homogenizing model. This is a way of collaborating in solidarity with the processes of cognitive and social justice through marches (in the sense of struggles) of decolonization and decoloniality, since the project of colonization wasted a lot of social experience in an attempt to homogenize the world, reducing epistemological, cultural and political diversity.

An important concept for understanding abyssal thinking is the abyssal line, a metaphorical term coined by Santos (2009, 2020) to illustrate the deep split in humanity caused by the colonialist, capitalist, and patriarchal project that “[...] prevents the universe ‘on this side of the line’ from copresenting with the universe ‘on the other side of the line’ [...]” (Santos; Araújo; Baumgarten, 2016, p. 16).

“This side of the line” refers to the global North and all its hegemony, while “the other side of the line”, in turn, refers to the global South, colonized, but at the same time made up of struggles and resistance to the different forms of oppression/domination/exploitation imposed.

Abyssal thinking subsists by denying the humanity of the “other side of the line” – a fundamental condition for affirming its universality – producing geographical, cultural, political, racial and knowledge peripheries (Gomes, 2012). In addition, it creates invisible borders that cross different spaces, from the border of knowledge to those of authorized and accepted forms of existence, determining and regulating social relations in an explicitly violent and inhumane way (the massacres of native peoples and the enslavement of black peoples, for example).

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Under a homogenizing premise, civilized humanity “on this side of the line” and, therefore, in a condition of superiority, supported by the pretext in the form of a civilizing project of primitive sub-humanity “on the other side of the line”, starts to put its colonizing actions into practice, as Quijano (2005, p. 117) states: “This idea was assumed by the conquerors as the main constitutive, foundational element of the relations of domination that conquest demanded.”

Thus, the colonization process resulted in a social configuration based on Eurocentric hegemony and its capitalist/racist/patriarchal/modern power, since such hegemony concentrated forms of domination/control over subjectivities, cultures and, especially, the production of knowledge (Quijano, 2005).

In this context of hegemonization and negation, *Epistemologies of the South* emerge as a counter-hegemonic alternative, based on the recognition of the inexhaustible richness of the world’s diversity, “[...] which continues to lack an adequate epistemology” (Santos, 2009, p. 43), since “[...] the knowledge and practices on the other side of the line disappear in the mirror of the monocultural canon defined on this side” (Santos, Araújo, Baumgarten, 2016, p.



16). In these terms, Epistemologies of the South are configured as a prudent epistemological alternative to the dominant epistemology of the North.

In an interview with the *Boletim Dobradiça* (Hinge Bulletin), of the Brazilian School of Psychoanalysis, Santos (2020) points out that *Epistemologies of the South* are a proposal to identify, recognize and legitimize other knowledges, which emerge from the context of struggles and resistance to the modern paradigm that arrogantly claims the absolute monopoly of truth for itself, based on crystallized conceptions of society, human beings, nature etc.

Based on this conception, we can see that *Epistemologies of the South* are a coherent and viable possibility for articulating and broadening the understanding of diversity in EJA, especially when we take into account the forms of domination/violence/exploitation to which colonized peoples were subjugated, causing their knowledge, practices and cultures to be wasted and made invisible. *Epistemologies of the South* mainly come from the ways in which these peoples have resisted and still creatively (re)exist against the imposed oppressions.

Addressing the issue of diversity, in this case, is nothing like the universalist idea of diversity. On the contrary, according to Gomes (2018), it is a matter of going beyond the romanticized or universalist reading of diversity in order to understand it, inserting it into its complex problematic, embedded in power relations, in other words, in a political or politicized way.

Unlike the richness embedded in the idea of diversity, it is reaffirmed that the more diverse people are, the more unequal they are in a society that reaffirms its intolerance of those who are different (Paiva, 2019a, p. 1153).

Therefore, the recognition, appreciation and legitimization of the diversity richness includes the notion of social, cultural, and cognitive justice, as well as the political, ethical, epistemological, and social will to overcome the many contradictions produced amid modern societies guided by the capitalist, patriarchal and racist project, which is also mortifying.

