



[Unpublished articles]

The use of intersectionality in criminology

O uso da interseccionalidade na criminologia

Fernanda Martins¹

¹ Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM), Santa Maria, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. E-mail: Fernanda.ma@gmail.com. ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9444-120X>.

Victor Sugamoto Romfeld²

² Federal University of Paraná, Curitiba, Paraná, Brazil. E-mail: victorrromfeld@gmail.com. ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2386-7080>.

Article received on 08/19/2022 and accepted on 02/25/2023.



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Abstract

This article aims to demonstrate that the use of intersectionality, as an analytical, political and social strategy, is compatible with a critical and radical reading of criminology, considering LGBT issues as a central point of the implications of violence and vulnerability. Intersectionality is used as a strategy for contemporary criminological thinking, given its analytical potential regarding the intersection of power systems and the production of inequalities. The course of reflections, which has LGBTphobic violence as a starting point, begins with a brief exposition of Brazilian data on homotransphobia and its relations with the intersectional perspective. It then justifies the choice of Patricia Hill Collins and her approach to intersectionality as a critical social theory. It advances the analysis of intersectional thinking as a necessary strategy for contemporary criminological criticism, by repositioning reflections on vulnerability, especially regarding LGBT debates. The results of these discussions leave open possibilities for a paradigm shift in Brazilian critical criminological thinking, which has become accustomed to working with social markers of difference in a generic or isolationist bias, a perspective that can be overcome with the intersectional criminology proposed by Hillary Potter.

Keywords: Intersectionality; Criminology; Vulnerability; Social markers of difference; Lgbtphobia.

Resumo

O presente artigo tem como objetivo demonstrar que o uso da interseccionalidade, enquanto estratégia analítica, política e social, se compatibiliza com uma leitura crítica e radical da criminologia, considerando as questões LGBT como ponto central das implicações de violência e vulnerabilidade. A interseccionalidade é empregada como estratégia para o pensamento criminológico contemporâneo, diante do seu potencial analítico quanto ao entrecruzamento dos sistemas de poder e a produção de desigualdades. O percurso das reflexões, que tem a violência LGBTfóbica como ponto de partida, inicia com uma breve exposição de dados brasileiros sobre a homotransfobia e suas relações com a perspectiva interseccional. Em seguida, justifica a escolha de Patrícia Hill Collins e sua abordagem da interseccionalidade como teoria crítica social. Avança na análise do pensamento interseccional como estratégia necessária à crítica criminológica contemporânea, ao reposicionar reflexões sobre vulnerabilidade, especialmente quanto aos debates LGBT's. Os resultados destas discussões deixam em aberto possibilidades de



uma mudança paradigmática no pensamento criminológico crítico brasileiro, que se habituou a trabalhar com marcadores sociais da diferença em um viés genérico ou isolacionista, perspectiva que pode ser superada com a criminologia interseccional proposta por Hillary Potter.

Palavras-chave: Interseccionalidade; Criminologia; Vulnerabilidade; Marcadores sociais da diferença; Lgbtfobia.



Introduction

Brazilian critical criminology¹ has been placed in tension by feminist and decolonial knowledge, critical race theory and queer theory, as well as other intellectual developments that have challenged the monolithic position of the category “class” and “selectivity” as universal expressions that attribute acute effects of punitive power to individuals.

Based on this finding, the present work aims to demonstrate how the use of intersectionality, as an analytical, political and social strategy, is compatible with a critical and radical reading of criminology, considering LGBT² issues as a focal point of the implications of violence and vulnerability. It introduces new meanings for criminology, in terms of radicality. In this sense, the research problem is centered on the following question: has Brazilian criminological work produced diagnoses capable of satisfactorily understanding LGBTphobic violence? The hypothesis proposed consists of using intersectionality to fill this epistemological gap in Brazilian criminological thought.

To achieve this goal, when we understand that people experience positions of oppression and discrimination that affect them in different ways, we advocate for the

¹ When in this article we use the term “Brazilian critical criminology”, we are referring to the generations of authors who received and translated critical criminological thought in Brazil, especially coming from the work of European (BARATTA, 2002) and Latin American thinkers (ZAFFARONI, 1988; ANIYAR DE CASTRO, 2005), from a structuralist and Marxist perspective, such as Juarez Cirino dos Santos (CIRINO DOS SANTOS, 2006), Vera Malaguti Batista (BATISTA, 2011) and Vera Andrade (ANDRADE, 2012). It is also pertinent to check out the work of Paula Gonçalves Alves, who investigated the narratives about Brazilian critical criminology using the “snowball” technique, with semi-directed interviews carried out with referenced researchers in this theoretical field (ALVES, 2016).

