

# EPISTEMOLOGICAL DEBATE TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF FEMINIST SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST RESEARCH

*DEBATE EPISTEMOLÓGICO PARA O ENTENDIMENTO DA PESQUISA FEMINISTA CONSTRUCIONISTA SOCIAL*

*DEBATE EPISTEMOLÓGICO A LA COMPRESIÓN DE LA INVESTIGACIÓN FEMINISTA SOCIAL CONSTRUCCIONISTA*

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**Abstract:** In this article, we aim to establish a dialogue between social constructionist and feminist research, highlighting similarities and possible tensions. Our discussion is based on the suggestion of dividing feminist research into three moments: empiricist, standpoint and postmodern. We suggest that the interface between social constructionist and postmodern feminist research proposes the problematization of universal truths, based on the notion of the social construction of realities. The epistemological proposition of this interface is political and relational, it potentiates practices by expanding possible themes and research methods, with a special interest in the effects of oppressive discourses on everyday life. The main contribution of this article is to invite the scientific community to approach feminist social movements, recognizing their latent and urgent demands for the transformation of society.

**Keywords:** Epistemology; Feminism; Social psychology; Social constructionism; Feminist social constructionist research.

**Resumo:** Neste artigo, temos como objetivo estabelecer um diálogo entre as pesquisas construcionista social e feminista, destacando aproximações e possíveis tensões. Nossa discussão se faz a partir da sugestão da divisão da pesquisa feminista em três momentos: empiricista, standpoint e pós-moderno. Sugerimos que a interface entre as pesquisas construcionista social e feminista pós-moderna propõe a problematização de verdades universais, a partir da noção da construção social das realidades. A proposição epistemológica dessa interface é política e relacional, potencializa práticas pelo alargamento de possíveis temas e métodos de pesquisa, com especial interesse pelos efeitos de discursos opressivos para o cotidiano. Este artigo tem como principal contribuição o convite para que a comunidade científica se aproxime dos movimentos sociais feministas, reconhecendo suas demandas latentes e urgentes para transformação da sociedade.

**Palavras-chave:** Epistemologia; Feminismo; Psicologia social; Construcionismo social; Pesquisa feminista construcionista social.

**Resumen:** En este artículo, pretendemos establecer un diálogo entre la investigación construcionista social y la feminista, destacando similitudes y posibles tensiones. Nuestra discusión se basa en la sugerencia de dividir la investigación feminista en tres momentos: empirista, de punto de vista y posmoderna. Sugerimos que la interfaz entre la investigación construcionista social y la feminista posmoderna propone la problematización de las verdades universales, a partir de la noción de construcción social de las realidades. La propuesta epistemológica de esta interfaz es política y relacional, potencializa prácticas al ampliar posibles temas y métodos de investigación, con especial interés en los efectos de los discursos opresores en la vida cotidiana. El principal aporte de este artículo es invitar a la comunidad científica a acercarse a los movimientos sociales feministas, reconociendo sus demandas latentes y urgentes para la transformación de la sociedad.

**Palabras clave:** Epistemología; Feminismo; Psicología social; Construcionismo social; Investigación feminista construcionista social.

## Introduction

In this article, we aim to establish a dialogue between the social constructionist and feminist research, highlighting similarities and possible tensions. This way, through a historical recapture, we seek to present different moments of feminist research as recognized by a hegemonic western world. Right after, we seek to discuss about how, as crossed by postmodern contributions, feminist research approaches social constructionist propositions on science, overall to understand it as a social practice. We conclude discussing potentialities of the definition of a social constructionist feminist research, aiming to highlight the commitment of doing research engaged with respect to the diversity and the plurality of perspectives on the world, considering social transformation. We highlight possible significant effects that the field of therapeutic practices would benefit from with the critical perusal of hegemonic discourses in order not to reproduce daily microaggression.

When discussing epistemological issues, we also argued in favor of the vocabulary expansion of what science is. Our intention is not in disagreeing with the relevance of any type of knowledge production, but to reflect on the possibility of alternative formats, epistemological as well as methodological. We believe that plural realities are provoked by different knowledge, made by multiple questions, then presented in a way to respect the complexity of what it “is” to do science.

