

The learning web in the systematisation of experiences: An analysis of research processes with Artisan women

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Abstract

This article discusses aspects of a dialogue with artisan women during the production of their handi-crafts. Our dialogical proposition builds on participant research studies conducted in Brazil since the 1960's, to which feminist studies are added and mixed here. The article integrates two groups of female artisans who produced pieces, and simultaneously talked about their craft production processes and their daily experiences. We analyse the broad spectrum of accounts that emerges at the meetings, and the power of self-perception arising from the places of collective speech and listening. We conclude that the alternatives found for systematising the recorded findings provoked new reflections and the recognition, in scale, of other directions and derivations of research practice with poorly educated adult women.

Keywords: participant research, systematization, artisan women, simultaneity.

La red de aprendizaje en la sistematización de experiencias: análisis de procesos de investigación con mujeres artesanas.

Resumen

Este artículo analiza aspectos de un diálogo con mujeres artesanas durante la producción de sus artesanías. La propuesta dialógica se refiere a los estudios de investigación participativa producidos en Brasil desde la década de 1960, a los que se mezclan aquí los estudios feministas. El artículo integra dos grupos de artesanas que produjeron piezas y al mismo tiempo hablaron sobre sus procesos de producción artesanal y sus experiencias diarias. Analiza el amplio espectro del discurso que emerge en los encuentros y el poder de la autopercepción desde los lugares de discurso y escucha colectivos. Se concluyó que las alternativas encontradas para sistematizar los hallazgos registrados provocaron nuevas reflexiones y el reconocimiento, en escala, de otras direcciones y derivaciones de la práctica de investigación con mujeres adultas con baja escolaridad.

Palabras clave: investigación participativa, sistematización, artesanas, simultaneidad.

Introduction

Based on the experience originated from research activities with women who produce handi-crafts, who learned from and taught each other techniques of craft production, we present in this article some of the methodological processes developed with them. Over the past ten years (Cunha 2010; Eggert 2011, 2017) we have been conducting research with artisan women, most of them poorly educated, who produce pieces for their own use and/or for sale. These groups allowed us to spend time with them and, through this interaction, provoked us to think about the forms of systematising the research we conducted, with reflections on current studies, such as this one. The contexts experienced in our investigative practices varied: a) in ateliers, where weaving pieces were produced for sale, which in this article we call the *hand weaving loom* group and, b) in the community spaces of a public school, through meetings organized for teaching and learning staple crochet and other forms of craft production, which in this article we call the *staple crochet* group.



Figure 1. Hand weaving loom

Note: Image retrieved from

<http://www.tecelagemanual.com.br/lojatear/acessorios.htm>

According to Maria Rita Webster (1997) and Elza Hirata Baptista (2004), the hand weaving loom (Figure 1) predominates in the weaving produced in the state of Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil), besides being a more popular, easy-to-handle loom.

Staple crochet is a very old weaving technique that is nearly extinct in Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil); it uses a needle, thread or wool and a U-shaped wooden or metal artifact (Figure 2) in which the piece is woven. Each woven part (Figure 3) can be sewn to another to form a whole piece (jackets, purses, blankets...)¹.

¹ There are few references to staple crochet in academic texts. Currently, through the Google Scholar platform, two articles are available (Júnior & Junger 2009; Montemezzo & Cunha 2013), two end-of-course monographs (Ferreira 2017; Rufino 2018), two Master's dissertations (Azevedo 2012; Cândido 2015), a doctoral thesis (Cunha 2010) and a book chapter (Cunha & Eggert 2011). Only one of the dissertations and one monograph, both in the Design area, detail a little more about the technique (Cândido 2015; Ferreira 2017). In addition to these, details about the technique and its teaching can be found in the doctoral thesis and book chapter, both in the Education area (Cunha 2010; Cunha & Eggert 2011). The other studies only cite staple crochet as a typology of crochet weaving. The thesis above refers to the study conducted by Cunha (2010), whose experience is part of the reflections presented in this article. That study illustrates the technique of staple crochet and goes into details on questions related to its teaching. Cunha e Eggert (2011, p. 60) suspect that staple crochet "[...] emerged by Chinese influence and was brought [to Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil] by Azoreans. With their fork-shaped hairpins, women wove with what threads they had access to (reeds, for example) in order to pass time." Cândido (2015) reaffirms that staple crochet is nearly extinct in Rio Grande do Sul.



Figure 2. Staple

Note: The researcher's personal collection (Cunha 2010, p. 217).



Figure 3. Detail of staple weaving

Note: The researcher's collection (Cunha 2010, p. 220).

In the two groups we followed, some characteristics were similar: they were formed by black and white women from lower classes, mostly poorly educated. The similarities also pervaded their way of sharing their technical knowledge, their silence and concentration while producing the pieces.

