

Theoretical Essay

For a reframing of women's entrepreneurship from three philosophical views on gender and power

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Abstract

Objective: This text is an essay that discusses the concept of female entrepreneurship from the re-signification posed by the idea of gender relations, where these are considered as asymmetrical power relations, encompassing violence as the result of this condition. Our argument is built especially from the perspective of three authors: in the thinking of the historian Joan Scott, the philosopher Michel Foucault and the philosopher Hannah Arendt. **Thesis:** Their theoretical proposals allow us to reconstruct views about women as a historical construction based on power and control relations, on the one hand, and the exercise of violence as the main mechanism of patriarchy's domination over the feminine. **Relevance/Originality:** This is how we argue that Female Entrepreneurship manifests itself in a context of violence, as it expresses the different forms of violence against women as a socially constituted event, highlighting the fact that, in the culture of capitalism, undertaking is an activity of power and, precisely for this reason, is usually denied to the female presence. **Social/Management contributions:** In addition, violence is a reaction to entrepreneurial women and works as an illegitimate resource used by the aggressor to maintain the patriarchal status quo, based on an asymmetrical view of women's power and submission to men. Consequently, violence increases the more women are equal to men in spaces of power, suffering greater attacks from different forms of violence.

Keywords: Emotion. Entrepreneurial education. Emotional resilience. Artistic entrepreneurship.

Por uma ressignificação do empreendedorismo feminino a partir de três visões filosóficas sobre o gênero e poder

Resumo

Objetivo: Este texto é um ensaio que discute o conceito de empreendedorismo feminino a partir da ressignificação posta pela ideia de relações de gênero, em que estas são consideradas como relações assimétricas de poder, abarcando a violência como o resultado desta condição. Nosso argumento se constrói particularmente pela perspectiva de três autores: no pensamento da historiadora Joan Scott, do filósofo Michel Foucault e da filósofa Hannah Arendt. **Tese:** Suas propostas teóricas nos permitem reconstruir as visões sobre a mulher enquanto uma construção histórica baseada nas relações de poder e controle, e pelo exercício da violência como principal mecanismo de dominação do patriarcado sobre o feminino. **Relevância/Originalidade:** É assim que argumentamos que o Empreendedorismo Feminino se manifesta em um contexto de violência, já que expressa as diferentes formas de violência contra a mulher enquanto evento socialmente constituído, destacando-se o fato de que, na cultura do capitalismo, empreender é uma atividade de poder e, justamente por isso, costuma ser negada à presença feminina. **Contribuição social/gerencial:** Em adição, a violência é uma reação à mulher empreendedora e funciona como um recurso não legítimo utilizado pelo agressor para manter o status quo do patriarcado, baseado em uma visão assimétrica de poder e de submissão da mulher ao homem. Por conseguinte, a violência se amplia quanto mais as mulheres se equiparam aos homens nos espaços de poder, sofrendo maior ataque a partir de diferentes formas de violência.

Palavras-chave: Empreendedorismo feminino. Relações assimétricas de poder. Violência contra a mulher. Patriarcado. Feminismo.



INTRODUCTION

The field of research in entrepreneurship has increasingly given space to the theme of the woman entrepreneur. Worldwide, studies related to women's entrepreneurship are gaining momentum in the research agendas of different fields of knowledge, such as administration, economics, anthropology, and sociology. This growing interest demonstrates that women's entrepreneurial activity leads us to think of it as something valuable for contemporary society, which considers entrepreneurship as a value in itself for social ascension and legitimacy (Versiani et al., 2021; Iizuka & Costa, 2022). This growing interest may be related to the continuous growth of entrepreneurial activity led by women (GEM, 2019; Gomes et al., 2014; Versiani et al., 2021). On this point, Morales-Urrutia (2023) and Souza et al. (2022) point to the positive correlation between affirmative public policies and the advancement of women's entrepreneurship as a strategy to combat gender inequality; however, it is still necessary to deepen studies on the social and political dimensions of this phenomenon, in which women are still considered from a fragile perspective without consideration to the unique challenges of their precarious social condition in comparison to men.

In this sense, some studies warn of the need for a more socially realistic view than those commonly adopted in studies on women's entrepreneurship. For example, Versiani et al. (2021) point out that women entrepreneurs still assume a sense of guilt with difficulties in reconciling professional life and family care, as Souza and Cascaes (2008) recognized in female executives. Pontes and Dinis (2022) and Souza et al. (2022) also alert us to the search for entrepreneurial activity caused by the greater vulnerability of women, especially in critical social contexts, as was the case with the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Considering such issues, in spite of the increasingly relevant role that women have played in entrepreneurship (GEM, 2019; Morales-Urrutia, 2023), it is necessary to adopt a more careful look at this phenomenon, especially taking into account the insufficiency in adequately conceptualizing the complex issues of gender relations by the paradigm that supports entrepreneurship studies (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Jennings & Brush, 2013; Foss et al., 2019; Bizarria et al., 2022). This is because it is necessary to consider that the practice of entrepreneurship is also mediated by the same tension of gender relations established by the traditional assumptions of society; that is, machismo and sexism, historically constructed and culturally sustained.

In the case of research on entrepreneurship, the role of women is considered from the outset as a mere category of entrepreneurial practice to be understood. Studies are conducted to crystallize the idea that gender is merely a difference that influences styles and conditions of success and/or failure in certain contexts and situations. This is how, in this self-proclaimed field of "women's entrepreneurship," gender has been systematically taken as an a priori category without being culturally problematized, with research omitting what it actually means to be a woman in contemporary society, including in the field of business. That is, research on women's entrepreneurship disregards that, prior to being an agent of entrepreneurial activity, a woman is situated in society from birth under harsh conditions related to gender differences, and precisely because of this, faces problems that are unique to her (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Brush et al., 2019).