This way, we introduce ourselves as feminist and social constructionist psychologists and researchers, inspired by the contributions about the social constructionist feminist research, as well as to point out other sensible debates to the constant update of the social constructionist research. As researchers that join the process of social transformation, attentive to the historical and current processes of colonization of power, knowledge and being, it appears to us a coherence process with our history and position in the academic and social world to affirm the pertinence of social constructionist feminist research.

## The feminist research from historical markers

In this first part of the text, we present approaches and advances of feminist epistemologies related to the processes of knowledge production, based on western feminist movements. Therefore, we make an ethical and political safeguard that such movements, as the Feminist Waves, cannot handle to express all feminist movements in their complexity, which would be to reduce many fights of women in different parts of the world, with their specificities as the Feminist Waves suggest. In this sense, there are authors in Brazilian literature that describe such western movements from Brazilian history (Montenegro-Ribeiro, Nogueira, & Magalhães, 2021).

However, the choice we made that justifies the correlation between such social movements and social constructionism is due to markedly western contributions, having been influenced and sensitive to different forms of knowledge production. We anticipate already that its marks are historical, but not gradual or chronological and that the presence of a movement does not end the other, they are phases that coexist until current days (Narvaz & Koller, 2006).

In this brief history, we are inspired by authors such as Mary Gergen (2001), Sandra Harding (2004) and Conceição Nogueira (2017). What these authors will highlight is that the process of knowledge construction is contextualized, situated and political. This way, the forms of doing science and its results vary with the context, that is, it is not pure and truthful, but relational.

Thus, we highlight a condition: those movements, especially the two first moments, as will be described, are based on women fights that gained evidence, that is, women who could establish relations with legitimized institutions, such as academia for instance. Hence, it is noted that groups of women that have always been marginalized were not included in these first more hegemonic debates.

For example, we highlight that, although the First Feminist Wave (very much known as the Suffragist Movement, in favor of the feminine vote's legitimacy) is an important and legitimate movement, we reflect upon the possibilities and constraints that the social orders impose so that we advance to what is established by the *status quo*. Moreover, we question academia's role in sustaining certain discourses, and in the problematization of who are the people, the content and methods considered, by excellence, worthy of being in its scope.

Mary Gergen (2001) and Conceição Nogueira (2017) recover the epistemological debate proposed by Sandra Harding, which presents a history of feminist research, divided in three distinct moments: empiricist feminism, the feminist point of view (*standpoint feminism*) and postmodern feminism. The first stage of this history has direct influence from Iluminism, modern science, the Fordist mode of production and the liberal ideas that founded the base of the democratic society we currently live in. This moment spread ways of understanding that we individually have the ability to accumulate knowledge and that there is only one way to do science – conventionally empiricist, quantitative, replicable and generalizing –, being this the true producer of ways of understanding about the world and the ways to conduct life. It is in this scenery that many forms of doing science are born, including psychology, compactuating with modernity fundamentals created by the male, white and bourgeois hegemony.

Even acting in a “*menstream*” form – that is, in a hegemonic and manly spread form –, empiricist feminist scientists presented undoubted gains to science, especially by problematizing spaces and results of sexist researches. Their point of major criticism was not exactly the way of doing research, but the generalization of results. In other words, they problematized an empirical science that was concerned in developing researches with male participants and drawing lines of normality based on them, with generalizations that not only revealed negligence with other groups but also showed who was in the center of the construction of this knowledge (Nogueira, 2017).

With the interest of advancing beyond the reproduction of a way of doing “*menstream*” research, the researchers started to seek for more horizontal formats of investigation. Thus, we go to the second stage of feminist research's history, the feminist point of view, being its contributions the incorporation of qualitative methods and the explicit political positioning of their productions (Gergen, 2001; Harding, 2004).

Feminist academics received contributions from the energy of the Second Wave's political movements, especially from the women fight for civil rights – already started with the Suffragist – for their advance in spaces of higher education. In this manner, they began arguing against researches that supported stereotyped notions of women and femininity, as well as the ones who presented results that endorsed male superiority – that is, the results of researches that deliberately sustained male superiority (Gergen, 2008).

Conceição Nogueira (2017) argues that during the Second Wave many feminist theories, that trigger debates of extreme relevance to women, were born, under the analysis of power differences. By incorporating political issues of the public world in research, they present the relation between what is structurally social to the oppression lived by women in their homes and other “private” environments, tensioning this separation so marked in modernity (Neves

& Nogueira, 2003). Such tension is brought by the known *slogan* of this phase of the feminist movement, “the personal is political”.