² We chose the terms “LGBT community” and “LGBTphobia”, the latter as an umbrella concept (and its synonym, homotransphobia, used in the judgment of ADO 26 and MI 4733), considering that it has become hegemonic both in Brazilian literature and in activism, as defined at the 3rd National LGBT Conference held in 2016. We do not ignore the insufficiencies of the aforementioned concepts, which may lead to reductionism, considering that: i) the prefix LGBT can reinforce the idea of homogeneity between the violence suffered by the subjects who are part of in the letters listed, when an intersectional look (defended in this thesis) indicates the opposite, that is, the differences in violence within the group itself, resulting from the intertwining of social markers of difference, affecting transvestites and transgender people much more intensely; ii) the suffix “phobia” points to fear, panic and aversion for subjective, psychic and individual issues, that is, psychopathologizing the “homo/transphobic subject” ignoring the sociocultural (and therefore structural) dimension of this type of violence, resulting from constitutive processes of patriarchal and heteronormative societies (PEIXOTO, 2018/2019, p. 7-23). We also recognize that the mention of an “LGBT community” may represent the silencing of other sexual minorities, such as groups of intersex, asexual and queer people, making up the recent acronym LGBTQIA+. However, for text standardization purposes, we are linked to the terms used in the 3rd National Conference, although we recognize that their use may be considered dated and that there are limitations related to other groups with non-hegemonic sexual orientations and gender identities that do not feel represented by the acronym used (LGBT).



application of intersectional thinking – which is prior to the concept of intersectionality³ and stems from the historical resistance of black feminism – as a strategy for contemporary criminological thought, demonstrating its capacity to elucidate the power systems producing inequalities and their interconnections⁴. It is, therefore, a theoretical perspective that goes beyond academic boundaries, as it is put in dialogue with projects organized by people who experience domination (COLLINS, 2019, p. 145-146). In this regard, we intend to: i) clarify certain aspects related to the application of intersectionality; ii) justify the choice of Collins; iii) present her approach to intersectionality (as critical social theory); iv) take progressive steps in intersectionality as a necessary strategy for contemporary criminological criticism, in particular, to understand the relationship between *criminology and LGBT debates*; v) and, finally, highlight its implications for criminology (following Hillary Potter's approach).

1. Gender, race, sexuality, desire, age, territory [...] - Who suffers violence?

The LGBT community is possibly one of the most plural social groups to be studied in criminal sciences, as it encompasses men and women, cisgender and transgender people, of different sexual orientations (gays, lesbians, bisexuals, asexuals, pansexuals), and non-hegemonic gender identities (such as transvestites, transmasculine people and non-binary people), of all ethnicities (white, black, Latin, Asian, indigenous), ages, nationalities and social classes. Therefore, examining the dynamics of violence that involve LGBT individuals in isolation inevitably ignores other social markers of difference, whose intersection is revealed in Brazilian data.

³ The concept of intersectionality was presented by Kimberle Crenshaw, in 1989 (CRENSHAW, 1989) *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*. **University of Chicago Legal Forum**, 1989, p. 139-167.

⁴ Collins warns us about uncritically repeating the “coining narrative” of intersectionality. This way of telling the story of intersectionality (as an “emergence” from an individual) would reinforce Western colonial and capitalist narratives, in their relationships of discovery and exploration. Rather than thinking of Crenshaw as the one who “discovered” intersectionality by bringing it to academia, Collins offers an alternative narrative of intersectionality, aligned with critical traditions of the “resistance knowledge project.” In this sense, Crenshaw's production would constitute less as a point of origin of intersectionality and more as an inflection point that highlights the change in relations between activists and academia under conditions of decolonization and neoliberalism. Crenshaw's works were published at a specific juncture in which subordinate groups challenged not only the academic power arrangements that excluded them from literature, education, and work, but also the epistemological authority of academic arguments that had long dominated the mainstream explanations about the experiences of the aforementioned groups (COLLINS, 2019, p. 123-124).



The production of data on this topic faces difficulties in fully investigating cases of discrimination and homicides, considering the historical neglect of Brazilian State institutions in collecting and compiling information regarding LGBTphobia. The Bahia Gay Group [Grupo Gay da Bahia] (GGB), a non-governmental organization (NGO) founded in 1980 to defend the human rights of LGBT people, addressed – in part – this deficit.⁵ One of its activities consists of producing annual reports collecting data on the deaths of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transsexuals and transvestites in Brazil, as well as human rights violations committed against this group.⁶

Surveys carried out in recent years by the GGB in all units of the federation indicate the following statistics on the deaths of LGBT people: i) in 2019, 329 (OLIVEIRA; MOTT, 2020); ii) in 2018, 420 (MOTT, 2018); iii) in 2017, 445 (MOTT, 2017); iv) in 2015, 318 (MOTT, 2015); v) in 2014, 326 (MOTT, 2014). The methodology adopted to monitor this data corresponds to the identification of journalistic notes published in Brazilian newspapers and other media, made by activists of the LGBT movement and systematized by the GGB. Wendt criticizes this methodology because: i) data collection is carried out by an NGO “advocating for its own rights” (supposedly biased in its actions, therefore); ii) the source used is the media, which uses strategies to disseminate facts in order to increase the feeling of fear, insecurity and threat, feelings originating from common sense and mobilized for the expansion of criminal law (WENDT, 2018, p 119).

Despite the need to improve the methodology for collecting data on deaths resulting from LGBTphobia, we understand that Wendt's criticism must be received with reservations. Firstly, because the “partial action” of activists in data collection may sound like a conservative criticism (undermining the work carried out by LGBT movements and activists in general), in addition to presupposing a positivist research condition (universal observer, not situated and absolutely neutral towards its object of study). Secondly, because although the media presents a political meaning in journalistic mediation, maintaining the capitalist social order (MORETZSOHN, 2002), helping in the social construction of crime (in a sensationalist bias) in conjunction with other instances of social

⁵ Available at: <<https://grupogaydabahia.com/>>. Accessed on: 28 Mar. 2022.