A relevant aspect to be considered in women's entrepreneurship refers to the very notion of the feminine in today's society, which, according to feminist authors such as Saffioti (1987; 2001; 2004), Sardenberg (2004), Souza and Cascaes (2008), and Louro (1997) — who propose their perspective in agreement with Bourdieu's sociology — the feminine is constituted from symbolic instruments of power that characterize contemporary society as culturally sexist. In essence, being a woman means establishing oneself in the social structure based on what society understands about the feminine and its relationship with the masculine.

In this context, the fundamental point of gender relations is the fact that there is a subordination of the feminine to the masculine. The problem relates to an asymmetrical power relationship between men and women, which is historically constituted and culturally reinforced. The present essay on women's entrepreneurship is based on this perspective, proposing a broader view of the field that can contribute to the area as it establishes itself as a social phenomenon integrated with all the challenges faced by the current social context, as is the case with discursive and gender issues.

Besides this discussion on the political dimension, our proposal is to introduce the idea of violence against women from a socio-historical perspective, from which the very relationship between feminine-masculine is impregnated by the exercise of violence. Thus, by derivation, violence also becomes a hallmark in women's entrepreneurship and needs to be considered by studies in this field. To support our argument, we articulate three different philosophical views: i) on the feminine gender; ii) on the power relations articulated in the discourse and culture of the time; and iii) on violence as the absence of democratically instituted politics. We begin with Joan Scott's view and her idea that gender is not only a social construction, but also a political and historical development concept. Next, we present Foucault's view of sexuality, which highlights the Victorian period as the seminal moment of a modern conception of relations between men and women, based on female subjugation and withdrawal to the home, marriage, and family. Finally, we present Hannah Arendt's thesis on violence as the absence of politics, which allows us to see that the response to women's entrepreneurship is associated with an increase in violence against women precisely because they are beginning to occupy leadership and power positions, such as in entrepreneurship, business management, and public office (judicial, legislative, and executive branches).

JOAN SCOTT:

GENDER AS A RELATIONSHIP OF POWER POSITIONS

When showcasing the forms of knowledge construction as consolidated by modern practice, the importance of the political dimension involving the symbolic construction of gender difference stands out. Additionally, considering that it is essential to establish the understanding that social phenomena must be regarded in light of the historical power asymmetry between men and women, it becomes necessary to re-signify the concepts of feminine and masculine.

From the Enlightenment project and with the advent of the capitalist social order, our understanding of the world began to take place through the perspective of reason and human progress. Since then, scientific knowledge has become a legitimate source of power, exerting direct influence on social and historical processes. Regarding this, Souza and Cascaes (2008) emphasize that the rational organization of modern capitalist society relied on what was most true at the time, that is, scientific discourses that defined the human being according to an inevitable and conditioning biological nature.

Thus, the gender issue—socially problematic from the standpoint of inequality—is also inserted into the discourse of Enlightenment rationality and scientific modernity, as well as into the political and economic arrangements resulting from this context. Due to this, although progress can be achieved, awareness of women's roles in the various spheres of social life occurs slowly, and, sometimes, with setbacks.

The exclusion of women from the political field and mechanisms of power is one of the most evident factors of this condition (Lautier, 2009; Morales-Urrutia, 2023; Souza et al., 2022). To understand this phenomena, the American historian and feminist movement activist, Professor Joan Scott, has dedicated herself to the analysis of gender as an important category of contemporary research. According to Siqueira (2008), this author understands that history is, at the same time, a method of understanding the relationships



between men and women, as well as a mechanism for creating these relationships. In other words, it is through historical analysis that the fabrication of gender relations is revealed, precisely because these relations are both a product and agent of history.

According to this author, the development of the construct 'gender' was an important contribution to feminist studies, as it allowed for analyses of social relationships 'between and with' men and women, avoiding the positivist methodological bias of isolating women as an analytical category. That is, the feminine and the masculine are inseparable categories, and thus Scott (1995) reveals asymmetric aspects that link power and gender. In the author's definition, gender is a constitutive element of social relations based on perceived differences between the sexes and, moreover, a primary way of signifying power relations. This is how the understanding predominates in our society that not only is the woman different from the man, but also that the peculiarity of the masculine is more 'powerful' than the feminine, consequently, articulating in multiple ways the asymmetrical power relations between the two genders. In short, simply being born a woman already means losing in social relations throughout life.

In its discursive structure of articulation, power in gender relations is sustained in a cultural process that naturalizes the masculine as superior. Scott (1987) explains that, as the masculine and feminine are taken as being natural and the masculine is always superior, differentiation is often used to construct other meanings and differences, always to legitimize, reinforce, or confer superior power to men and their representations. For this reason, in the early articulations of feminist thought, the notion of gender was taken as a social construction aimed at analyzing the relationship between women and men in terms of inequality and power. The idea was that the concept of gender applies to everyone, that it is a system of social organization that leaves no one out. Therefore, people are framed from the feminine and the masculine to recognize their place within society, with the rights and positions of power being occupied by men; or, at the very least, that the attributes associated with the masculine were necessary for the exercise of power.