The research propositions in both groups were implemented using some data collection techniques: audio and video recordings, photographs, group and individual interviews, participant observation and notes in field diaries. This collection took place mainly during the simultaneous making/learning and making/teaching comprised in the production of the handcrafted pieces. The interviews' script was guided towards the form of open dialogues held amid the handicraft production and, according to the possibilities provided by the groups, with the actual participation of the researchers during the production of pieces. This methodological choice provoked reflections about the ways of systematising data which, in most cases, were not transcribed even despite our careful listening, due to the difficulty of understanding simultaneous speeches or to interference by the women's work instruments (e.g., their looms). In addition to these factors, the proposition of spending time with the women during their group time led to long dialogues and parallel talks about which, in some cases, the researchers' intervention was not possible: this was more recurrent in the staple crochet group.

The experience of dialoguing in these groups of women generated displacements with regard to the treatment of collected data. As we transcribed them, we realised it was necessary to organise them into thematic axes, in order to avoid excessive fragmentation. Thus, particularly with regard to the group of women who learned staple crochet, we thought of ways of systematising that formed a map, a document in scale, produced from the breadth of talks at the meetings. We built on Gattaz (1996), referred to by Eggert (1998) in our "trans-creating" of transcriptions when the range of talks was too wide. In other words, as we identified parts that harmonised, we brought them together and synthesised them as we systematized the written text.

Although focused on intervention and group participation, individual talks were also proposed with some women, especially those with some leadership role (those who had been longer in craft, who were older, who were craft teachers, recognized by the group and

referred to as authorities). However, we assumed that the dialogue with the artisan women, even if carried out individually, were influenced by the collectivity they belonged to. In synthesis, dialoguing about this range of manifest opinions, considering that the speech carries a 'we', even with the use of data collection tools that may be widely known (e.g., individual or group interviews), required other forms of systematisation due to the quantity and/or the difficulty to understand.

In the staple crochet group, few talks were literally transcribed. Most of them were synthesised, though carefully so that they did not lose their original connotation and could generate enough analysis elements, thematic axes and syntheses to form a mandala. For example, during the recording, some women took several minutes to discuss the importance of friendships made in the group for their mental health, arguing at length about the topic. Therefore, *Mental Health* and *friendships* were highlighted as elements of analysis and synthesis of these accounts, respectively, which made up the mandala.

In the dialogue with these artisan women, the challenge of systematising their work, their ways of teaching and learning, all this was pervaded by the repercussions of these craft practices on the present, since these are old practices that connect to their ancestry. This ancestry is understood from historical origins that "[...] bring the possibility of elaborating more consistent and significant identity processes, i.e., beyond individual gain, processes that can be perceived collectively" (Cunha 2010, p. 193). We consider that, although some women did not identify their groups of belonging: ethnic, religious, cultural or social, there were elements of these experiences in their accounts, and in the choice of artisanal production techniques. With regard to staple crochet, for example, the Azorean influence of handicraft practices circulating in the Rio Grande region (Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil) was evident. In this group, based in the far south of Brazil, at no time was there an interest in learning bobbin lace (Figure 4), for example, even though it is a craft practiced in the neighboring state (Santa Catarina, Brazil) and also of Portuguese origin.



Figure 4. Bobbin Lace

Note: image retrieved from <http://www.pmf.sc.gov.br/mobile/index.php?pagina=notpagina¬i=5479>

Therefore, we can see that there were preferred techniques which were so considered because they were part of set of cultural practices specific to where they lived, very typical of that region. In this particular case, another aspect to consider is the lack of recognition of artisanal practices that could connect to black ancestry, since the staple crochet group is mostly formed by black women (black or brown), including the craft teacher. This choice shows the effects of the racism that structured Brazilian society, which erased, in different communities, elements of black ancestry in terms of

creative and autonomous products produced through artisanal techniques. In Brazil's southern region, which was heavily influenced by European immigration, many of these practices arising from the experience of blacks were subsumed or ignored. Based on this group, we will reflect on elements considered important to enter this investigative experience and

think about pedagogical aspects that occurred in the making of a mandala of possibilities – a graphic representation used to systematise the meetings.

Participant Observation of “Worldviews” amid “Experiential Knowledge”

Participant observation was essential as a data collection instrument. This approach is characterised by a “less structured, continuous conversation” that emphasises “absorbing local knowledge and culture for a longer period of time” without having to “ask questions within a relatively limited period” (Gaskell 2002, p. 64). Therefore, the need arose to promote a broader dialogue, knowing that it could transcend the initial agenda organised by the researchers. In a way, this conduct was expected and desired in the course of research activity with established groups of women. By choosing to use open instruments, we found the prominent need to identify aspects of the daily life of the artisan women and their collectivity.

Thus we realised that, even in different groups of women, participant observation and a few talks in particular allowed us to find the existence of Pedagogies, i.e., forms of teaching and learning in which they were protagonists. We do not consider this to be a feature exclusive of groups formed by women; however, through the approaches adopted in the research we conducted in recent years, we intend to point to a peculiar reality of women in their teaching and learning processes. Women in lower class groups, in particular, have been deprived of the opportunity to attend formal instructional spaces for centuries, and have built up their learning in other places and times, a fact we believe Pedagogy should address.