⁶ These reports have been produced since the founding of GGB, and some of them have been published in physical formats (books). In this sense, the books published by Luiz Mott (MOTT, 2000) and together with Marcelo Cerqueira (MOTT; CERQUEIRA, 2001).



control (BUDÓ, 2013) , this logic does not seem to apply when the victim depicted in the news is part of the LGBT community.⁷

In addition to the GGB, other civil society organizations seek to gather data on violence committed against specific groups within the LGBT community itself. The Social Inclusion Center [Núcleo de Inclusão Social] (NIS), a project linked to the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) produced the “Lesbocide Dossier”, compiling information from 2014 to 2017 in view of the need to investigate the specificities of violence against lesbian women. This document is significant because it adopts a more rigorous methodology than that of the GGB reports⁸, establishing a typology of lesbocides that contributes to understanding the nuances of this particular phenomenon. The working group responsible for preparing the Dossier found that, from 2014 to 2017, the number of registered deaths of lesbians increased: 16, 26, 30 and 54, respectively (PERES; SOARES; DIAS, 2018).

The National Association of Transvestites and Transsexuals [Associação Nacional de Travestis e Transexuais] (ANTRA) also organizes dossiers and reports containing data on violence against trans people in Brazil (transvestites, transsexual men, transsexual women and transmasculine individuals).⁹ Regarding homicide statistics for the trans population, ANTRA gathered the following information: i) in 2017, 179 (BENEVIDES, 2017); ii) in 2018, 163 (BENEVIDES; NOGUEIRA, 2019); iii) in 2019, 124 (BENEVIDES; NOGUEIRA, 2020); iv) in 2020, 175 (BENEVIDES; NOGUEIRA, 2021). Even though the numbers have shown apparent stability, the most recent report points to the “systematic

⁷ Journalist Roldão Arruda investigated murders of homosexuals that occurred in the eighties in the city of São Paulo, a context in which the Civil Police believed in the existence of a serial killer, the sex worker Fortunato Botton Neto, later tried and convicted for part of the crimes occurred. The investigation conducted at the time reveals how police agencies and the media were guided by a series of prejudices against homosexuals. In this sense: “The fact that Gilson lives in a middle-class neighborhood and works as a manager in a well-known multinational attracted the attention of the press, which reported the crime prominently. The newspapers even reproduced photos of the building, in Paraíso, trying to highlight that it was a habitation for middle-class people and referring to the victim as an economist, executive and manager. Nobody mentioned the word “homosexual” (ARRUDA, 2001, p. 203-204). Arruda’s research is symptomatic of the way in which the media – at least, according to the time and place examined – does not produce news based on a sensationalist narrative that “favors” LGBT people, but on the contrary, acts to reproduce structural LGBTphobia. Academic studies in Social Communication point to the media as co-responsible for a significant portion of what is socially disseminated about LGBT people, reinforcing negative stereotypes and marginalization processes (CARVALHO, 2012).

⁸ The empirical research carried out in the Lesbocide Dossier is carried out in six stages: search, analysis of collected data, validation, cataloging, monitoring and dissemination.

⁹ In the 2019 Dossier, there is a specific section presenting definitions about each of these identities, discussed at the National LGBT Conferences.



underreporting”¹⁰ of the murder of transvestites and other trans people, as a result of the lack of adequate care for the victims (both in the police and in the Legal Medical Institutes [Institutos Médicos Legais] – IML), the qualification of the occurrence as stated in the civil document – potentially divergent from the victim's gender identity in cases without rectification of the registration settlement –, among other factors. The aforementioned report also highlights that the homicide rate of trans people increased by 41% (compared to 2019) and that 78% of fatal victims were black.

Leaving the scope of specific groups and entering into general analyzes regarding LGBTphobia, the “Atlas of Violence” is a portal that provides information about violence in Brazil, managed by the Institute of Applied Economic Research [Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada] (Ipea) with the collaboration of the Brazilian Forum of Public Security [do Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública] (FBSP). Its 2020 edition brought to light the invisibility of violence against the LGBT population, systematizing data from complaints registered by “Dial 100”, the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights [Ministério da Mulher, Família e dos Direitos Humanos] (MMFDH) and records from the Disease Information System of Notification [Sistema de Informação de Agravos de Notificação] (Sinan). Complaints reached a maximum level in 2012 and remained stable from 2015 to 2018 in the number of records. The team that coordinated the Atlas reiterated the scarcity of indicators of violence against LGBT people, highlighting that it is essential that they are included in police reports (IPEA, 2020). The same difficulties – regarding the collection and publication of data on violence against the LGBT population – are highlighted by the FBSP in the Brazilian Public Security Yearbook (2020), especially because a minority of Federative Units [Unidades Federativas] (UF's) in Brazil produce data on LGBTphobia (FBSP, 2020).

Even in the face of obstacles related to notifications and records of LGBTphobic violence, an unprecedented survey analyzed notifications of violence against the Brazilian LGBT population between 2015 and 2017, verifying that half of the people targeted by attacks were black (50%), while those identified as white would account for 41.4% of cases (PINTO, 2020). This work brought together researchers from the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz), the Primary Health Care and Health Surveillance secretariats of the Ministry of Health, the Federal Institute of Rio Grande do Sul (IFRS) and the Federal

¹⁰ The use of this form of neologism (cystem instead of system) is explained in the dossier: to demarcate the suffix “cis” as something that comes from cisgender people or cisgenderity.