In this context, other configurations of inequality, different from classic class inequality, are emerging: inequality of sex, race, age, gender and origin constitute a set that can predetermine the place on the social ladder or the

condition to which individuals are submitted. This is because, according to Santos (2020), colonialism has ceased to exist in a very specific way, but has continued in various other ways, reproducing and operationalizing dynamics of inequality in social relations.

And that is why we dispute the idea that colonialism ended with independence. No. Colonialism continued in another form. Racism is colonialism. Land concentration is colonialism. The expulsion of peasants and indigenous people for megaprojects, whether rivers dams or large industrial agriculture projects, is colonialism. And patriarchy continues, despite all the victories of the feminist movement. Femicide is increasing because capitalism does not exist without colonialism or patriarchy (Santos, 2020, p. 23).

6 This phenomenon of the continuity of colonialism is referred to by Quijano (2005, 2009) as the *coloniality of capitalist power*. According to this theorist, "[...] in world capitalism, the three central instances in which relations of exploitation/domination/conflict are ordered are the question of work, 'race' and 'gender'" (Quijano, 2009, p. 104). The naturalization of these relations is a determining factor in maintaining inequalities and their consequences in the form of xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia etc., all of which are the result of a canonical conception of society and the human being.

According to abyssal, capitalist/racist/patriarchal thinking, diversity is considered a problem to be overcome (Neufeld, 2006). The author points out that the concept of diversity should not be reduced to the concept of differences that are defined in relation to their peers (man-woman, white-black, North-South). This has been the conception given by the dominant rationality, which structures society and places these pairs in a dichotomous relationship, hierarchizing them, legitimizing some and undermining others.

In his text *A construção do discurso sobre a diversidade e suas práticas* (The construction of the discourse on diversity and its practices), Sacristán (2002) argues that diversity indicates the fact that individuals are unique and different. However, these differences can allude to inequalities.

Difference is not only a manifestation of the unique being that each person is; in many cases, it is the manifestation of *power* or of becoming, of *having* the possibility of being and participating in social, economic, and cultural goods (Sacristán, 2002, p. 14, author's emphasis).



Diversity in modern societies, reconfigured by capitalist globalization, implies inequalities resulting from the power relations that shape them and, in turn, constitute mechanisms of explicit and implicit social violence that cause the suffering (Heller, 1999) of humanity, feeding oppression, hunger, discrimination, prejudice and interdictions, precisely because the abyssal lines of modern thought, despite being invisible borders, are very present and are inscribed in people's bodies and lives (Santos, 2020).

Starting with an investigation into the principle of equality in modern societies, sociologist Dubet (2001) points to the contradictions that emerge from this system: as they claim to be democratic, presupposing a condition of equality and freedom between individuals, capitalist societies constantly produce hierarchies and non-equal effects, deepening social inequalities.

According to Dubet (2001, p. 6), "[...] in modernity, individuals are considered increasingly equal". The expansion of equality – an essential principle for conceiving Western democracy – occurs as there is a process of homogenization of society, based on the principle of meritocracy. The success or failure of the individual becomes their sole responsibility, depending exclusively on the result of their individual voluntary efforts, thus, social mobility is configured as "[...] the product of competition between equal individuals [...]" (Dubet, 2001, p. 6) with access to equal opportunities.

The author points out the *double face of modernity*: while equality has grown, whether through mass access to education or even cultural and material goods, which were previously rare or forbidden, its context is still one of contradiction, since "[...] the social structure of our societies is 'Latin Americanized' with the growth of poverty, the uncertainty, the informal economy [...]" (Dubet, 2001, p. 9, author's emphasis). This social structure affects very specific social groups, which suggests the cultural and historical nature of the accumulation of inequalities produced by the massifying and one-dimensional project of society. Thus, social segmentation is determined not only by class, but also by gender, race, origin etc.