Sandra Harding (2004) presents political and intellectual controversies for research in the feminist point of view. The author perceives an effort of this movement by doing engaged research, which turns her original and defiant by incorporating politics to research, but not surpassing theoretical issues and, by not doing it, reproduce normatizations. Thus, according to the author, contradictions from the feminist point of view are, for example, betting on qualitative and narrative methods, and on discussions about the relation between participants and researchers, but paradoxically base their debate on an essentialist and individualistic perspective. This way, the feminist point of view research does not surpass distinctions marked between the psychological and the biological, sustaining understandings regarding their intrinsic, individual and naturally distinct nature between men and women.

The main critics to this epistemology also contributed to a movement of transition and construction of another way of doing feminist science, postmodern feminism, whose formulation is based on the plurality, not on the dichotomy. While the feminist point of view positioning sought the creation of the universal woman’s voice, interested on finding the difference from the man’s voice, those researchers did not pay attention to the differences that are on the group of women itself. Thus, groups were left out, such as black, indigenous, quilombola, poor women, women with bodies of varied functionalities, old or adolescents, lesbians, bisexuals, transexuals and travestis<sup>1</sup>, those who came from non Anglo-Saxon continents, among others.

Postmodern feminism leaned on different contributions from movements of women whose voices have been denouncing the hegemony of narratives regarding the lived oppressions, claimed by a group of women. Such hegemonic narratives tend to sustain oppressions similar to the ondes of the patriarchy, considering the reproduction of silencing and invisibilization processes of the experiences of other groups of women (Neves & Nogueira, 2003). Thus, the development of research related to the multiple oppressions became urgent. Among the movements that contributed to the diversity character of postmodern feminism, we list black feminism, decolonial studies, decolonial feminism and intersectional studies.

Black feminism had a central role to demark the beginning of the Third Feminist Wave, especially by the critical propositions to the epistemology of the feminist point of view. That movement articulated voices from different marginalized groups of women by defying the white, academic, middle class, of bodies without disability that were and are controlling theories, research and publications (Gergen, 2008). Highlighted names that may be cited here are Angela Davis, *bell hooks* (it is worth to remember that it is the pseudonym of Gloria Jean Watkins, whose choice of name deserves two notes: the first one is that it is a tribute to her grandmother – Bell Blair Hooks –, and the second one is that it is intentionally spelled in lowercase, as a way to emphasize her ideas and not her name or any title), Conceição Evaristo, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Djamila Ribeiro, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Lélia Gonzalez, Patricia Hill Collins and Sueli Carneiro.

In this manner, the Third Wave feminists propose an analysis of the multiple identities, unstable and incoherent, personified and that cross different groups of women. Women with varied experiences of power and oppression, from their bodies in the world and, consequently, different possibilities and constraints of social interactions. Highlighted by these epistemological movements, that perception regarding specificities that different women live varies in many productions of the first epistemologies, considering their character in the search of universal and generalizable knowledge, answering to the group “woman” (Nogueira, Saavedra, & Costa, 2008).

In the sense of affirming the need of plurality of knowledge and experiences, so that multiple narratives and epistemologies are validated, perspectives that approach the hegemonic processes of doing science in a critical form are needed, in an epistemic turn that promotes decolonial approaches in science. This way, supported by Aníbal Quijano's studies, Rita Segato (2021) points that situating race as an idea-axle of the decolonial studies concerns the recognition of our history, marked by the erasure of our memories and censorships invoked by coloniality. The anthropologist understands that gender and race must be deciphered together and reiterates the effects of the biologization of difference as a colonial/modern project. From this process derives the invisibility of the historical process and disclaimer of such erasures, deliberated on the expropriator and spoiler's behalf.

By situating us as researchers of a Southern epistemological movement, it is worth mentioning Geni Nuñez's (2019) invitation to a process of decolonizing thought. The author weaves a critic to the hegemonic and eurocentric thought, and traces an analysis regarding the colonization of thought, therefore, of the subjectivity, being supported by the field of decolonial studies.