University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS). The team of researchers collected notifications made by Sinan – which is part of the public health system, known in Brazil as SUS – including several cases of violence that were not reported. This data also seems to reinforce the need for an intersectional approach to LGBTphobia, especially considering its overlaps with racism.

The existence of the aforementioned reports is justified by the Federal Government's failure to produce official statistics on homotransphobic violence in Brazil. The last document produced refers to data from 2016, addressing the obstacles in responding to and investigating crimes with homophobic motivation (BRASIL, 2016). In any case, the documents presented so far highlight not only the precariousness of the data obtained, but also the underreporting, a phenomenon classified as a “rainbow figure” of crime (BURKE, 2019, p. 99-100). In other words, crimes committed against the LGBT population that are not referred to public authorities or are not properly registered with law enforcement bodies.¹¹ In short, even in the face of obstacles to collecting information on LGBTphobic violence, the reports and dossiers cited contain data that corroborate the necessary reinterpretation of criminology based on intersectionality.

2. Intersectionality as a starting point

In the same way, analyzing the problems of gender violence, especially against LGBT people, only through the lens of a criminology informed only by queer theory would necessarily exclude other critical criminological discourses (Marxist, feminist, racial, for example). In view of this, we seek to demonstrate, as a starting point, an analysis based on intersectionality.

¹¹ In the journalistic investigation conducted by Roldão Arruda, it appears that one of the surviving victims grew tired of the discriminatory treatment received at the police station: “After some trips to and from the police station, the librarian ended up giving up on the police investigation. He got tired, he said, of hearing ironies and insinuations about his sexual life” (ARRUDA, 2001, p. 257). Everything indicates that these practices have not changed substantially, as journalist Weber Fonseca gathered reports from victims of LGBTphobia in Greater São Paulo that occurred over the last fifteen years. One of the interviews was carried out with a couple of gay men who were attacked in a bar located on Augusta Street, in 2014, because they have kissed. They highlighted the difficulty in registering a police report: “The general feeling I have in relation to justice, in relation to the police, is that it is a number. If it is a one-page report, it is a lot, you know? Because it does not matter. It makes no difference” (FONSECA, 2015, p. 77).



We believe it is more appropriate to think about oppressed human beings from the discrimination that they face, since these men and women face them simultaneously and in different ways. Following this path, intersectional thinking – which is prior to the concept of intersectionality and stems from the historical resistance of black feminism – seems necessary, considering its ability to explain the systems of power that produce inequalities and their interconnections. It is, therefore, a theoretical perspective that goes beyond academic boundaries, as it is put in dialogue with projects organized by people who experience domination (COLLINS, 2019, p. 145-146).

It is important to recognize that the basis of intersectionality lies in black feminism, both in the theoretical and in the practical sphere (activist). Not assuming this foundation can lead to the risk of making a mistaken and superficial reading, adding the term in order to erase race from power relations (POTTER, 2015, p. 40-41). There are also other risks of an uncritical use of intersectionality, indicated by Potter: i) whitening (or white-washing) resulting from a detached use of the term, disregarding the originality of the theory (POTTER, 2015, p. 79); ii) allude to intersectionality (concept and relevance), but abandon it afterwards, without connecting the research to theory (POTTER, 2015, p. 149). As pointed out by Potter, criminologists should at least consider how being white can influence experiences with crime and the criminal justice system compared to the experiences of individuals who are not white (POTTER, 2015, p 150).

While it is not common, it is possible to adopt Collins' intersectional framework for other vulnerable groups, such as LGBT. According to Winnie Bueno, although Collins' work is articulated from the point of view of black women, her objective is to recover the multiplicity of silenced voices (BUENO, 2020, p. 61). This means that the conceptual frameworks presented by the author are applicable to other emancipatory struggles, including the LGBT population.¹² Despite the need to preserve its principles, maintaining the centrality of the racial issue,¹³ the scope of intersectionality seems to go beyond the

¹² “The conceptual frameworks presented by the author, organized from the perspective of black women, are easily applicable to think about other experiences of struggle for emancipation, such as those that occur, for example, within the LGBT movement and poor white workers” (BUENO, 2020, p. 31).

¹³ This concern is highlighted by Carla Akotirene: “I believe, for political identity, that we should mention intersectionality as a suggestion from black feminists and not say intersectional feminism, since this hides the term black, as well as the fact that it was black feminists proponents of intersectionality as a methodology, aiming to combat multiple discriminations, initially based on the race-gender binomial” (AKOTIRENE, 2018, p. 46-47).



experience of black women,¹⁴ which justifies seeking to interrogate the compatibility of its use with criminology thought.

Intersectionality here will have as a guiding reference the thought of Patricia Hill Collins, especially in the work “Intersectionality as critical social theory”. Despite the existence of black North American feminists (like Crenshaw) and black Brazilian feminists who are directly linked to intersectional thinking (Lélia Gonzalez, Sueli Carneiro, Jurema Werneck, Carla Akotirene, among many others), selecting Collins' work as starting point is justified due to the systematization carried out by her, as well as the proposal to think about intersectionality as a critical social theory.

For Collins, intersectionality is a tool for social change that brings together ideas from different perspectives, allowing the sharing of points of view that are originally conceived separately. It is understood by the author as a critical social theory that highlights social problems and the changes necessary to resolve them (COLLINS, 2019, p. 2). In general, the term “critical” is used intellectually to differentiate a given theory from its “traditional” counterparts. As for intersectionality, it can be considered critical because it is located at an intellectual crossroads, where multiple knowledge projects meet, in a space where social sciences and humanities coexist with artistic¹⁵, political and intellectual activism that crosses academic borders (COLLINS, 2019, p. 54-55).