According to Gaskell (2002, p. 65) “[...] The understanding of the life worlds of respondents and specified social groupings is the sine qua non of qualitative interviewing”. These “life worlds” come close to what Freire² emphasises by referring to the “readings of the world.” These readings, which precede the reading of words, were guided by women in their dialogues about daily life. Poorly educated, they had the handicraft production collectives as a possibility of knowledge and income generation. Also considering that “no one

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- 2 Paulo Freire’s life and work were marked by his clear choice to be on the side of the oppressed. Born in a poor region of Brazil: Recife, Pernambuco, in 1921, he could, from an early age, observe the survival difficulties of the disadvantaged classes. Perhaps from this came his indignation against injustice and his great desire: the transformation of society which, according to him, should be less authoritarian, discriminatory and unequal. [...] Because he dared to put into practice a methodology capable not only of instructing the reading and writing of the illiterate, or literacy acquirers, as he preferred to call them, but also of inciting their liberation, Freire was accused of subverting the order established [by the Military Regime] and, after arrest, had to leave the country to follow the path of exile. [...] After 16 years of exile, Paulo Freire returned to Brazil in 1980. He taught at major universities such as UNICAMP (State University of Campinas) and PUC/SP (Pontifical University of São Paulo) and gradually recognized and re-learned life in his country. [...] Paulo Freire won several awards around the world in recognition of the relevance of his work in the field of education. In April 1997, he released his last book, *Pedagogia da Autonomia: Saberes necessários à prática educativa* [Pedagogy of Autonomy: Knowledge Required for Educational Practice], and in May the same year, after suffering a heart attack, Paulo Freire passed away. In 2012, through Law 12,612 of April 13, 2012, proposed by Representative Luíza Erundina, Paulo Freire was declared Patron of Brazilian Education. (Retrieved from: <https://www.paulofreire.org/paulo-freire-patrono-da-educacao-brasileira>).

reads the world isolatedly” (Passos 2008, p. 241), it is possible to infer that there are “as many worlds as possible readings of it” (Passos 2008, p. 242). We find resonance in this statement when we dialogue with the group of women.

Here, we understand “world” based on what Balduino Andreola points out by describing that

Freire relates the category world to: nature, culture, history, existence, consciousness, work, transformative action, word and praxis, concepts through which he tries to make explicit: reading the world – reading the word, the foundation of all literacy and all education (Andreola 2008, p. 288).

To us, “life worlds” is related to what Wivian Weller (2003, p. 1) highlights, based on Karl Mannheim, about “worldview” which, as she reminds us, is “[...] a series of experiences linked to the same structure which, in turn, constitutes the common basis of the experiences that pervade the lives of multiple individuals” (Weller 2003, p. 2). Which more closely denotes what Freire calls “reading the world”. Still concerning this issue, Weller points out that worldviews “[...] are built from practical actions and belong to the field that Mannheim defined as *atheoretical knowledge*” (Weller 2003, p. 2). In other words, there is implicit, not always systematised knowledge in the ways of seeing the world, and the role of the researcher is to find ways to access and name this knowledge in the groups he/she aims to research, thus contributing to these knowledge systematisation processes according to the interests of the collective. In the case of Mannheim, cited by Weller (2003, 2005), we can understand the concern with empirical social research. In our case, because we are pedagogues, we direct our analysis to understanding empirical pedagogical research that results in elements to advance the comprehension of ways of teaching and learning in lower-class groups.

The worldviews we found in our empirical pedagogical research were organized through interactions which, as we analyse today, after ten years, provided deeper insight on a group of women based on social constraints and on their historical contingencies. Through their individualities and peculiarities, in addition to the different knowledge that each one demonstrated to have, we were able to systematise the ways of teaching and learning, as well as conceptions about both.

Such views, manifested in the dialogues between these women, were therefore based on the daily experiences of each of them in their communities, in their daily movements to overcome social conditions. They did not always take the time to reflect on these events and actions, but their conduct and forms of argumentation brought up these experiences. According to Freire (1997, p. 82), in this case, “our mind [...] in the spontaneous orientation we make in the world does not operate epistemologically. It is not critically, inquisitively, methodically, rigorously directed to the world or to the objects it focuses on.”

He nonetheless values such experiences as fundamental to life in community and, beyond that, as essential for educational projects that aim to contribute to the acquisition of meaningful learning that is transformed into emancipatory processes. To Freire, experiential knowledge lacks criticality. “[...] It is the naïve, common-sense wisdom, disarmed of rigorous methods of approaching the object, however, not for this reason can we or should we disregard it” (Freire 1997, p. 82). The author points out that only by starting from common sense can we overcome it. Likewise, it is our view that the analysis of this knowledge generates questions and reflections not only for the women who manifest them,

but also for those who research and, consequently, for the procedures that guide field research.