For this reason, Scott (2012) explains that the concept of gender falls upon the social recognition of women and men in distinct political positions, about how the traits attributed to each sex justified the different treatments each received. Thus, gender distinction serves to normalize an asymmetric structure of social conditions and opportunities, naturalizing gender inequality in social, economic, and political terms. Due to this principle of objectively articulating a universally and socially determined unequal structure, the concept of gender condenses varieties of femininity and masculinity into a binary system, hierarchically arranged and radically stereotyped. All shades of characterization of the feminine and the masculine are dependent on the dichotomy of asymmetric power relations: every time a characteristic attributed to women arises in contemporary society's culture (even with the legitimization of scientific knowledge), it only sustains itself within the general framework of the social structure if there is a connection with this fundamental premise of power relations. For example, saying that women are more emotional than men 'makes sense' in our society as long as emotion is interpreted as fragility in positions of power. Therefore, saying that women are sweet, kind, and delicate is, in reality, a way of placing women in a subordinate position to men, since it is implied that these traits are incompatible with leadership and strength.

Although gender relations are not the only social field in which power is expressed, Scott (1995) asserts that it seems to have constituted itself as a persistent and recurring means of giving efficacy to the signification of power in the West, as well as in Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions. This reading by the feminist author is echoed even by important male authors, such as Bourdieu, for whom the conception that the social division of the world founded on biological differences—which refer to the sexual division of labor, procreation, and reproduction—operates as one of the most important collective illusions (Saffioti, 2004; Louro, 1997).

The recognition of gender as categorically structuring power relations in our society does not only occur in the field of academic discourse. The political status of the term gender has been used in initiatives by world organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), with efforts to correct the inequalities inherent in this type of construct. Therefore, to expand affirmative actions on gender relations, these organizations propose institutional programs to support projects dedicated to improving women's empowerment and better social conditions, such as access to health services, education, employment, as well as access to other forms of economic resources. Initiatives are also articulated to combat violence and discrimination against women and to encourage political inclusion (Scott, 2012).

Despite advances with affirmative programs created by governments and diplomatic organizations, the issue of power in gender relations presents nuances that require precision and care. For this reason, Cornwall (2018) criticizes the use of the term 'empowerment', understanding that it implies that power can be transferred, that women could be infused with it. Therefore, the problem with the argument of 'empowering women' often ends up being a simplification of the asymmetry process in gender relations. This simplification especially materializes in the connection between gender relations and economic power, where the acquisition of money is seen as having 'almost magical' powers. In other words, it is a false illusion that solving gender issues boils down to economic matters; once women have their own money, they would supposedly be able to make the inequality imposed by social norms, affective relationships, as well as all the different forms of discrimination and violence imposed by social institutions disappear.

This is why the problem of gender relations is structural, socio-cultural in nature and permeated by institutions that articulate power relations in society. Thus, for Scott (2012), the first and most obvious discrimination against women comes from governments themselves, which historically establish the perpetuation and protection of male privileges, usually in the name of culture. A good example of how the state reinforces the gender social condition as unequal is public policies aimed at women. Almost always, these do not prioritize the importance and significance established in the relationship between the sexes; on the contrary, the centrality placed on the woman-family condition reaffirms the essentialist view that reproduction and sexuality cause gender difference in a simple and inevitable way. This bias is reproduced in various forms in everyday life, being visible in certain public policies, such as the precariousness of women's assistance units or even in legal regulations regarding the female body in complex issues such as abortion. If culture and tradition can explain differences between masculine and feminine, then inequality ceases to be problematized. It is in this sense that such an approach is harmful to the cause of women, as it masks a form of cultural relativism that refuses to address gender relations as a matter of power asymmetry.

One way to understand the cultural dimension of gender relations is the term 'patriarchy'. This refers to the set of social and moral conceptions that restrict women to a subordinate position to men, especially concerning public life and family (Saffioti, 2004). Despite having been established as one of the pillars of modern life from the Victorian conception of femininity as a way to justify the discourse of sexual oppression (Foucault, 1988), such a cultural model represents a contradiction to modern democracy, another pillar of contemporary societies. If we were capable of abolishing slavery as an organizing institution of economic and social life during the colonization period of the Americas, we did not do so regarding women's political life, due to patriarchy. As pointed out in the following excerpt:



The active presence of machismo negatively compromises the outcome of struggles for democracy, as it achieves at most, a half-hearted democracy. In this crippled democracy, even though the negative impact is greater for women, men will continue to have their personality curtailed as well. It is worth noting this phenomenon (Saffioti, 1987, p.24).

Another issue that permeates gender relations, according to Scott (2012), is the establishment of what equality between the sexes means. Is it the formal equality of abstract individuals before the law - such as the right to vote, or the prohibition of discrimination between sexes in family law and civil relations codes? Or is the equality intended the one that extends to broader social rights? The problem, according to the author, is that equality in social relations between women and men involves multiple aspects and meanings, which complicate a common understanding of equivalence, quality, and even how this condition could be measured. For this reason, the rhetoric defending simple gender equality is fallacious, precisely because it assumes that the problem of gender relations would be resolved by the mere compatibility of social conditions between men and women, which could lead to a false sense that the arbitrariness of equal rights is sufficient to nullify the conceptual distinction of gender as something asymmetric in its social constitution.

An important example of how gender equality, as a clear principle with global application, can be fallacious emerged in the rhetoric of the 'clash of civilizations'. Scott (2012) points out that, in the struggle over the place of Muslims in Western nations, gender equality has been enunciated by the Judeo-Christian tradition as one of the primordial values of the West. In this sense, issues such as "male domination, violence against women, their sexual exploitation and repression, were all [themes] aligned on the Islamic side, clearing the West of these issues" (Scott, 2012, p. 340). In essence, this rhetoric spreads the false idea that only in the Islamic world would there still be inequality and oppression of women, while in the Western world these issues have already been resolved and overcome, which is far from the truth.