Accompanied by interlocutors who dialogue concerning the effects of colonization as a historical and subjective phenomenon, she argues that we currently deal with the marks and effects from coloniality still present. This way, we have our bodies and narratives crossed by the effects of a colonizing process that violated groups of people, diverse knowledge, forms of knowledge production and possibilities of description of us. In other words, regarding relations of knowledge, power and domination of colonization, we still face them in daily life and in social practices.

Specifically concerning psychology, coloniality can be observed in the field when individualizing positions are assumed, which blame people as if their personal and subjective trajectories did not hold relation with the history of the country and of the world (Nuñez, 2019). As Andrea Moraes and Patrícia Farias (2018, p. 235) suggest: "Decolonial thought proposes a new paradigm, which considers not only geopolitics, but also body-politics, that is, the geo-historical and corporeal situation that articulates knowledge production"<sup>2</sup>.

Thus, to propose feminist studies that are engaged with the process of social change is to point to a decolonial and intersectional analysis, that accompanies an agenda of historical reparation marked by racist, misogynous, ableist processes, among other violences. According to Geni Nuñez (2019), it is a positioning of collective responsabilization in favor of eradicating inequalities, welcoming and supporting the pains caused by a process of colonization and coloniality.

In relation to intersectionality, the term was presented in the 1980s by the black and activist college professor, Kimberlé Crenshaw (2004). Her studies directed many ways through which race and gender interact, and in this intersection different oppression expressions shape multiple dimensions of black women's experiences. Therefore, she denounces the condition in which black women (do not) meet, that is, are not represented by feminist discourses, neither anti-racist discourses. Thus, she shows the importance of creating discursive repertoire so that we can first understand that situations exist, understand them as problems, in order to deal with them. She argues that saying, speaking or naming is a political act necessary to the existence of what is named. It is a position of language that gives vocabulary to face the problems.

In this moment, it is noticeable a plural and denser involvement between the academy and social movements, which is a mark of all the history of feminist research, taking shape even more in this historical moment. The recognition of this encounter participates in a process that explicit aspects previously less central, so that many voices, that were silenced over time, started having spaces to be expressed through counter-hegemonic ways. The *internet*

is an example of central vehicle to the extension and dissemination of feminist social movements. Not in a homogeneous manner and with a few opposed opinions, this moment may characterize the Fourth Wave of the feminist movement by its composition formed by activists who use social media as ways for denouncing and collective organizations against sexism and misogyny (Chamberlain, 2016).

According to Cristiane Costa (2019), the autonomy and freedom offered by communication on social media mainly favored the marginalized movements, poor people that got organized in political action, especially in countries that have overwhelming inequality in terms of rights politics and the access to those. Still according to the author, this explosion of social media users for activist activities may be analyzed by the urgent need of voices many times silenced as well as by the political reach of those voices.

This brief history may be read from different sides, among which we list: from the explicit effort that women have engaged throughout the centuries seeking representativity and legitimacy, specifically in the western world, in different spaces, here namely in the search for social rights and in knowledge production; from the arduous movement of questioning *status quo*, seeking to overcome and sustain power structures, including inside social movements of historically, but differently, marginalized; from the reached advances and, especially, in the legitimate effort in order to reach it, regarding understandings concerning the coexistence of multiple understandings of what being a woman is, as well as concerning the different scientific methodological propositions and from the existent relation between the legitimacy of what knowledge is, situated in its epistemological debate, and its repercussions on daily life, that is, on the plural possibilities of existing.

## Interfaces with the social constructionist research

The problematization proposed by the previously cited authors lead to reflections on other ways of thinking from non-hegemonic repertoire, and to the possibility of creation of new discourses and other issues. This way, the relation between new discourses and new realities built is an indispensable theme for social constructionist researchers. Those questions are especially centered on the nature of truth, knowledge and language (Gergen, 2001). In this understanding, when we converse and coordinate movement in communities, we create worlds based on the postulation of language as action producer, by its performatic character (McNamee, 2017).

In order to situate and summarize the understandings of social constructionist research, we present its elements as described by Kenneth Gergen (1999, 2015), especially emphasizing the direct relation between discourse and reality, which the social constructionist epistemology incorporates to its *praxis*:

1. The cultural and historical specificity of the forms of knowing the world – there is no fundamental relation between the words and the reality they describe. The world descriptions themselves are constructions of reality.
2. The primacy of human relationships on the production and sustenance of knowledge – the world 's explications are results by the meanings that we build in a relationship, so the meaning of the words derives from its social use.