Through this path, the collective and manual work amidst a study in the field of Education sought to establish simultaneity, an element that is seldom visible or debated in academic contexts, in order to bring together places and experiences arising from non-formality (Eggert 2017), which is quite common in the lives of these women. We believe these experiences with non-formality have been a fruitful teaching and learning time that enabled these women to somehow continue to resist oppression. It is the recognition of the potential of teaching and learning in different spaces and times, performed by people without an academic or school background. Moreover, these are ways of thinking that problematise and provoke reflections on traditional Youth and Adult Education methodologies.³

Simultaneous Dialogues and the Systematisation Mandala

In our research experiences with craft-producing groups, we noted that in order to structure our empirical findings, we would have to adapt collection and systematisation techniques in order to perform data analysis and interpretation. Hermetically structured strategies would be insufficient to deal with the experiences that are usually involved in researching working youths and adults. Thus, we began to outline possibilities for meetings that fostered participation while allowing for reorganisation according to present demands. We called *learning webs* the methodology designed for both groups.

In the first one, which we called the *hand weaving loom* group, there was an average of four artisan women at an atelier located in the city of Alvorada, in the metropolitan area of Porto Alegre, capital of the state of Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil). Dialogue interviews took place during the weaving of pieces. The artisans told the researchers about their processes and their stories and, at a certain point in the study, were invited to form two discussion groups inspired by the documentary method of Ralf Bohnsack, which was reread in Brazil by Wivian Weller and Nicole Pfaff (2013). In this group, participant research was a key element since the first meeting, held in 2007, and continued in the involvement of the artisan group when it accepted to hold weaving courses for Pedagogy students from 2010 onwards, apart from just providing information on how they produced their pieces. The dynamics with this group took place mostly in the weaving atelier, where we and the artisans planned some activities in which they visited schools and universities to present their work. We

3 In Brazil, until the 1988 Constitution, adult literacy was the task of well-meaning people who engaged in government campaigns or in NGO initiatives for eradicating Adult illiteracy in the country in the long term. According to Fischer and Godinho (2014), the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law 9394/96 extinguished *Ensino Supletivo* [Supplementary Education], which was meant to provide education for those who could not go to school or who had done so for a short period but, for several reasons, dropped out. In order to overcome the idea of supplementary education, which was provided through faster, simplified programmes, Youth and Adult Education was implemented and recognised as an education modality. Its proposition was that youth and adult programmes should recognise this public's specific features, including their work experience, and play three roles: to repair the previously denied right to basic education; to equalise learning of scientific and technological knowledge, even if through a late access to it; and to guarantee lifelong education for all Brazilian citizens (training role).

identified perceptions that these women built about their work and their lives, and systematised them over the meetings, which cannot be considered simply as data collection through questions and answers, because, as Brandão and Streck (2006) argue, knowledge sharing is one of the founding characteristics of participant research. Thus, we proposed for them to be both *teachers and students*, since they taught and learned in a dialogue with the other women in their production group, as well as with researchers, students and faculty.

The research on craft production in the *staple crochet* group was carried out in a more fluctuating way, through a proposal in the form of intervention which involved organizing a collective of women to learn the *staple crochet* technique. Women were invited to the meetings, and the field research took place from 2008 to 2010. The meetings were held weekly, and attendance varied from six to thirty women, in the urban area of the municipality of Rio Grande, in the south of the state Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil) as said earlier. During the conduction of this group, the *staple crochet* technique was chosen as the sole production method for collective learning. The researcher sought to organise the weekly meetings according to the number of women attending them. What we noted at first was that the technique of collecting information through dialogue required a different organisation depending on the number of women present.

The initial idea: whose execution was not fully possible, was that, in a group of up to six women, a learning web would be held in which each woman would be represented by a letter: W1, W2, W3, W4, W5 and W6. Thus, the web would be formed so that each woman could share with others what they brought to the group as knowledge. For example, W1 teaches W2, W3, W4, W5, and W6, and likewise, W2 teaches what she knows to W1, W3, W4, W5, and W6, and so on, thus forming a learning web. After establishing this, each group would have its own rotation, based on the composition of its web, thus ensuring the participation of each woman as a teacher and as a learner. In addition, a rotation between subgroups would be proposed when more women were present, so as to allow for multiple meeting possibilities. This dynamic was meant for all women to participate in different positions, not always as learners, not always as teachers, thus contributing to rotation. However, we found that the women insistently said they had nothing to share with the others.

Therefore, without abandoning the learning web, i.e., spaces for constant dialogue between women to learn and teach collectively, we adopted the formation of a large group, regardless of the number of women, always around a table, like the Popular Culture Circles.⁴ Thus, they could see their own production among the others, besides facilitating, through the positioning of their bodies, dialogue and fraternisation. Carlos Rodrigues Brandão (2008) points out that when Paulo Freire questions the “banking” concept of educating, he proposes cultural circles in which people can share their experiences and knowledge around a circle of people. Thus, no one occupies a visibly prominent place. Therefore, “[...] dialogue ceases to be a simple methodology or a technique of group action to become the guideline itself...” (Brandão 2008, p. 77).