From the multiplicity of social inequalities, social movements emerge as a power for emancipatory action in the process of social participation, demanding justice, respect, and recognition: "[...] the theme of respect is necessarily indexed to individual particularities, natural or claimed, demanding

the *recognition* of specific characteristics and experiences” (Dubet, 2001, p. 18, author’s emphasis).

The nonconformist struggle for recognition, appreciation and legitimacy demanded by historically marginalized social groups through the feminist, anti-racist, workers, landless rural workers and LGBTQIA+ movements presupposes a review of the concepts of equality and difference, exposing their life-shaping and therefore exclusionary limits. The idea of equality disseminated by modern rationality creates the anomalous, the different, based on an ideal of the human being, of society, in short, a culture of standardization that eliminates the right to different ways of being, existing, thinking, living, feeling and being in the world.

The [social] movement is signified as something that interrupted the repositioning of sameness [...], created the conditions for coping with psychosocial suffering, understood here as a symptom of one of the deepest needs of modernity – helplessness/impotence, which means not being recognized and not recognizing one’s own human integrity and power to act (Sawaia, 1997, p. 152).

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From that conception, Sawaia (1997, p. 150) argues that social movements are a rebellious denial of the homogenizing project of society, as well as a *space-time* for recognizing identities, above all because “[...] they create a diversity of strategies for confronting the traditional rationality of exclusion and a diversity of intersubjectivities with a clear demand for participation [...]” towards actions that produce potentially emancipatory and solidary effects of citizenship and collective social responsibility.

It should also be noted that social movements, beyond the *effectiveness of political participation actions*, can present themselves as possibilities, latency, gestures of rupture and emancipatory dreams. They present themselves

[...] as the power to act and as subjective *legitimacy*, which means having the right to feel entitled to be heard and recognized as a member of argumentative communities that define collective policies for the “common good” (Sawaia, 1997, p. 155, author’s emphasis).

Through the pedagogical dimension of social movements, which give rise to debates and reflections – educating and re-educating society, the State



and the movements themselves – the emancipatory power of social struggles and movements is recognized, as well as their educational strength, since they question power relations, stressing the rigid structures of capitalism, patriarchy and racism in favor of “[...] building a more democratic society, where everyone, recognized in their difference, is treated equally as a person of rights” (Gomes, 2012, p. 731).

Gomes (2012, 2020), when discussing the black movement in Brazil, reinforces its political-epistemological character, as a producer of emancipatory knowledge born out of struggle. The researcher considers in this process the intersectionality between the social markers of race, gender, sexual orientation, and class, helping to expand understanding to other social movements fighting for dignity, recognition, and social justice.

Regarding the political-epistemological knowledge born out of the struggle, Gomes states:

The more a knowledge is consolidated, the more it has the capacity to transform its own way of perceiving and interpreting the problems that motivate its struggle. A knowledge that is organized in the form of intellectual production and political, social, and pedagogical practices (Gomes, 2020, p. 365).

These are knowledges, pedagogies of insurgency and resistance that have articulated subjective and diverse possibilities of being, living and existing, breaking with modern Western thought and colonial/capitalist/racist/patriarchal power.

Pedagogies that encourage thinking from and with genealogies, rationalities, knowledge, practices, and different civilizing and living systems. Pedagogies that incite possibilities of being, feeling, existing, doing, thinking, looking, listening, and knowing differently, pedagogies that are directed and anchored in processes and projects with a decolonial, horizon, and intention character (Walsh, 2017, p. 28).

In this web of knowledge, pedagogies, insurgencies and decolonial resistance, the notion of diversity is simultaneously inserted into broader social, cultural, historical and political contexts, which implies a subversive and complex epistemological stance on nature, on being human, with its identities and

its uni-diversity, as Morin (2012) states. This is no simple task, challenging those who fight for cognitive justice in order to achieve social justice. However, it is an urgent, necessary, and vital task to articulate the pedagogical and the decolonial (Walsh, 2017) in order to rebuild the condition of dignified existence and sow constellations of life, in the deepest, most diverse, human, and non-human sense that this word encompasses.