In this area, Collins recognizes that there is no consensus regarding the concept of intersectionality among its adherents, in such a way that it accommodates heterogeneous points of view. Intersectional thought, as a field of critical investigation, can be understood based on three uses identified by the author: metaphorical, heuristic and paradigmatic (COLLINS, 2019, p. 23-24).

As a metaphor, intersectionality named an ongoing communication process for trying to understand race in terms of gender, or gender in terms of class, providing a shortcut that drew on existing sensibilities for envisioning the interconnections between systems of power. The metaphor mentioned by Crenshaw – axes of power (class, race, gender, sexuality) constitute the avenues that structure the social, economic and political

¹⁴ Hillary Potter, on the one hand, recognizes that there are authors defending the use of intersectionality solely for black women, but on the other, she states that several protagonists – such as Kimberle Crenshaw – believe that its application goes beyond the experience of black women (POTTER, 2015, p. 70).

¹⁵ On this point, Collins explores, in her book, three traditions in Western critical social theory that potentially constitute foundations for intersectional thinking: the Frankfurt School, British Cultural Studies and French Social Theory.



terrains in which the dynamics of disempowerment occur (CRENSHAW, 2002) – became accessible to several people because invoked tangible spatial relations of everyday life. A metaphor that can be appropriated by people to imagine different types of paths and crossroads of oppression that cross them (COLLINS, 2019, p. 26-27).

In contrast to the metaphorical use, the heuristic use of intersectionality points to action strategies on how to move forward in solving social problems and how to deal with existing puzzles. Using intersectionality as a heuristic has made it easier to rethink social institutions such as work, family, media, education, healthcare, and similar fundamental social institutions through what appear to be fairly straightforward heuristic approaches. An advantage of heuristic thinking concerns the ease of use for criticizing existing knowledge and asking new questions: in the world of work, for example, simple questions like “does this apply to women?” or “why are white, male workers the focus of work-related studies?” identify areas of exaggerated emphasis and deficits in relation to specific social groups (COLLINS, 2019, p. 34-36).

Intersectionality is interpreted by academic and activist common sense as an identity theory due to its heuristic use, from which topics related to identity emerge (COLLINS, 2019, p. 37). Winnie Bueno explains, however, that Collins understands race, gender and class not as identity categories, but as interconnected systems of oppression.

The way in which Patricia Hill Collins understands race, class, gender, sexuality, is not as identity categories, but as interconnected systems of oppression, allows us to reformulate analyzes of social relations of domination and resistance. The domination matrix locates the structures of race, class, gender and sexuality based on how they operate as systems of social domination and not based on the cumulative effects that manifest themselves in the lives of individuals who experience multiple experiences of oppression. The interconnected character of systems of domination, in Patricia Hill Collins' conception, is central to the social structure (BUENO, 2020, p. 86-87).

As a paradigm, intersectionality contributes to thinking about how mutually constructed power relations shape social phenomena. In academic disciplines, traditional paradigms approached race and gender inequalities differently, as if they were separate and disconnected phenomena. However, intersectionality potentially represents a paradigmatic change in that it is willing to reflect on intersecting systems of power and their connections with equally intersecting social inequalities (COLLINS, 2019, p. 43). To explain intersectionality as a paradigm and to delimit its content, Collins proposes a



scheme divided between essential constructs and guiding premises, as shown in the table below.

TABLE 1 – PARADIGMATIC IDEAS OF INTERSECTIONALITY

Essential Constructs	Guiding premises
Relationality	(1) Race, class, gender and similar systems of power are interdependent and mutually construct each other.
Power	(2) Intersecting power relations produce complex and interdependent social inequalities of race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, ability and age.
Social inequality	(3) The social location of individuals and groups in intersecting power relations shapes their experiences and perspectives in the social world.
Social context	(4) Solving social problems in a given local, regional, national, or global context requires intersectoral analyze
Complexity	
Social justice	

Source: COLLINS (2019, p. 44).

It is pertinent to explain, albeit briefly, the content of each of the constructs mentioned in the scheme presented by the author. Regarding 'relationality', Collins states that race, gender, class and other systems of power are constituted and maintained through relational processes, acquiring meaning from the nature of these relationships. The analytical importance of 'relationality' for intersectionality demonstrates how various social positions (occupied by actors, systems and structural political-economic arrangements) necessarily acquire meaning and power (or lack thereof) in relation to other social positions (COLLINS, 2019, p. 45-46).

Power relations, in turn, produce social divisions of race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, age, country of origin, and citizenship that are not adequately understood in isolation from one another. From this point of view, gender and race are not individual identities; patriarchy and racism are not monolithic systems of power. These oppressions,



of a structural nature, can build on each other, using similar and distinct practices and forms of organization that collectively shape social reality (COLLINS, 2019, p. 46).

Intersectionality, moreover, provided a new way of thinking about social inequalities, not as separate entities that are natural or inevitable, but by evaluating how power relations produce social inequalities and the problems arising from these disparities. In this context, the social context also appears as a relevant aspect, given the way in which the social location of individuals and groups in intersecting power relations shape intellectual production, whether in academic or activist communities (COLLINS, 2019, p. 46-47).