Another important contribution of Scott to the concept of gender is the idea of the link between power and language. For the author, there is always politics - in the sense of a power relationship - in the operations of language (Scott, 1987). That is to say, language encodes politics and rationalism as masculine products, contrasting with the utopian side of the feminine. Thus, according to Scott (1987), sexual difference provided an objective way to indicate or choose a political position. It is from this political-discursive distinction that Scott (1987) reminds us that gender conceptions are defined and often shared by women and men. Thus, although each group (or even individuals within each group) may have slightly different understandings of what the concepts of masculine and feminine imply, the appeal to gender is generally made in terms of natural biological roles or theological conceptions. Women's support, therefore, would not change the operations of sexual difference in the notion of gender as a stereotype, as well as in class or race relations. Finally, Scott herself Scott (2012) warns as to the limitations of the term 'gender'. She argues that the visible inequalities between women and men are often generated or perpetuated by global market work structures, manufactured by financial capital - and are unsolvable without attention to their impacts and operations. Thus, the focus on reproductive rights, domestic violence, female education, and sexual trafficking must be seen as crucial for improving women's quality of life; however, focusing exclusively on these serious issues underestimates or ignores the economic structures that shape these lives, transforming them from different material conditions. This is the point we wish to highlight in women's entrepreneurship as an asymmetrical condition of power that reproduces violence against women.

MICHEL FOUCAULT: DISCOURSE, SEXUALITY, AND POWER

If we establish that the power asymmetry between men and women occurs through the naturalization of certain cultural and historical differences, we can suppose that the operationalization of discrimination and inequality against women occurs largely through discourse.

This understanding is associated with the movement in social sciences that establishes the centrality of language in the ontology of the social, including the understanding of fractures and contradictions of historical reality that allow for emancipation (Lara & Vizeu, 2020). An important representative of this 'linguistic turn' in critical social thought is Michel Foucault, who builds his work from a perspective on social phenomena focused on the historical construction of meanings, especially those articulated through discourses and language, in other words, social reality constituted by 'words'.

As noted by Revel (2005), Foucault was interested in the 'discursive planes' of social reality in a dual manner, thus constructing his own method of discursive analysis (and consequently social analysis) of Modernity. On one hand, it involved analyzing discursive marks, seeking to isolate the operating order independent of the nature and conditions of enunciation, which explains his interest in grammar, linguistics, and formalism. On the other hand, it involved describing the transformation of types of discourse in the 17th and 18th centuries, that is, historicizing the procedures of identification and classification specific to that period, namely, the conditions of their appearance, in order to understand the genesis of power relations naturalized in the Modern era.

Foucault (2008) explains that there are procedures exercised by subjects of discourse both externally and internally to discourses. Regarding external procedures, the author mentions those that operate exclusion, identified by him in three forms. Firstly, there are prohibition procedures - which consist of controlling what can be said, in what circumstances, and to whom speaking is permitted. The second exclusionary procedure is the segregation of madness - which occurred in the modern era with the emergence of the asylum institution segregating madness as non-modern reason (Foucault, 1997). Finally, the third exclusionary procedure pointed out by Foucault is the will to truth. For the author, this form corresponds to a dynamic that does not restrict itself to an absolute perspective on true versus false, as this duality changes according to time, place, and people.

Thus, of the three great systems of exclusion that affect discourse in the modern era (the prohibited word, the segregation of madness and the will to truth), Foucault (1996) states that it was precisely from this third form of exclusion that power in gender relations is articulated through discourse. To explain the history of sexuality, Foucault divided the topic into a trilogy, with 'The Will to Know' being his first volume (the other two books being 'The Use of Pleasures' and 'The Care of the Self'), and we will support our argument in the first text, since it is a historical-genealogical analysis of the mechanisms of power that are related to the production of knowledge about sexuality.

The text 'The Will to Know' (Foucault, 1988) addresses the history of sexuality in Western societies to understand the reasons that supported, over the centuries, the hypothesis of sexuality as an object of repressive mechanisms, which the author calls the repressive hypothesis. It is, therefore, not a text about sexuality itself, but about the mechanisms of power engendered in the production of specific knowledge, in this case, that about sexuality.

Michel Foucault begins his argument by bringing forth the image of Victorian morality as encompassing a contained, mute, hypocritical sexuality, in which conjugal life encourages silence about sex. With this image, the author illustrates his argument that, in the Modern era, sexuality is confined within the institution of marriage. It becomes something that must be restricted to the function of procreation, becoming a secret of conjugal life, under

the control of the patriarchal family, where the bond of power relations and sex occurs around repression. From a repressive panorama, power is evaluated as domination, imposing a law and demanding submission.

In essence, sex becomes taboo to the extent that it is prohibited and conditioned by marriage and patriarchal power. This would explain, for example, the repressive behavior towards women regarding their sexuality, which is seen as an obligation in marriage and at the same time as a sin. To men, freedom remains in relation to their sexuality within marriage or in the obscurity of Modern life.

Thus, Foucault aims to determine the regime of power-knowledge-pleasure that sustains, among us, discourse on human sexuality. The author emphasizes sex placed in discourse, in which polymorphic techniques of power are articulated, and questions the means by which discourses on sexuality regulate the individual, where silence, denial, and censorship are discursive productions (Foucault, 1988).

In this way, institutional mechanisms emerge for articulating discourse on sexuality as a form of interdiction. The Church, literature, and new rational techniques, which regulate the modern subject, constitute discourses that also focus on sexuality. Medicine and law are also part of these regulatory devices. As Foucault (1996) argues, exchange and communication are positive figures that operate within complex systems of restraint. The most superficial and visible form of these systems of restraint is constituted by what can be grouped under the name of ritual. It is this ritual that defines the qualifications that those who speak, occupy a certain position, or formulate a certain type of statement, must possess.