4 The Popular Culture Circles were developed during the 1960's and 1970's in different parts of Brazil, through activities that contained ideas and propositions by Paulo Freire and by groups whose worldviews sought the emancipation of the people. The Popular Culture Movement (MCP) had its first National Meeting in 1961. Leôncio Soares and Osmar Fávero (2009) wrote a study that systematized the whole history of it.

Starting from the intentionality of the dialogue with women, we thought of strategies for establishing of the *staple crochet* group that would enhance collectivity. The presence of a craft teacher who mastered the technique became essential. In view of this demand, a woman was invited who was recognised by others as a knowledge authority in the area and who could share her knowledge with them in the proposed circle around the table. Thus, there was a significant change in the way the group was conducted, regardless of the number of women present. Even with a small number or with the full group, which ranged from six to thirty women, the craft teacher was responsible for starting the proposition of the day by talking to all of them, who were organised around a large table or divided in small groups according to their interests. Learning focused on *staple crochet*, but at the same time, some women said they wanted to learn other techniques they considered simpler, before moving on to *staple*, which they considered more complex. Sometimes the craft teacher would ask women with experience in teaching crafts to help leading the group so as to share the teaching and enhance learning. The women who learned *staple crochet* attached great importance to the models, i.e., pieces produced by the teacher which served as an inspiration to them. In addition to the models, handicraft magazines represented teaching material to be followed, as they illustrated mastery of the technique which would later allow them to creatively advance to more independent production.

The Mandala of Possibilities

The mandala image was intended to be a representation of what was said by the women attending the *staple crochet* group. As said earlier, considering the number of women and how they related to each other in this environment where they gathered to teach and learn handicraft production techniques, the presence of working instrument noises or parallel talks made literal transcription and speaker identification difficult. The mandala, in turn, was formed by nonlinear syntheses interconnected with each other, and allowed the inclusion of silences. Thus, in this approach, each group or set of groups had its mandala of possibilities.

In the research experience presented here, we began to construct the figure by the element at center of the mandala, formed by the theme that pervaded dialogues and practices with greatest emphasis (Figure 5). We started from the idea that this central theme should also be identified, during the research activity, as an aggregator of the analysis elements and thematic axes. Therefore, we constructed a mandala to systematise the dialogue produced in the *staple crochet* group, in which the central theme was *ancestry* (Cunha, 2010), considering these women's experiences with their Afro-Brazilian origin in a context of Azorean colonisation.



Figure 5. The mandala's central core

Analysis elements linked to this central theme emerged as a result of it while having also been originated from the theoretical studies that founded our research practice (Figure 6). Ancestry, in this example, is linked to five motion-generating elements in the mandala: corporeality (Gomes 2003a, 2003b, 2006), sensitivity (Josso 2004, 2006), health promotion (Werneck, Mendonça & White 2000), aesthetic care (Eggert 2003, 2004) and emancipatory processes (Freire 1981, 2006; Moreira 2008).

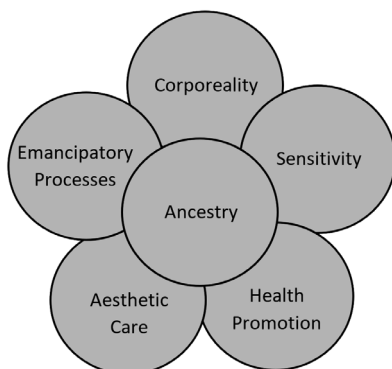


Figure 6. The mandala's central core and analysis elements

The mandala comprised the syntheses of talks, which were produced after we carefully listened to the audios and videos and reread the photographic records and notes in the field diary. These syntheses were placed close to the analysis elements they adhered to, grouped into three thematic axes and represented by coloured circles.⁵ The analysis elements, thematic axes and syntheses were not randomly juxtaposed. Both were designed as agreed to in the group, and were organised to represent the dialogues that emerged.

The first set of circles represented the thematic axis *being a woman* (Figure 7). A series of syntheses linked to it and briefly mentioned here were produced from the talks of the women who participated in the *staple crochet* group; according to them, the craft and the group allowed a relationship between them and a care of the self.

5 Due to editorial contingencies, the Journal will print the central parts in darker shades of gray, and each circle will have a hue, but you are invited to read with the commitment of imagining a colored mandala with the following colors: the core with the word 'ancestry' and the analysis elements: corporeality, sensitivity, health promotion, aesthetic care and emancipatory processes, in different shades of lilac. The next circles, which correspond to axes "being a woman", "autonomy" and "teaching and learning" should be imagined in green, red and purple, respectively. This is how the conversation produced with the women was made visible, and it can be seen in Cunha's doctoral thesis (2010).