3. The interconnection between knowledge and action – different forms of describing the world imply different forms of social action, in a way that the truths we create sustain new forms of action in the world.
4. The valorization of a critical and reflexive position – what is known as right and truthful may be rethought, including the traditions and how they reflect our actions and living ways.

Social constructionism may be defined as a critical and interdisciplinary movement that has been sustained overall with the problematization of essentialistic views on social realities, pointing to the important role of language, context and social interactions in the construction of the world we live in (Gergen & Gergen, 2010; Spink & Frezza, 1999). This way, this epistemology is interested in the study of choices of certain words instead of others and how those reflect on actions. From this comprehension, knowledge is seen as a relational product, deriving from a certain social, historical and cultural context, circumscribed between the members of a specific community (Nogueira, 2001).

In its diffuse origin, as mentioned by Kenneth Gergen and Mary Gergen (2010), the social constructionist movement makes use of different epistemologies and theories as contributors to their own epistemological sustenance. Regarding the influence of feminist studies, social constructionist researchers find space for their disquietude concerning diversity, and add their annoyance about science formats, lighting up formal aspects of rationality as fundamentally masculine. Conventional understandings of what science is refer to the purist model of stereotyped scientists inside labs, studying any subject, except human relations (Neves & Nogueira, 2003; Rago, 1998).

Feminists contest this ideal and propose new possibilities of multiple images that may assume researchers and their researches, leaning on science as the promoter and sustainer of discourses that are culturally spread and shared. According to Harding (1991), democratic sciences must be able to distinguish between how people want the world and how it is, seeking future social transformations. What is also called by Kenneth Gergen (2016) as visionary research made by people that, by developing research, also acted as agents of social transformation.

Moreover, Harding (1993, p. 11) suggests that it is a “delirium to imagine that feminism reaches the perfect theory, a ‘normal’ paradigm with conceptual and methodological assumptions accepted by all currents”<sup>3</sup>. This positioning open and receptive to multiple approaches, in constant transformation, allocates science and feminist epistemologies side by side with other epistemologies and forms of doing science, not intending to be superior.

In this manner, we highlight some approaches between interests and ways of doing post-modern and social constructionist feminist research, as epistemological contributions, sustained by Mary Gergen (2001): criticism as scientific activity; social and political values integrated to scientific work; the understanding that the limits of language are limits of our worlds, and how the description of multiple voices through ethnography may compose more diverse notions about the worlds; lives’ narrative modes, such as fictional and artistical; the reflexivity as a way to compose the text and scientific doings; the performativity beyond the written text (Gergen & Gergen, 2010). Such themes are inevitably covered in social, ethical, aesthetic and political values and, at the same time, require methods that handle expressing its complexity (Gergen, 2015).

## Encounters and tensions between both epistemologies

Affirming assumptions and postulations of a research named social constructionist feminist at this moment may answer some needs, among which may be fundamental the recognition itself of the theorization and activism's advances on 21st century feminist science, with effects in epistemological transformations. The social constructionist movement is at times recognized as a research method, but fundamentally an epistemology. Also, must be upgraded regarding the advances of social movements and the construction of new concepts, being these alive in fluidity, sustaining arguments capable of transforming the relations of persons with their life.

Some authors inserted in the study field of this interface point out some advances in the encounter between feminist researches and social constructionist research. It is worth highlighting that Margareth Rago (1998) problematizes the construction process of a certain feminist epistemology, suggesting its articulation with postmodern assumptions, which is also referred to the operating modes in the social constructionist science field. This way, it is understood that what postmodern feminists intend and do is to the construction of a new language, in an emancipator feminist counter-discourse.

Joan Biever, Cynthia Fuentes, Lisa Cashion, and Cynthia Franklin (1998) understand that among what approaches the postmodern feminists to social constructionism is: the importance of the social context to comprehend relationships, interactions and behaviors; the skepticism towards common beliefs regarding truth, knowledge, power, *self*; and language; the analysis of power towards understandings that legitimize western male domination and the valorization and respect to diversity. At the same time, they propose that the explicit political positioning on feminist productions, seeking changes in sexist practices and environments, is among the main distinctions.