Finally, the connections between categories of analysis indicate that one of the essential constructs of intersectional thinking is complexity. Dealing with the interaction of different analytical categories requires the formulation of more complex problems and responses than when systems of power were viewed in isolation. Complex questions require equally complex investigation strategies. In this scenario, the construct of social justice raises ethical questions for those who propose to apply intersectionality, especially related to freedom and equality (COLLINS, 2019, p. 47).

3. Intersectionality and vulnerabilities

Intersectionality studies have been fundamental in repositioning reflections on vulnerability. In a general sense, it is important to highlight that the identities that formulate the possibility of connecting spectrums of vulnerabilities can be – and here they are – read as situational strategies for bodies marked by colonial exploitation (economic, subjective, libidinal, psychic, knowledge activity, etc.) (SPIVAK, 2009).

Spivak affirms that the “strategy works through a persistent (de)constructive critique of the theoretical. ‘Strategy’ is an embattled concept-metaphor and unlike ‘theory’, its antecedents are not disinterested and universal” (SPIVAK, 2009, p. 18). The idea of “strategic identity” presupposes that the problems of identities are not ignored, nor is it assumed as a presupposition for claiming rights, but it becomes indispensable, for the author, when starting from subalternity, even when crossed by the very limits of recognition.



The limits of recognition are established in the totalizing appropriation of identities. However, the interpellation of identities can be heard “as an affirmation or an insult, depending on the context in which it occurs (and context, here, is historicity and spatiality [...]).” Thus, “what is at stake is whether the temporary totalization carried out” by the name [identity] is “politically facilitating or paralyzing”, or whether the violence of the “totalizing reduction of identity carried out is politically strategic or regressive or, if paralyzing and regressive ” (BUTLER, 2017, p. 103). This possibility of understanding “strategic identities” as a “social category” (BUTLER, 2017, p. 103) is what calls into question the difference between the “call for recognition of the oppressed with the aim of overcoming oppression and the call for recognition of the identity that is defined by its wound, by the damage received” (BUTLER, 2017, p. 110, free translation).

According to Butler, inscribing the “wound” within identity transforms it into a “presupposition of political self-representation”, which requires a monopoly on pain as an identification mechanism. However, when the emphasis of the problem is established on oppression, the “category of identity becomes something historical” and this implies that “politics focuses less on the proclamation and display of identity than on the struggle to overcome social conditions” and much broader economic and economic aspects of oppression” (BUTLER, 2017, p. 110, free translation).

It seems important to consider that, in order to understand intersectionality, which may require the claim of a temporary and situational identity to corroborate a position of vulnerability, it is necessary to momentarily reveal how the focus on the incidence of violence *marks*, but does not define, subjects or groups in specific contexts called “contingent historical situations”. This idea can be connected to what Butler refers to as “contingent foundations” (BUTLER, 2018, p. 61-92), a hypothesis that consists of saying that, according to the historical situation that is placed in real dynamics, different identities can be assumed to connect experiences of vulnerability as a localized position of coalitions¹⁶ in resistance, without, however, identities becoming the central focus of the possibility of collective struggle.

¹⁶ The idea of possible coalitions through “contingent foundations” is extracted from Carla Rodrigues' analysis of the connection between the “condition of precariousness of every subject, [...] from the philosophy of Judith Butler, and the condition of subalternity thought mainly by Gayatri Spivak.” For the author, the possibility of relating the two concepts as sharing the struggle, through the contingent foundations between precariousness and subalternity, allows the promotion of “coalitions between everyone who needs to fight against the most diverse forms of State violence”. By contingent foundations, Carla Rodrigues understands contingency, situational issues, which are based on a plural demand for political strategies without identity



In the case of the relationship between *Brazilian history, women, LGBT people and black people*, the overlap of precariousness that engenders the historical conception of Brazil itself is longer, permanent and deeper than is usually identified. In this sense, “intersectionality as a critical theoretical framework, as an analytical tool for analyzing identities, as a theoretical contribution and as a paradigm of knowledge” seems to be more than a reinforcement of the demands of identities, but rather a “set of ideas and practices that maintain that gender, race, class, sexuality, age, ethnicity, citizenship status and other markers cannot be understood in isolation”, as stated by Winnie Bueno (BUENO, 2019). The political-analytical trajectory of intersectionality, as mentioned above, must be read as a historical contribution already prior to the formulation of the “concept”, in which the perspectives of black feminism, since its tradition, propose views of “interconnection between systems of oppression ” (COLLINS, 2000, p. 18), understanding oppression as “any unjust situation where, systematically and for a long period of time, one group denies another group access to society's resources” (COLLINS, 2000, p. 4).

On the subject, Angela Davis states that “black feminism emerged as a theoretical and practical initiative that demonstrated that race, class and gender were inseparable in the social worlds we inhabit” and that beyond overlapping identities, or how they “intertwine” these categories, the assumption of intersectionality is “understanding the interrelationships between ideas and processes that appear to be separate and unrelated” (DAVIS, 2017, p. 19).