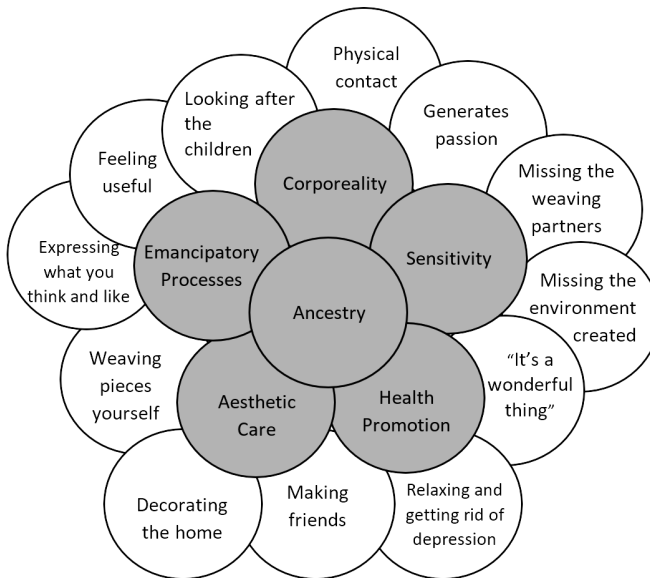


Figure 7. The mandala's central core and analysis elements, and the syntheses in the axis **being a woman**

According to the proposed design, ancestry is linked to corporeality, which in turn is closely intertwined with physical contact (between bodies) and the possibility of making handicrafts while looking after their children. In the researched group, such connections were possible even initially, when the women kept some distance between themselves, and grew stronger as they discovered the positive effects of sharing knowledge in the group, beyond what they were taught by the teacher. The influence between them, with positive and encouraging expressions, generated other images about themselves that reflected in their bodies. They came closer to each other and, likewise, praised each other with more affective, proud and receptive body postures, exchanging hugs and affection. The tasks of looking after their children conditioned the daily lives of most of them to routines aimed at the care of young children. We observed that the need to share care tasks was not recognised by their families, especially their partners and sometimes themselves. Thus, their bodies also bore the marks and consequences of doing all housework and child care. The synthesis *feeling useful* was placed next to the analysis element *emancipatory processes*, because, in the researched group, this was so read by the older women, whose bodies were marked by time and therefore had some physical limitations regarding some activities. Participation in a handicraft group, however, made them regain a certain type of protagonist role. The passion, generated by the possibility of making the pieces was manifested in the body through the joy and contentment about their production, and they became connected to the sensitivity provided by the awakening of good feelings about themselves and the group. Becoming passionate about handicraft expanded towards a passion for the group members, for themselves and for the collectivity itself.

The second set of circles presents the thematic axis *autonomy* (Figure 8). We included some empty spaces, i.e., moments of silence in which we could not identify syntheses that might represent what happened while they were producing together. In the talk syntheses, we noticed that the women recognized the beauty of their production and awakened their creativity, and because they became able to produce at home while looking after their children, they achieved some *autonomy*. It is also worth highlighting that this *autonomy* included *income generation* and the possibility of *reducing spending on clothing*, considering that several of the women were responsible for family support or for managing their families' finances.