The circulation of knowledge-meanings about diversity in the EJA

This section presents the circulation of *knowledge-meanings* (Andrade; Caldas; Alves, 2019) about diversity in the EJA, based on the investigation of academic research that discusses the subject, in an attempt to find out how diversity has been written, thought about and understood within the scope of this research, considering the educational context.

To this end, a bibliographic study was carried out, called *State of the Art* (Ferreira, 2002), with the aim of analyzing ways in which the problem mentioned has been studied from dissertations, theses, and articles, taking into account the works available in the database of the Brazilian Digital Library of Dissertations and Theses (BDTD) and in the Institutional Repositories of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN) and the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA).

Eight academic works were considered, more specifically 4 theses, 3 dissertations and 1 course completion work, obtained through two searches, considering the following descriptors: *Diversity AND EJA and EJA AND Diversity AND Identity*; another criterion, in addition to the descriptors and the boolean operator AND, was the time frame, taking the period 2015 to 2021 as a reference.

In the first study, called *Entre idas e vindas: uma diversidade de sentidos para a escola de EJA* (Between comings and goings: a diversity of meanings for the EJA school) (Santos, 2018), it was identified that the aim of the research was to understand the meanings that EJA students attribute to school, taking into account the reasons why these persons return to school with the intention of continuing their studies after various complications that cross their lives.



The author points out that most of *practitioners-thinkers* are placed on the margins of society for economic, social, political, and cultural reasons. In this sense, Santos (2018) seeks to find out what prospects the school can offer, even if through the return or “late” entry of these people who have been denied the right to education.

The term “late” used by Santos (2018) is in quotation marks as a way of drawing attention to the fact that the expression can signal another factor of exclusion, of a blaming nature, attributed to young people and adults who have been banned from the right to education. In this case, age becomes another factor of exclusion for these people.

That said, age can be seen as another of the many *absences* created by modernity, in the sense of fixing, determining a “right” time and legitimizing a single place to learn. Another important aspect to highlight is that the term “late” can limit the philosophical understanding of *lifelong learning* that has been assumed by Paiva (2019b).

Among the characteristics considered to be constitutive of the identities and diversity of these people, the research revealed that there is a variety of genders (with a predominance of females), age groups, colors, marital status etc. The meanings attributed by the persons in relation to school are diverse, as are their identity characteristics, and are part of the process of subjectivity that seeks a way to improve living conditions at school; to enter higher education, get a better job, restore the right to education and access to other civil rights that have been denied.

In the second work, a dissertation entitled *Diversidade sexual na Educação de Jovens e Adultos (EJA): limites e possibilidades da efetivação do direito à educação* (Sexual diversity in Youth and Adult Education [EJA]: limits and possibilities for the realization of the right to education), Silva (2016) seeks to identify the specificities of LGBT students who come to EJA. The research tries to understand how homophobia can hinder the free expression of sexual orientation, as well as being a barrier to the realization of the right to education for young people, adults, and the elderly. The author also highlights the need to build and implement an anti-homophobic practice in the EJA, since homophobia has represented an obstacle to guaranteeing the right to education.

The study reveals the sexual diversity present in the EJA, finding that the themes of gender identity, sexuality and homophobia have been little discussed in the modality, given their complexity and because they are “[...] from a theoretical point of view, relatively new, especially in their articulation with the EJA field” (Silva, 2016, p. 286).

In the discussion, the author points out that the heteronormative standard, reaffirmed through modern institutions, full of power relations, such as the family, school, and church, has destined people who do not fit into its normative molds to places of marginalization, actively producing them as non-existent and invisible, banning them from the right to a dignified life. In addition, there is damage to the subjective well-being and identity construction process of these people who deviate from the dominant norm.