Thus, the progressive aspect emphasized by intersectionality through feminist analyses (here also attributed to variations in gender and sexuality) is not so much its focus on the formulation of identity categories, which can establish hierarchies of vulnerability – and in this sense “no one can assume the primacy of one category over the others” (DAVIS, 2016, p. 13), but, in particular, as a political-social assumption, in which the challenge faced by the intentions of building international solidarities and cross-border links is not so much in the intersectionality of identities, but in the intersectionality

being the center of claims of shared experiences. In this sense, the author states that “the construction of coalitions [...] with those whose recognition of their own precariousness allows me to draw bonds, bonds, alliances, affections – here in the strictest sense of the term, affection as that which touches me, affection and affectation of the other's effects on me. Affects are also contingent, circumstantial, impermanent, they are indications that contingent foundations are precarious, and to be constructed in the political space they do not start from an a priori, however well-intentioned they may be, such as emancipating women, ending homophobia, giving an end to femicide, etc.” (RODRIGUES, 2017).



of struggles (DAVIS, 2017a, p. 143). As bell hooks argues, it is crucial for the feminist movement to have, as its primary objective, the end all forms of violence, which implies insisting that the “feminist fight against violence against women is [...] part of a broader movement that seeks end violence” (HOOKS, 2000, p. 88), in a general sense

The idea that struggles for social justice invariably go through a sharing of vulnerability, which perspective of intersectionality is established as a central node, presupposes bearing in mind that this sphere of theoretical-political-social project takes as its direction the principle that among its objectives lies the responsibility of “governing all the authentic struggles of dispossessed people” (DAVIS, 2017b, p. 17).

This implies considering that concerns about gender, race, sexuality, nationality, ability [and so on] must be interrelated with issues that are often removed from the context of “gender” analysis, such as “jobs, working conditions, higher wages and racist violence; factory closures and the lack of housing and repressive immigration legislation; with homophobia, ageism and discrimination against people with physical disabilities” (DAVIS, 2017b, p. 17). Just as “abortion, daycare centers and forced sterilizations” (DAVIS, 2017b, p. 18-19), which generally presuppose reflections linked to feminist struggles, need to be thought of together from anti-racist demands to a broader understanding of how such situations of violence are connected to the absence of public services, precariousness of health and education services. In other words, the minimum material set for the possibility of “living well”.¹⁷

Thus, it means that

[we] cannot talk about a body without knowing what supports that body and what its relationship with this support (or lack thereof) might be. In this way, the body is less an entity than a relationship and cannot be fully dissociated from the infrastructural conditions and environmental circumstances of its existence. Consequently, the dependence of humans and other creatures on infrastructural support exposes a specific vulnerability that arises when we lack support, when these infrastructural conditions begin to break down, or when we are radically deprived of support in precarious conditions. (BUTLER, 2018, p. 8, free translation)

¹⁷ “Living well” is an expression widely defended by the indigenous peoples of Latin America, whose presupposition is not in the mere condition of life, but as the possibility of life connected to land, water, nature, spiritual expression, ancestry, collectivity and the very viability of perpetuating life is the possible condition to live. “Living well” is a representation of the worldview of original peoples, which expresses that the experience of life is only possible through life shared between animals – human and non-human – and the ecosystem. In fact, this expression has been central to indigenous feminist movements across the American continent (LARREA, 2010, p. 15-27).



In this context, Patricia Hill Collins emphasizes that “black women and other historically oppressed groups aim to find ways to escape, survive and/or oppose prevailing social and economic injustice”, and through this strategy of resistance, “social thinking and African-American politician analyzes institutionalized racism, not to help it work more efficiently, but to resist it.” Similarly, “feminism defends the emancipation and empowerment of women, Marxist social thought aims for a more equitable society, while queer theory opposes heterosexism” (COLLINS, 2000, p. 9).

These contacts are “objective” confrontation paths when the categories are analyzed individually. However, the effort of “radical intersection” (RODRIGUES, 2017, p. 65) is “understanding new forms of injustice”, which indicates that “the social theories expressed by women who emerge” from different groups “do not emerge from the rarefied atmosphere of their imaginations. Instead, social theories reflect women's efforts to come to terms with lived experiences within intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and religion” (COLLINS, 2000, p. 9).

Therefore, stemming from the identity of “black feminist thought” – rather than the subjective category of collective identity –, it becomes evident that the forms for the production of knowledge, or this modality of “thought”, are set “as a social 'critical' theory”, which commitment is established with justice, “both for black American women as a collective and for other equally oppressed groups” (COLLINS, 2000, p. 9). To the same extent that “the struggle against injustice is at the heart of the experiences of black American women” [...], “the analysis and creation of imaginative responses to injustice characterize the core of thought black feminist” (COLLINS, 2000, p. 12) and its crossing with regard to reflections on vulnerability.

4. Final notes: criminology at whose service?

Without intending to reduce the consistency of Collins' proposal, we apply intersectionality in its paradigmatic dimension, as we are interested in thinking about how violence against LGBT people and state responses to this social problem, in critical criminological discourses, are typically treated in a dissociated manner, without exploring the connections and divergences between criminological perspectives that question punitive power and vulnerability. Furthermore, the empirical data discussed previously



corroborate the need to think about LGBTphobia intersected with other systems of power, a dynamic from which the processes of exposure to violence, notably marked by criminalization and victimization, of individuals belonging to this group can be in-depth. Finally, some of the essential points of intersectional thinking (such as relationality, power relations and social inequality) leave open possibilities for a paradigmatic change in critical criminological thinking, which, at least with regard to Brazilian criminology, seems having become used to working with social markers of difference in a generic or isolationist bias, restricted to each research niche.