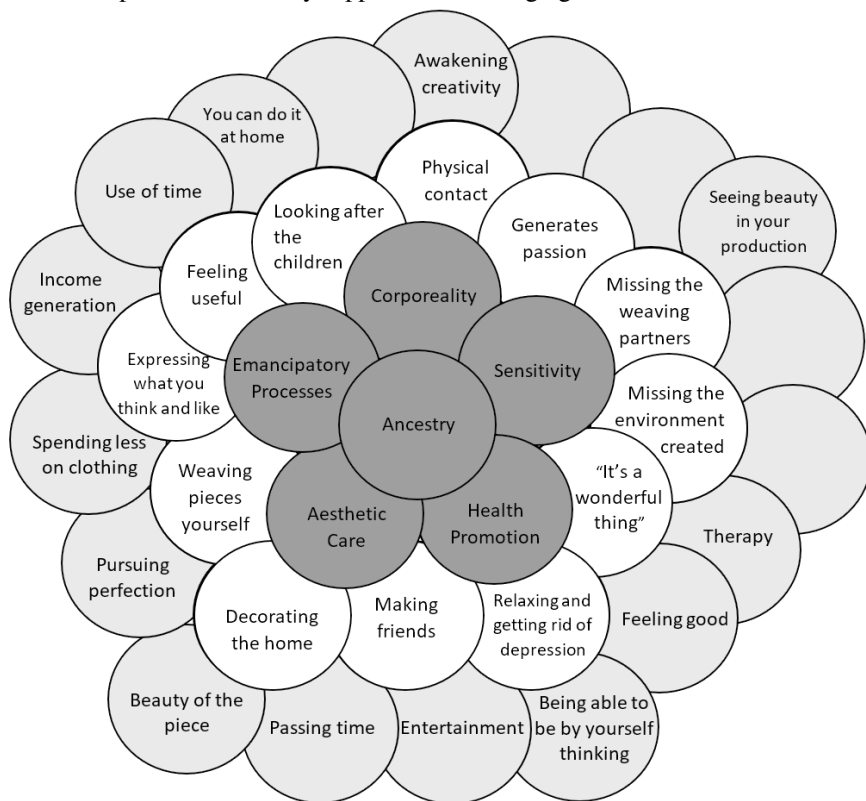


Figure 8. The mandala's central core and analysis elements, the syntheses in the axis **being a woman**, the syntheses in the axis **autonomy**, and silences

The third set of circles presents the thematic axis *learning and teaching* (Figure 9). As the women learned and taught, they overcame the technical difficulties in *staple crochet*. The craft mode was progressively experimented and enhanced. The syntheses *arousing curiosity* and *overcoming learning difficulties* demonstrated the encouragement they gave and received, which made them experience the achievement of completing a piece. It seems to us that their artisanal production was only possible through the direct contact that the teacher encouraged and allowed to happen between them. Another aspect to be highlighted was certainly the change in the body posture of women who no longer saw themselves as those

who did not know anything. On the contrary, by the overcoming learning difficulties, the desire to always learn more also emerged in them and, according to them, served as encouragement to their children, who had them as role models.

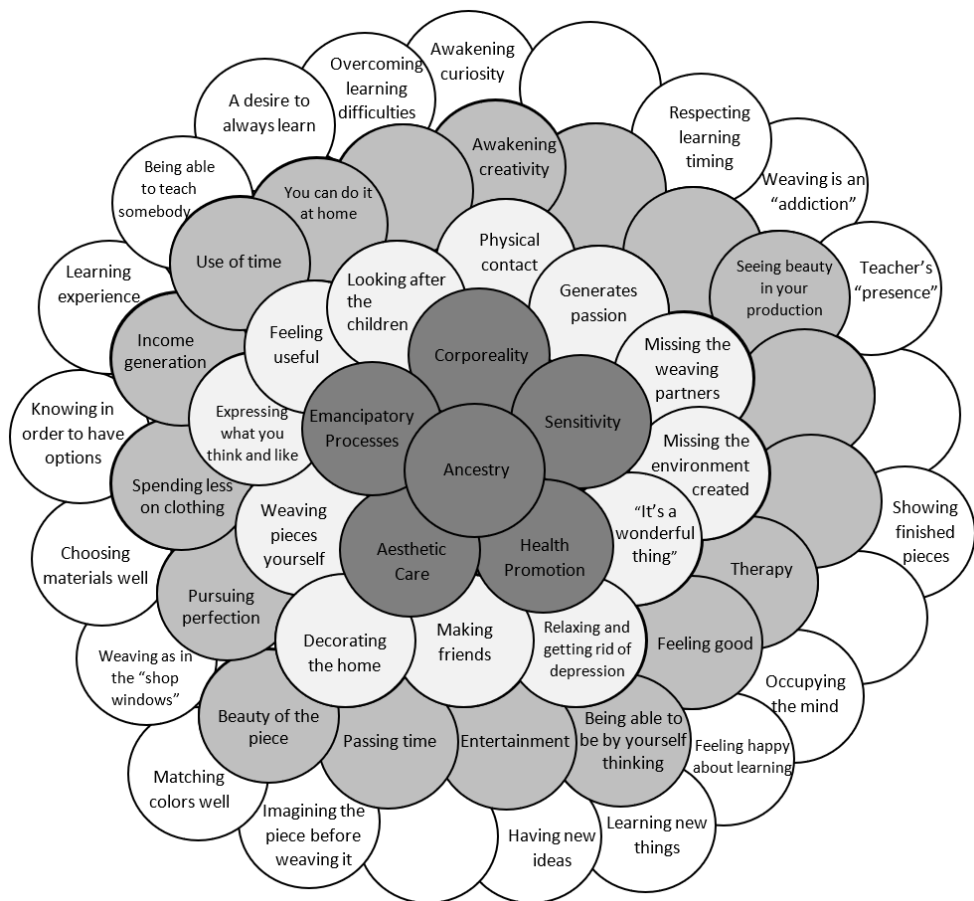


Figure 9. The mandala's central core and analysis elements, the syntheses in the axis the **being a woman**, the syntheses in the axis **autonomy**, the syntheses in the axis **teaching and learning**, and silences.