Founded on the idea of compulsory heteronormativity, homophobia in the EJA school can materialize in various aspects, in an intersectional way, when articulated with other social markers of exclusion, which are determined from the abyssal lines of modern thought. Silva, (2016) argues that the expressions of these abyssalities, which we understand as diversity, are very present and embodied in the EJA, which presupposes pedagogical work that considers the specificities of its *practitioner-thinkers* in an imbricated way, in order to produce a logic of confronting discrimination and prejudice.

In this context, the author defends the concept of a *welcoming pedagogy*, which has an anti-homophobic perspective that seeks to perceive and legitimize the diversity of EJA's students, since school can represent a hostile place for LGBTQIA+ people, culminating in this population dropping out of school because it mostly reproduces discriminatory processes through discourses and/or homophobic pedagogical practices.

The *welcoming pedagogy*, in our view, is in line with the epistemological nature of the South, as it plays a strategic role in collaborating with and making effective the process of transforming the sexist relations present in everyday school life and in society; by questioning the dominant heteronormative pattern; and by proposing the construction of a fairer society, with conditions for a dignified existence, right from school education, taking into account the life trajectories, particularities, experiences and expectations of the students.



In the third work, *O não-lugar do lugar da escola: sentidos produzidos por jovens de 15 a 17 anos na Educação de Jovens e Adultos* (The non-place of the school: meanings produced by young people aged 15 to 17 in Youth and Adult Education) (Silva, 2019), the author starts from the perspective of the EJA's diversity of people in a way that is imbricated with their life stories, experiences, singularities, identities, characteristics, sociability, different belongings, among other factors that are entangled and have repercussions in school, forming a larger subjective web that is related to the permanence of these young people in school, making this space multiple of meanings.

In the web of meanings attributed to school by these young people, there are threads such as gender, ethnic-racial belonging, family, work, and relationships of sociability that intersect, defining this *space-time* that designates unique textures and intensities, perceived through the meanings emerging in the census statements (Silva, 2019).

Similar to the first work by Santos (2018), it can be seen that the EJA school is a place of resistance, possibilities and convergence of diversity expressed by the individual or collective subjectivities of the *practitioners-thinkers* who populate it on a daily basis, reinventing and re-signifying this *space-time* of collective processing as a creative alternative to the challenge of dealing with their existences crossed by historical absences, produced "on this side of the abyssal line".

In *A construção de igualdade de gênero no currículo da educação de adolescentes, jovens e adultos na rede municipal de ensino de Goiânia* (The construction of gender equality in the curriculum of adolescent, youth and adult education in the municipal school system of Goiânia) (Gomes, 2016), the fourth work selected and analyzed, the need and urgency to recognize the EJA as a space for diversity is highlighted, as well as considering the groups that make up the majority of it, paying attention to their characteristics, subjectivities, specificities and identities. These have historically been crossed by processes of exclusion, resulting from the colonial power structure that has persisted and continued in the form of the coloniality of capitalist/racist/patriarchal power, producing a contingent of those who are left off the map (Santos; Araújo; Baumgarten, 2016).

The author reveals that, as an EJA teacher, she has always been concerned about the dropout rate, especially among women who attend this type

of education. Marriage and motherhood are among the reasons given by female students for leaving school.

Gomes (2016, p. 156) argues that “[...] gender relations between women and men in the EJA are effectively affected by this heteronormative model [...]”, drawing attention to the fact that gender issues have still been approached in a simplistic way, limited to generalizing themes such as rights, citizenship, or commemorative dates, such as International Women’s Day, for example, in a reductionist way.

Such situations highlight the unjust structuring of the patriarchal model, which implicitly brings with it eminently masculine relations of power and domination, especially in relation to socially and culturally constructed roles, which take gender as a reference. In this way, patriarchy and heteronormativity act to regulate the other manifestations that make up society’s cultural, sexual and gender diversity, also having repercussions on school organization.