Ten years later, Barbara Marshall (2008) agrees with the authors, indicating the similarities and divergence between feminisms and social constructionism, adding that the approximations do not only exist, as they are necessary. According to the author, by situating words as possible to revolutionize practices, the social constructionist feminists propose that new productions of vocabulary and meanings as sex, gender, gender roles, gender identity, gender order, sex/gender system, patriarchy, gender problem, among others, could promote new social practices.

Judith Lorber (2008) goes back the structural aspects that are influent in this construction, which is complementary to the interactive process between people. This way, the signification process focused on work organizations, systems of social control such as laws, medicine and knowledge production (especially science), started being interesting to the explanations on the most important issues to the feminist studies. Not only the conceptualization, problematization and reconstruction of significations about gender, very dear to the feminist studies; social constructionist feminist researchers bent on the interactions and nuances in which patriarchy is present.

Thus, resuming the reflections about decolonial and intersectional feminisms, the current feminist critique concerns particular, ideological, racist and sexist formats (Gomes, 2018; Nuñez, 2019; Rago, 1998), therefore colonizing, exclusionary knowledge and thought, incapable of comprehending its productions towards difference. Therefore, we may point out approaches that dialogue with the ones presented by the cited authors, as well as explore other two aspects from this reflection: the relational dimension of explanation of the human phenomena and the allocation of the gender debates through performative perspective.



Firstly, we point out the approximation between feminist and social constructionist knowledge and the relational dimension, that offers explanation to human phenomena. In this manner, social constructionist feminist psychology is not interested in comprehending what is human from the “individual” (individualistic explanation based on western male metric), but otherwise from the cultural, intersectional and decolonial dynamic (Nuñez, 2019; Rago, 1998).

Secondly, we highlight the gender comprehension as a social construction, once the sexual and gender explanations are deconstructed and start being situated in the relational, social, political and discursive dimension (Gomes, 2018; Marshall, 2008; Nogueira, 2017).

It is worth mentioning Vera Paiva (2008)’s text, which develops how social constructionist ideas could contribute to debates in the sexuality and gender study field. The author highlights the movement of the sex comprehension’s enlargement from the optics of the instinct and impulse to a social construction critics. For that matter, she dialogues with significant texts to the debate, such as Gayle Rubin (1975)’s essay, which has been recognized as central to question the “essentialism notions that attributed the origin of gender inequality to sexuality and reproduction”<sup>4</sup> (p. 644).

In this comprehension context, some authors point out that the debate on gender issues is more situated from performance other than discourse (Marshall, 2008; Nogueira, 2017; Paiva, 2008). Thus, Rachel Hare-Mustin (2004) understands that gender is a social construction sustained by different processes that are associated with how society negotiates and legitimizes the socialization and education of children based on gender binarism, on the construction of social arrangements based on such binarism, on the rigid configuration concerning marriage (that privileges patriarchal and sexist notions) and on the language itself as descriptor and constructor of gender differences.

Regarding the tensions between both epistemologies, we present some points. First, some authors will point out that feminist epistemology is born with a political base that is more politically involved than social constructionism, sometimes recognized by a certain relativism (Biever et al., 1998; Marshall, 2008). Since we are anchored in both epistemologies, we do not agree that there is relativism in social constructionism, but we do affirm that there are different emphases, although many approximations, as already mentioned.

While the main interest of social constructionism is in investigating linguistic constructions and how they explain and make sense of the world and ourselves (Gergen, 1999), feminist epistemologies are interested in proposing a new language (Rago, 1998). This way, social constructionist research, based on the power differences of hegemonic discourses, seek to build new meanings about the world together with people, in a situated and ethical way.

On the other hand, feminist research recognizes a world constructed from a patriarchal and colonialist logic. Such studies offer reformulations within theories, incorporating the feminist critique of scientific practice, which generated many discomforts in the original and traditional formulations of theories, notably androcentric (Rago, 1998). Thus, we can highlight that feminist research arises as a result of women’s claims about everyday life and the interior of institutions with regard to the process of knowledge production.

Furthermore, among some aspects of the *praxis* of social constructionist psychology is the promotion of dialogue and collaboration. Some feminist researchers and therapists will question the possibility of practicing some postmodern assumptions without considering the power differences marked in the construction of identities (Hare-Mustin, 2004), which would explain such an argument by feminist researchers about relativism of social constructionism.