Thus, Foucault (1988) understands that modern rationality sought to make sex useful, reversing the logic from repression to regulation. In this sense, the more masked the mechanisms of power, the more tolerable power becomes. As such, power has in the secrecy of its mechanisms its true strength, indispensable to the success of its operation. As examples of these devices, the author cites some scientific arguments, such as issues of demography, birth control, political economy of population, prohibition of child sex, or even teenage sex as a public problem.

From this institutional apparatus, a qualitative change in discourse is created, with useful and conservative forms of sexuality emerging. Heterosexual monogamy, as a norm, gains the 'right' to discretion; thus, discourse focuses on dissidents, such as homosexuality, which appears as one of the figures of sexuality when transferred from the practice of sodomy to a kind of interior androgyny. A series of marginalized names and subjects are created: exhibitionists, fetishists, auto-monosexualists, mixoscophiles, gynecomasts, presbyophiles, sexoesthetic inverts, dyspareunist women. Although these practices already existed, they were not brought to the forefront in the discourse on sexuality.

Control also presents itself as a process of articulating power over sexuality. It functions as a mechanism of dual intention: regulation of pleasure and power. For Foucault (1988), any attempt to go beyond the boundaries traced by sexual repression would be the same as challenging and confronting established institutional powers (State, Church, and family). In this sense, repression would be the fundamental mode of connection between power, knowledge, and sexuality.

Power is then understood in its complex form, as potency and relation, and not as structure or institution. For Foucault (1988), power relations play a productive role, being formed and active in the apparatuses of production, permeating the entire social body. Also for Revel (2005), Foucault never treats power as a coherent, unitary, and stable entity, but as historically constituted and multifaceted relations. In thinking about power in terms of relations, Foucault (1988) conceives the idea of a network of power, meaning power is not exercised from a central point, statically. This relational character of power also dethrones the perspective of power as an object, a potency. From this viewpoint, power is not something to be acquired, but something that is exercised through relations. This is an assemblage in which practices, knowledge, and

institutions intersect, and in which the type of objective pursued is not solely reduced to domination, as it does not belong to anyone and varies itself in history (Revel, 2005).

Here we arrive at a central point in our argument, which is the role of gender relations in Foucault's conception of modern sexuality as a manifestation of a power-knowledge system. In the realm of sexuality, power as relation is established in the interaction between masculine and feminine genders, mediated primarily by the patriarchal family institution. Thus, the characterization of modern sexuality not only occurs through the repression of sexual manifestations contrary to the heterosexual model of the biological man-woman relationship, but also in the definition of female sexuality based on its exclusively reproductive functionality and confined within marriage. As an example of repressive manifestation, Foucault (1988) recalls certain strategies that emerged in the Modern Era, such as hysteria associated with the female body, the construction of a pedagogy about children's sexuality, the socialization of procreation behaviors, and psychiatric therapy for perversity. These are devices that reinforce his thesis of the production of sexuality as a form of manifestation of power apparatuses, rather than mere interdiction and repression.

Thus, power, through a multiplicity of force correlations and exercised through strategies, would set in motion a kind of network of procedures and mechanisms that affect and regulate the most subtle aspects of reality and women's daily lives. It is in this way that this analytical model becomes particularly useful for explaining the subjection of women to patriarchy over time, as the domination of men was legitimized by laws, customs, and various other practices, until it became commonplace and daily. In this context, the exercise of power is understood as a complex apparatus, a web within which various entities and interests align, altering relations and from which women have been systematically excluded and repressed. Thus, female sexuality would be linked to such power devices, in which its articulation was connected to an intensification of the body, its valorization as an object of knowledge (the rationality of procreation; the rationalization of repression of female sexual pleasure; the function of the patriarchal family as a pillar of social organization) and as an articulating element of power relations in the differentiation between genders (the masculine predominating over the feminine; women as the sexual object of men; sex as a woman's obligation in marriage).

In summary, in Foucault's conception, the governance of individuals is complemented by a control of populations through a series of biopowers that globally manage life (hygiene, sexuality, demography, etc.) to maximize the reproduction of values in modern systems of social organization. In this sense, Foucault's contribution to gender relations as a form of knowledge-power lies in reducing female sexuality to a form (perhaps the only one, in certain aspects of modern daily life) of feminine manifestation. In other words, Foucault's complex articulation of sexuality and its discursive construction of knowledge-power reveal how gender relations have been constituted as relations of male power over female, relegating women to nullify any political dimension of social life, restricting themselves to the idealization of the roles of wife and mother, fulfilling two functions – ensuring the husband's sexual pleasure and procreation.

This insightful Foucauldian interpretation of gender relations as centered on the affirmative construction of female (and consequently male) sexuality as a knowledge articulating the relations between men and women can be observed in various social manifestations of Western societies in modernity. It seems to us that beyond the layer of body regulation – in which it is clear that women's bodies have been systematically controlled and subjugated through the modern discourse on female sexuality – biopower employs social control devices over femininity, reinforcing masculine hegemony and restricting women's role within the family. This conditions Western women to marry and procreate, preparing them throughout their primary and secondary socialization for this purpose. Girls repress their sexuality (sex and



any other manifestation related to sexuality are considered wrong, sinful, and should only be done as an obligation within marriage, etc.) and are conditioned to a restricted societal role as mother-wife. Women who, for any reason, do not conform to or achieve this role are marginalized (a good example being the marginalization of divorced women in Brazil, even through legal instruments until the second half of the 20th century). In summary, the dimension of biopower seeks, collectively, to discipline elements of daily life, where a woman's place is determined by female sexuality as an object of knowledge and as an articulating element of power relations, generating a systematic process of disqualification and subservience to men.