Considering the EJA as a heterogeneous *space-time*, constituted by the multiplicity of subjectivities, trajectories and life experiences linked to issues of gender, race, class, and origin of its *practitioners-thinkers*, it is understood that these power relations do not occur without conflicts, tensions, and clashes. This makes this type of education a privileged place for tackling social exclusions and asymmetries, as well as for the inclusion of those who are socially produced as invisible, and it can become an environment that rebuilds human dignity, as long as it is linked to a pedagogical project that sows social justice and democracy from the perspective of a *welcoming pedagogy* (Silva, 2016).

In this wake of processes, practices and situations that articulate diversity, the work *As Inter-Relações entre Discriminação Racial, de Gênero e Exclusão Social na Trajetória de Mulheres Negras da EJA* (The Interrelations between Racial and Gender Discrimination and Social Exclusion in the Trajectory of Black Women in the EJA) (Leal, 2017) emphasizes the social markers: race, gender and class and the way in which these markers cross the trajectory of black women in the EJA, in order to understand the complex web of delegitimization that surrounds their lives, linked to negative stereotyping, racism, prejudice, the maintenance of the historical subordinating condition, among other aspects.



The researcher points out that the forms of prejudice experienced by the black women studied do not originate from just one of the social markers, but from the intersectionality between them, affecting the lives of these women in a complex way, who even reported the desire to be invisible in order to escape discrimination.

Santos (2009) points out that modern abyssal thinking is universalized and affirms itself as unique, legitimate, and socially valid through its ability to produce and deepen differences. These differences arise from the context of stigmatization, stereotyping and interiorization of aspects that escape the racist, patriarchal, colonial, Eurocentric hegemonic model, negatively affecting the processes of construction and positive affirmation of black women's aesthetic-corporeal knowledge (Gomes, 2020).

During the research process, one of the things that surprised the author was the racist and sexist practices that permeate the lives of these women during their school careers. In this sense, we reinforce the need to build anti-racist and anti-discriminatory pedagogical practices that point to the non-invisibilities and valorization of the diversity embodied in the EJA, which produce intersectional networks of solidarity and affection, politicizing the struggles for the construction of a truly democratic society, based on "[...] the principle of recognizing difference" (Santos, 2009, p. 42).

A viable alternative for making the recognition of differences as a right can be found in theorizing about the pedagogical role of the black movement. Gomes (2012, 2018, 2020) has supported the political-pedagogical action of the black movement as a collective actor in the production of emancipatory knowledge, an educator of society, of itself and of the State, by questioning colonial power relations, bringing into debate and reflection issues such as structural racism, black youth, racial discrimination etc.

The work *Trajetórias de alunos e alunas transgêneros na educação de jovens e adultos do município de Nova Iguaçu* (Trajectories of transgender students in youth and adult education in the municipality of Nova Iguaçu) (Silva, 2015) reveals, based on a mapping of the municipality's schools and interviews with teachers, the absence of transvestite and transgender students in the EJA and the transphobic attitude of basic education schools, which prohibits and does not ensure the right of the trans population to attend and remain in school.

The school's intolerant stance reflects a heteronormatively oriented and therefore transphobic society, which makes it a hostile place for those who deviate from this norm and consequently excludes them from the right to education. This attitude ends up having repercussions on trans people's decision not to stay at school because they feel insecure, because they are targets of prejudice, discrimination, or stigmatization.

It is important to emphasize that the public school is an institution that emerged and consolidated with modernity and, for this reason, can collaborate with the processes of maintaining inequalities arising from unjust power relations. However, beyond the abyssalities of modern thinking, school cannot be denied as an essential and necessary right to produce citizenship.

In her research, Silva (2015) highlights that the plurality of sexual identities beyond the binarism and reductionism imposed by the heteronormative standard must be recognized and discussed at school, as permanent content, and agenda, in order to minimize and break with this abyssal thinking-practice.

In the thesis *Trajatórias de mulheres da e na EJA e seus enfrentamentos às situações de violências* (Trajectories of women in the EJA and their coping with situations of violence), Barreto (2021) discusses the processes of structural violence suffered and faced by women due to social organization, notably patriarchal, racist, and capitalist, culminating in the impediment or removal of these women regarding access and the right to education.