Another aspect of tension between social constructionism and feminist research is the legitimacy of emotional issues. For social constructionism, emotions are understood as an interactional language game, which favors the construction of certain meanings for emotional expressions (Rom Harré, 1986). On the other hand, feminists are less interested in understanding the process of emotion construction as an interactional aspect, and more focused on the study of emotions as a field of interest for women, since they are recognized as predominantly female, therefore, building argument and repertoire as interpretations about the world from the logic of the sensitive.

Such formulations are also related to the dichotomization between reason x emotion; objectivity x subjectivity; body x mind, so marked in empiricist and androcentric logic (Rago, 1998). Therefore, the recognition of subjectivity – including the emotional dimension in its understanding – for explanations of the world accounts for a central aspect of feminist research. This also marks the search for new vocabulary, in order to overcome androcentric ways of explaining and qualifying human interactions.

Finally, another point of tension between the epistemologies concerns the way research is presented, also referring to the feminist intention of expanding the ways of telling our stories (Gergen, 2001; Rago, 1998). Feminist historic interpretation seeks to break with hierarchies, dichotomies and binarisms, and with narratives that are formulated based on what is “good” and “successes” often anchored in masculine metrics. Thus, research that tells about the lives of women, with their details of a subjective daily life, that problematizes hegemonically formulated notions, in the form of narrative research and artistic performance, are also proposals emphasized by feminist research.

## Reflections

The recognition of the importance of feminist debates and their consequences is indisputable. Talking about feminism is talking about the daily difficulties and challenges that different women live with their different bodies, also the pride in composing a history of resistance and struggle, which is made in the social construction of different groups of women. The social constructionist movement, when interested in discussing the political dimension of everyday life, responds attentively by joining the advances that those studies have represented in the social field (in the streets, in art and media), as well as in the scientific field.

In this sense, pointing to a social constructionist feminist research seems relevant, as we suggest the political character concerning the issues that involve the gender debate of post-modern feminist research, associated with the relational ontological explanations of social constructionist research. Still, this connection of values also expands the diffusion of common ideas to communities, with effects for a greater sharing of pertinent reflections for the transformation of the world.

Therefore, the development of such research can contribute to the field of development of reflections and therapeutic practices in the field of Psychology, for example. We can be more attentive as psychologists to reflect on the corporeal form that hegemonic discourses assume, in different contexts of therapeutic action, so that there are changes in terms of requests, agreements, recognition, changes, among other expressions also of subjective orders. This is a remarkable process of construction and change to which the field of therapeutic

practices, which works especially with nuances and micro-interactions, must align itself so that prejudices, sexism, racism, among other forms of microaggressions, are not reproduced, nor acceptable even if imperceptibly charged.

As Kenneth Gergen and Mary Gergen (2011) suggest, it is necessary to think about how the productions of the social sciences truly benefit culture and human well-being in general. When we bet on expanding what we understand as scientific expression, we invite the most varied forms of human communication to this understanding. The main contribution of this article is to invite the scientific community to approach feminist social movements, recognizing their latent and urgent demands for the transformation of society.

## Notes

1 Travesti is a gender category emerged in Latin America by those who claimed what once was could even be considered an offense, transforming it into an identity. It is always used with female pronouns.

2 Direct translation from the Portuguese citation, as referenced below, by the article's translator.

3 Direct translation from the Portuguese citation, as referenced below, by the article's translator.

4 Direct translation from the Portuguese citation, as referenced below, by the article's translator.

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<b>History</b>	<p><b>Submission:</b> 04/05/2021  <b>Review:</b> 04/15/2022  <b>Acceptance:</b> 04/18/2022</p>
<b>Contribution</b>	<p><b>Conception:</b> DG, CG; CN.  <b>Data collection:</b> DG, CG; CN.  <b>Data analysis:</b> DG, CG; CN.  <b>Elaboration of manuscript:</b> DG.  <b>Reviews of important intellectual content:</b> DG, CG; CN.  <b>Final approval of manuscript:</b> DG, CG; CN.</p>
<b>Financing</b>	<p>Processes nº 2016/25882-4 and 2018/16490-0, Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (FAPESP).</p>