Thus, through the Foucauldian analytical model of discourse-knowledge-power, we can perceive this interplay of meanings and discursive constructions focused on the political dimension and the discourses used to legitimize historically constituted gender inequalities. This is one of the foundations for revising the concept of women's entrepreneurship as a factor of resistance and change. This concept incorporates concern with power relations and seeks to understand how biopower operates and articulates itself in the practice of entrepreneurship exercised by women. Our argument that this practice is conditioned by the role of women as the "mother-wife" of the patriarchal family is central to understanding how this concept articulates a new research agenda on this phenomenon.

The perspective on gender relations as historically situated power relations, reinforced by discourse and Modern institutions—including Entrepreneurship—can be materialized in how this power is exercised through violence against women. For this reason, it is necessary to better establish the relationship between violence and power, brilliantly addressed by the German philosopher Hannah Arendt.

HANNAH ARENDT: ON VIOLENCE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH POWER

In general, there is consensus on the idea that violence is any act that provokes or intends to compromise someone's integrity—the victim—whether physical, sexual, psychological, moral, or symbolic integrity (Saffioti, 2004; Gomes et al., 2016). But there is also a more diffuse way of understanding the concept of violence, considering its sociological nature, through which we seek to understand violence as a socially constituted and sometimes justified phenomenon. This is why we turn to Hannah Arendt's (1999) essay on this particular dimension, where the author presents an interesting philosophical view that helps us better understand the relationship between violence and power.

In a novel approach, the philosopher critiques how social and philosophical thought considers the role of violence in history, conducting a reflection that repositions violence to its proper place, namely, destruction. Arendt (1999) seeks to combat what she calls the intellectuals' apology for violence throughout history, driven by the imaginary belief that violence is part of civilizational dynamics.

For this reason, Arendt (1999) contests the different premises of social and philosophical thought that consider violence as a form of power or its manifestation, being justified especially in a sense of organization of social life. This is how the author criticizes the idea of the State as the holder of 'legitimate violence', warning that this idea is mistaken since violence paralyzes and produces inaction. Her main argument is that the concept of power should be that of the classical conception of politics, in which legitimate power emanates from the people and ensures the sustainability of social institutions. In this sense, Arendt understands power as a force of political nature, through which it is articulated by coalition. In other words, power is established by the strength of legitimate articulation within established political rules, by mobilizing political actors in an effort to meet their interests within the current political sphere,

so that their pleas can be incorporated into political structures. This is how we talk about power structures, power relations, and forms of power, which contradict the manifestation of violence..

In other words, Arendt (1999) argument is that violence antagonizes the dynamic process involving power structures, where political actors act to build coalitions. In this way, violence becomes a resource for the paralysis of politics, as it inhibits coalition-building through the use of political power; since this power is based on legitimacy given by the people's opinion, manipulation of public opinion arises, even in authoritarian regimes. It is in this sense of opposition to true politics that violence is understood by the philosopher as an extreme resource, even when used by the State – which holds legitimacy for the articulation of politics, for the realization of the coalition sought by legitimate power disputes. In this sense, violence can be understood as a resource for the annihilation of the political coalition, given by actors in the public sphere.

Another point that Arendt (1999) rejects from hegemonic social thought is the theory that violence is a natural behavior. The author argues that violence is not inherent in human biology nor is it an irrational act born of hatred; violence is a purposeful resource that involves a certain rationality. And it is this rationality that allows every act of violence to find a justification provided by the aggressor. Contextually, this premise of rationality in the issue of violence against women is the justification given by aggressors to explain their actions, always incorporated into their discourse with 'reasons' that led them to commit violence. In statements so common in acts of violence like "she deserved to be hit," it is understood that the justification given by the aggressor is associated with the conscious intention to nullify the woman's right to act according to her own will and freedom, even if this right is legally guaranteed. In fact, violence is established to nullify the political power of all women, guaranteed by their struggle in public life and in legitimate power institutions. This is what Arendt (1999) understands to be the contrast between violence and the legitimate power that is established in political institutions. Thus, for Arendt (2011), violent acts never generate power, in the sense of the isonomy that emerged from the Greek polis.

This assertion is important to understand our argument about the relationship between power dynamics revolving around women's rights in the political sphere and public life. If the concept of gender reflects an asymmetry of power in society that is historically constituted and institutionalized, even within the State (Scott, 2012), the fight against this condition is a political effort, where forces come together to change the institutional conditions that support or do not prevent misogynistic actions in society. It was through the political struggle of feminism that women gained the right to vote, to participate more effectively in political life, and to access state resources. Although these achievements are insufficient to compensate for the historical inequality in gender relations, they are still important and legitimate achievements that represent civilizational progress and have supported new demands for political and social change. This also applies to the growth of Women's Entrepreneurship, understood as a space of power achieved through the political and institutional struggle of women.

However, it is still necessary to understand the contradiction between women's emancipation through entrepreneurial activity and the manifestation of established gender power dynamics and violence in society. The contradictions between the optimistic view of women's entrepreneurship – as a process of empowerment, emancipation, advantage for women, or advantage for society (Greene et al., 2003; Henry et al., 2016; Foley et al., 2018; Kothari, 2017) – need to be juxtaposed with the perpetuation of the same processes of subjugation and violence historically entrenched in gender relations. Only then will we have a realistic view of the phenomenon and the historical conditions necessary to overcome its contradictions.



WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP, POWER RELATIONS, AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Over the years, the term "women's entrepreneurship" has been designated as one that addresses the issue of gender, but has remained limited to presenting gender only as a difference (Greene et al., 2003). As such, studies of women's entrepreneurship start from the binary difference and with the lens of the positivist tradition, seeking to answer the following fundamental questions: are women entrepreneurs different? What are the differences? How do we measure and compare businesses run by men and women? However, the political dimension of the gender issue is simply omitted from the discussion.