The gender issue is associated with other social markers (class, race/ethnicity) that reflect asymmetrically and negatively on the lives of women, when one or more conditions intersect, which are characterized as factors of oppression, exclusion and subalternation in a society standardized by abyssal patriarchal/racist thinking. Thus, Barreto (2021) states that being a woman in a society crossed by gender, race and class issues is a condition of inequality and impediment to the schooling process of students, both in childhood and adolescence and in adulthood.

Barreto (2021) establishes a relationship between education and politics, considering, above all, the unjust and unequal power relations that shape the structural organization of society, determining the material conditions of existence of poor, black and peripheral women. In this way, the trajectories of coping with situations of violence experienced by black and peripheral women intersect in the EJA, forming networks of emancipatory solidarity and



resistance to the exclusions instituted by inequalities of gender, class, and race/ethnicity.

Descolonizar o corpo, reinventar o currículo: memórias de luta e resistência (Decolonizing the body, reinventing the curriculum: memories of struggle and resistance) is another work selected by this state of the art, crossed by memories of a colonized body in which Silva (2016) reflects on the processes of violence suffered and reinforced at school and its normative, heterosexist and racist molds. The author describes how she experienced, through pain, suffering, struggle and resistance, this trajectory marked by denial, silencing, stigmatization, and ridicule in the school environment.

This monograph, as Silva (2016, p. 52) points out, is characterized as a mobilizing and powerful force of denunciation and struggle “[...] against mortifying oppressions! [...]”, by problematizing the supposed neutrality of education and the way in which oppressions are currently being emptied, generalized and reduced to a single definition: bullying.

The generalizing definition of the processes of violence and delegitimization suffered by those who have been placed “on the other side of the line” is yet another form of silencing to be faced by colonized people, who have struggled to assert themselves, demanding the valorization and “[...] inclusion of cultural forms that reflect the experience of groups whose cultural and social identities [are] marginalized by the dominant European identity” (Silva, 2022, p. 126).

The works investigated show that the EJA is a favorable field for the convergence of diversity – either through the meanings that the *practitioners-thinkers* themselves attribute to the school, or through the countless social markers, such as gender, race, class, sexuality, among others, constituting a fertile *space-time* of differences to be considered in the formation of identities and subjectivities.

Final considerations

This study, based on the *Epistemologies of the South*, shows that the school, as an institution that emerged from modernity, has reproduced processes of exclusion, denying the diversity that makes it up. When this problem is addressed in the EJA, the situation gains greater breadth and complexity,

because when trying to understand and get closer to the persons who make up the EJA – women and men who are attending school for the first time or who are returning to school after periods of being denied the right to education in terms of access, permanence or success in school – it can be seen that, for the most part, these are people with life trajectories crossed by countless forms of exclusion, the result of the hierarchies, dichotomies and binarism of Eurocentric abyssal thinking.

As a result of this analysis, it can be concluded that EJA schools have not always been prepared to work politically and pedagogically with diversity, reinforcing processes of exclusion, silencing, invisibilities, prejudice, and intolerance. However, it is important to emphasize that, beyond its abyssalities, the school plays an important role in the social transformation of young people, adults, and the elderly in the EJA, as well as being integrated as a right, being necessary for the constitution of processes of social and human emancipation. It is significant to recognize that, as it is a privileged *space-time* for the convergence of diversity, since it is made up of heterogeneous realities of life, represented by so-called minorities, the EJA has the strength, nature, and political, cultural, and aesthetic symbolism capable of valuing and legitimizing the multiple identity dynamics of its *practitioners-thinkers*.

The diversity of the EJA's *practitioners-thinkers* – considering their ethical, aesthetic, cultural and political meanings – reverberates in the school through the people who daily inhabit, live in, and populate the school, creatively manufacturing ways of resisting imposed social normativity to avoid non-invisibilities and to re-signify their experiences.

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