Thus, we identified the relationship between the syntheses, the thematic axes of each set of mandala circles and the analysis elements that were central to its constitution. The element *corporeality*, for example, in the axis *being a woman*, was linked to *physical contact* and *looking after the children*. With regard to *autonomy*, it was linked to *awakening creativity*, silences (empty spaces) and other syntheses, in a secondary way. Creativity in the experience of this group was closely linked to close contact with each other. It was through ways of teaching from body to body and with exclusive attention that craft teachers and peers encouraged

and contributed to the stimulation and creativity of those who learned, thus arousing curiosity to learn other craft techniques. The silences also represented some secrets that, according to the women, guaranteed a differential in their products (what is not revealed becomes exclusive in the pieces they produce) or, even, that which could not be captured. Certainly, other experiences would generate other elements, other syntheses, and new connections. However, our goal in outlining this experience with the *staple crochet* group was to present a data systematisation alternative that was not linearly organised, considering that groups are plural and dynamic. The figure represented by a mandala also seeks to create such a representation, and we are aware that, besides silences, other themes and syntheses can be added to it without the need to guarantee a fixed number of records. The mandala can be expanded according to groups' needs.

Final Considerations

The interpretation of the methodological processes in the production of manual experiences, according to our observations, showed that what the women were making and thinking became emblematic when, in the interpellations between the researchers and artisans, accounts emerged that demonstrated a sharp critical sense of their experiences and an outlining of ways of teaching and learning that pervaded knowledge derived from non-formality. Based on our research experiences with women, we address in these reflections the methodological choice whose principle was the simultaneity of dialogue and artisanal production, resuming forms of organisation and systematisation of experiences produced over the last ten years. Because we focused on these experiences, it became essential to detach from the traditional form of data collection through semi-structured interviews, whether individually or in group, from which accounts would be later represented and finally analysed.

The worldviews and knowledge that each woman brought to the groups we interacted with confronted us with the reality of experience, combined with academic knowledge that links us to feminist studies, Freirean studies and participant research. Each of these fields allowed articulations with researching in Education and Pedagogy, in the pursuit of a careful look at the condition of being a black, poor and peripheral woman in Brazil. In addition, we paid close attention of the fact that these are poorly educated women, which drove us to think about their experiences and aspects related to their autonomy, and to outline teaching and learning processes in non-school spaces. In such spaces, those who teach do not have systematised pedagogical knowledge; rather, they start from their experiences and the attention given to the group of learners so as to outline strategies in order to achieve the learning goals that pervade the collective. This way of researching, i.e., with women and not about them, generated the need to learn and teach within the group. We found that the peculiarities of each collective were significant for us to find similarities and differences in the ways of conducting and systematising experiences.

In the group of weavers that we call the *hand weaving loom*, i.e., the artisan women who produced pieces for sale, the experience of promoting a displacement from their apprentice position to that of teachers was significant. Interacting with groups of higher education students who showed an interest in their weaving in the sense of recognising it as an

object of knowledge promoted other meanings for their daily tasks, which they previously viewed only as manual, non-intellectual work..

In the case of the women in the *staple crochet* group, which is the main object of this article, their initial talks often expressed the conviction that they had nothing to teach one another; the researcher was thus faced with the need to change the schedule so as to start from a more hermetic learning web in order to promote a wider rotation in knowledge exchange. The women demonstrated that it was possible to learn in other ways, even though a central figure (the craft teacher) was necessary so that they could later feel authorised to share knowledge. They resumed the importance of models, which they did not view as something to be eternally followed, but rather something to inspire them to dedicate to new learning and possibilities of making handicraft pieces. Far more than a standard, the model provided the security they needed to enter the new.

The mandala of possibilities, which was built from the dialogue with the artisan women in the *staple crochet* group, allowed us to analyse a larger spectrum of the talks that emerged at the meetings, while highlighting elements that were also inspired by the theoretical-methodological framework adopted. Paying attention to the women's talks and promoting wider sharing spaces; recognising and valuing their worldviews so as to seek reflections about them based on dialogue; and providing spaces that guaranteed the women's place of speech, as well as listening to their aspirations, strengthened new views of themselves that generated changes in different dimensions of their daily lives. Recognising themselves as someone who can learn, valuing the collectivity and adopting new attitudes towards new knowledge are some of these changes.

We can see that the weaving produced with this group was not enough to achieve the emancipatory processes they might pursue (to overcome family and domestic violence, to have financial independence, to advance their education, for example), but we realized that, during the meetings, there was knowledge sharing and the possibility of learning and teaching. In addition, the autonomous completion of a piece was enchanting, with the beauty of the work done. This generated a humanising experience for these women. In the academic field, moreover, we were able to experiment with this encounter with pedagogies conducted by poorly educated women, and advances were achieved in the forms of systematising and recording these collective experiences.

The alternatives we found in both researched groups for systematising findings were possible through dialogue between the women. The way we found to record what was listened to provoked new reflections while making it possible to recognise, as said earlier, ways of teaching and learning from the world of poorly educated artisan women. These findings are relevant for studies on Youth and Adult Education, especially regarding teaching projects designed for this modality. The more horizontal relations in the empirical research process allow, in this case, the dialogical construction that produces the recognition of knowledge produced while handicrafts were made.

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