Approached from different philosophical conceptions, this text allows us to approach women's entrepreneurship through power relations and the manifestation of violence against women. In this sense, one way to dimension the power asymmetry as a determining gender condition present in Women's Entrepreneurship is to consider the influence of patriarchal values and the omission of gender-based violence in this entrepreneurial modality.

A first point to consider is violence as a response to the political space legitimately conquered by women entrepreneurs. Therefore, gender violence in its different forms and intensities manifests as a measure of resistance from representatives of patriarchy to women's achievements, especially political achievements that denote increased female participation in formal positions of power. This is how we also see gender violence as a response to dissatisfaction with women in positions of power in public organizations, whether in career roles or elected positions, as well as women in private, business, or non-business organizations in leadership positions.

Violence against women entrepreneurs can be understood along a continuum. Acts of violence, sometimes considered subtle, such as sexist jokes or sexist allusions, established through various symbolic forms, occur in dimensions such as psychological and financial, culminating in the more evident forms of physical and sexual violence against women, often lethal (Saffioti, 2001; Blay, 2014; Louro, 1997). Symbolic violence is particularly problematic because it is a type of violence committed with complicity between the victim and the perpetrator, often without the involved parties being aware of what they are experiencing or exerting (Saffioti, 2004).

As Sardenberg (2004) asserts, the symbolic has great importance in the reproduction of power structures, especially in the organization of gender relations. Therefore, it is necessary to understand how the symbolic dimension, present in the context of women's entrepreneurship, reproduces the economic and political structures of society in general, as well as reflecting the relationships of kinship, family and prevailing education in our society. In other words, since the organizational space has historically been occupied by men, when it is occupied by women as a result of feminist political struggle, those who are already there feel threatened by what they do not consider natural. In a historically macho context, power is the locus of the masculine; there is no space for those who identify as feminine. Because of this rupture, it is necessary to understand that organizations—as women gain spaces of power—develop new mechanisms of violence to maintain gender inequalities, such as low remuneration (economic violence), sexual harassment (sexual violence), psychological violence (stereotypes that threaten women and intentionally harm their emotional and psychic structure), moral violence (constraints in discourse and corporate imaginary regarding women and their competence in business), among many other forms of violence that become more sophisticated in organizational reality.

To overcome gender violence and the historical conditions of power asymmetry in women's entrepreneurship, it is necessary first to recognize these structural aspects. Gender violence permeates the daily lives of women entrepreneurs: for example, in the case of family businesses, wives and heirs who rise in their careers to leadership positions often report much greater effort, whether in

terms of time dedicated to work or the degree of perfectionism demanded of them (Coimbra et al., 2020). This demand represents a subtle form of symbolic violence (Gomes et al., 2016) within the context of executive careers, often self-imposed and without full awareness on the part of women (Versiani et al., 2021). This is how the patriarchal status quo also seeks to nullify or combat the power of women who own their own businesses, as women entrepreneurs, depending on the sector, compete with their companies in male-dominated markets (Alperstedt et al., 2014), where they are often subjected to sexist pressures (Coimbra et al., 2020). In this entrepreneurial context, gender violence is also exercised by male subordinates, as many have difficulty following orders from a woman (Cembranel et al., 2020).

The issue of reducing femininity to sexuality, as posited by Foucault (1988), also reveals a central issue to be considered in women's entrepreneurship. The problem of gender in the context of productive organizations is especially evident in the pressure on women to balance work and family (Foley et al., 2018; Cembranel et al., 2020), a demand that can be understood as a form of moral violence. Given the patriarchal model of family, the woman's primary social function is motherhood and marriage. Therefore, family care represents a much greater burden on women's careers than on men's. Women themselves develop guilt for not having "time" for the family, something that does not occur for men. If a woman advances in her career, any familial difficulties are her fault; if a man advances in his career, family problems are attributed to his wife who did not fulfill her role as wife and mother. This is a clear example of how subtle mechanisms of moral violence increase as female power increases, or in other words, the more a woman expands her power of command, the more difficult it is to meet the pressure to be a good mother, a good wife, and to care for the home, as if these tasks were much more hers than her partners'. This accumulation of difficulties often causes many women to give up or choose to progress more slowly in their career or business growth, and still blame themselves when they succeed in the organizational sphere.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

As Scott (1995) argues, gender interacts with other equally important elements in our historical time—class, race, ethnicity, age, among others—creating challenges, inequalities, and specific situations of domination and violence. Therefore, it is urgent and necessary to redefine the term "women's entrepreneurship" so that it becomes suitable for depicting and problematizing the creation and maintenance of businesses by women, based on aspects highlighted by feminist and gender studies. This redefinition comes from problematizing "being a woman" in a given society to form new research agendas. Similarly, by not naturalizing the differences between masculine and feminine, but rather denouncing the sexist and androcentric nature that affects women, we can present an emancipatory research agenda that contributes to gender equity within entrepreneurship research.

The contributions of Joan Scott, Michel Foucault and Hannah Arendt to the reworking of the concept of "women's entrepreneurship" occur on different, but complementary, planes. From the first author, we have a discussion about gender as a factor of social and historical distinction, in which the representation of the feminine marks a condition of social inferiority. In this dichotomy, the masculine delimits all references that explain power in the political sphere – aggressiveness, vigor, leadership – and the feminine constitutes itself as a way of representing fragility, which implies, at the same time, the need for male guardianship and subservience to his will. Already in Foucault, we have the feminine reduced to the idea of Western sexuality. In this sense, the author associates power, in gender relations, with discourse, in which the discursive syntheses about female sexuality, which we



receive and accept as natural in the social world, need to remain under suspicion, as they result from a complex web of tensions and historical constructions.