Collins, as explained above, inserts intersectionality into the path of a critical theory of society. Turning to the perspective of Hillary Potter, uses the intersectional framework and incorporates it into criminology, especially: i) in the assessment of crime or policies and laws related to crime; and ii) in the governmental administration of justice (POTTER, 2015, p. 3). Potter invests in intersectional criminological approaches both empirically and theoretically, demonstrating how other consolidated and renowned perspectives in criminology (what the author calls “orthodox criminology”)¹⁸ disregard power relations and social markers of difference (POTTER, 2015, p. 36- 37).¹⁹ For Potter, the criminological field, in particular, has often and for a long time ignored or disregarded the importance of socially constructed identities and how they affect or are affected by crime and the processes of criminalization and victimization within the criminal justice system.²⁰ Therefore, instead of keeping intersectional thinking exclusively linked to the experience of black women, Potter defends its analytical expansion to the experiences of

¹⁸ In her book, Potter focuses on two consolidated American criminological currents (which she classifies as orthodox), which do not consider the socially constructed identities of individuals who are the object of study of the research: i) the self-control theory, by Gottfredson and Hirschi, concerned with the influence of early childhood education practices and the tendency of some children to later become involved in criminal or deviant conduct due to low self-control developed in childhood; ii) the lifecourse perspective, represented mainly by Laub and Sampson, aimed at understanding the processes underlying continuity (persistence) and change (desistance) in criminal behavior throughout life (POTTER, 2015, p. 85-112).

¹⁹ It is important to highlight that Potter, when referring to “orthodox criminology”, is addressing a wide range of criminologies (whether of a justifying nature of the *status quo* or of a transformative nature of this *status*). The author rejects the use of the term mainstream criminology, as this language would demarcate a marginality of intersectional criminology, which would serve to promote and legitimize dominant criminology, to the detriment of those that question names and theories recognized as scientifically correct.

²⁰ To illustrate this observation, Potter tells the story of feminist criminologist Kathleen Daly who, at a conference of the American Society of Criminology in 1991, asked the presidents of the association (Ronald Akers, Travis Hirschi and C. Ray Jeffery) if the people they considered in his research on crime had a certain race, gender or socioeconomic status. Hirschi responded in the sense that his image of an offender would be someone without these identities (The offender is everyone – they have no qualities of class, race or gender). The panel moderator suggested that the session should be closed (POTTER, 2015, p. 82).



other vulnerable groups, as long as the continuous challenges faced by black women in their daily resistance are recognized (POTTER, 2015, p. 80).

It's disconcerting that many criminologists still do not consider that prisons and other criminal procedures may differ according to markers of race and gender, due to the expressions specific to the reality of these identities. Despite this trend, Potter identifies efforts by North American researchers to conduct criminological research that incorporates the intersectional approach, particularly in feminist studies (POTTER, 2015, p. 116). In this context, the author highlights the need to develop studies on criminal issues that affect the LGBT population, stating:

Intersectional criminological research conducted with other sexes or genders is also multiplying. There is a growing body of research on men and boys that provides intersectional analysis, most of which incorporates the role of masculinity into theoretical examination. And although severely lagging in criminological research generally, intersectional studies on the crime-related experiences of transgender or genderqueer individuals is also showing growth. (POTTER, 2015, p. 117)

Collins and Potter's theorizations are fundamental to thinking about how issues pertinent to LGBTphobic violence and gender discussions, in general, should be thought of not solely as an "LGBT issue", but as a system of power that intersects with various conditions, creating different levels of oppression within the community itself (affected by racism, capitalism and cisheteropatriarchy in different ways). In this sense, it is essential to deepen the critical meanings inaugurated by critical criminology from an intersectional perspective, especially when it comes to a plural and heterogeneous group (LGBT) crossed by different systems of power, which produce and reproduce discriminations that hierarchize individuals, inside and outside the LGBT community.

In Brazil, it is crucial to recall that efforts to disseminate criminological thinking proposed by the critical radicality of the intersectional view are being produced by criminology studies that take as a starting point debates on race and the impacts of racism in unequal exposure to violence.²¹ Therefore, it is categorical to assert that, within the realm of national production, researches that are consistently articulated with intersectionality or the plurality of vulnerabilities has been carried out for a long time.

²¹ A perspective that in the field of Brazilian critical criminology has as its exponent the work of Ana Flauzina (FLAUZINA, 2008).



However, what we seek to reinforce in this paper is to displace intersectionality as a *strategy* to understand the problems involved in other “situated analyzes” of violence.

From this standpoint, the role of academia and, consequently, of jurists and criminologists with critical biases consists of joining efforts with LGBT movements for the collective development of projects and proposals, whether reformist or transformative, but effectively committed to the reality of this group. Intersectionality, as a critical theory of society, proves to be a useful theoretical-political tool for deepening and radicalizing critical meanings in criminology, providing a paradigmatic turn from which the operability of punitive power begins to be understood beyond a strictly perspective class-based processes of criminalization, but from the crossing of systems of power, which produce and reproduce structural violence.

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About the authors

Fernanda Martins

Adjunct Professor at the Department of Law at the Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM), Santa Maria, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. E-mail: Fernanda.ma@gmail.com.
ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9444-120X>.

Victor Sugamoto Romfeld

Doctor and Master in State Law from the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR), Curitiba, Paraná, Brazil. E-mail: victorrromfeld@gmail.com. ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2386-7080>.

The authors contributed equally to the writing of the article.