Both in Scott and in Foucault, we have the idea that relations between men and women are constituted in our society as asymmetrical, based on different manifestations of male power over female. The issue of gender is essentially a question of power and domination; in this historical tradition, to be a woman is to subject oneself, to confine oneself to the condition of marriage and motherhood as the only possible expressions (centered on reducing the feminine to the rationalization of sexuality through the idea of procreation). Social institutions reinforce these conditions through scientific, religious, legal, and political discourse. This is no different in the institution of Entrepreneurship.

At this particular point, we understand that the power relationship between masculine and feminine also encompasses expressions of potency that are socially demanded by men. The most evident form of manifestation of this potency is violence. It is in this theme that the contribution of philosopher Hannah Arendt complements the views of Scott and Foucault. Arendt expresses the subjective and symbolic trigger of the man's place as lord in gender relations. Not surprisingly, the power asymmetry between men and women is expressed through different expressions of violence—sexual, physical, verbal, psychological, economic, and symbolic—all representing different strategies of coercion and domination of women.

While, on the one hand, we witness that the social inferiority of women has been contested with advances achieved by the feminist movement, on the other hand, incidents of violence against women multiply in our society, including in women's entrepreneurship. The more a woman establishes her space in a sexist society, the more gender-based violence is established, perhaps as a last resort to affirm questioned masculinity. For this reason, we understand that the redefinition of the concept of women's entrepreneurship is only justified to the extent that it portrays the vulnerability of women to the different forms of violence to which they are subject in entrepreneurial activity. The gender-based violence already exposed is a reality also among women who start their own businesses, yet it is practically ignored in research on women's entrepreneurship. Often, the very choice to pursue entrepreneurship is a strategy to escape contexts of violence, especially when these are established within the realm of economic power reproduced in gender relations. Thus, we propose that research on women's entrepreneurship be elevated to a new level, with a greater critical approach and more commitment to the feminist agenda. This new perspective, inspired by the understanding of gender relations as socially constructed asymmetrical power relations, points towards a new research agenda, which can be translated along two axes. First, studies on redefined women's entrepreneurship must focus on the unequal conditions of entrepreneurial activity for men and women. Second, such inequality is also expressed through the different forms of violence that characterize gender relations.

Exposing these two aspects becomes crucial to problematize women's entrepreneurship in its essence: the inequality between men and women. Such a premise not only guides a new research agenda, but also provides a new reference for guiding entrepreneurial discourse, as well as organizational studies in general. The omission in literature and among agents articulating entrepreneurial activity regarding women's conditions and their historical difficulties in gaining space in our society not only represents a distorted view of this phenomenon, but also reinforces such hurdles in entrepreneurship, perpetuating the discursive order prevailing in a misogynistic culture. In other words, it means that being a woman and entrepreneuring is starting the game at a disadvantage. We need to balance this game.

The redefinition of the concept of women's entrepreneurship will serve to reveal the condition of women who undertake and lead businesses, taking into account that their gender is marked by the historical condition of femininity as a social pariah. We

can no longer deny the forms of violence against women in the entrepreneurial context. We are especially talking about subtle forms of violence, such as moral, psychological, and other symbolic forms. As a society, we only recognize the most obvious forms of violence, those that occur when it is already too late to change the course of systematic and institutionalized oppression against women.

1 At this point, we would like to acknowledge a contribution from the reviewer(s) regarding some texts that have sought to highlight the inequality between men and women as an element of analysis in women's entrepreneurship, such as the study by Bulgacov et al. (2011), Barbosa et al. (2021), Bizarria et al. (2022), as well as efforts by supranational organizations like the UN in organizing movements in defense of women entrepreneurs.

Violence against women has been considered here from two perspectives. First, that there are very subtle forms of expression, not always perceived by victims and society in general as manifestations of violence. In a way, the different forms of symbolic violence - psychological, moral, patrimonial, verbal, and cultural - become mechanisms that attack political articulation efforts in defense of women in society. Patriarchal power is challenged when society creates objective mechanisms to counteract this historical form of gender power. Therefore, another perspective we assume is that violence represents the annulment of political power, consciously exercised by the aggressor to curb the political rights (Arendt, 1999) hard-won by women in patriarchal society.

The common practice of minimizing forms of symbolic violence - jokes, insults, embarrassments, speeches to delegitimize women's capacity, among other forms - contributes to the invisibility of the problem of violence against women. Violence operates in a subtle and veiled manner, always directed when the power of men is questioned (even in acts of violence against women committed by women). Following this reasoning, we see that women's achievements in better positions of power as businesswomen and in organizations provoke more violence against them, from subtle to more serious and fatal forms. This is because the most brutal forms of violence have roots in forms considered less serious by patriarchal society (Saffioti, 2004; Segato, 2003). It is through feeling authorized to act violently against women by discourse, morality, and customs that men (and sometimes women) assault women for gender-related issues. From this perspective, we highlight some points to be pursued by studies of women's entrepreneurship:

Redefining Women's Entrepreneurship in studies on family businesses and on women who maintain or create new businesses. Given that the traditional concept of women's entrepreneurship has led to omissions regarding gender issues, it is necessary to establish a conceptual review for this type of research that considers the reality experienced by women in entrepreneurial activities. Although women's entrepreneurship has been designated as addressing the gender issue, it has remained limited to presenting gender only as a difference, that is, a binary view, as if gender were simply a characteristic. By using a redefined women's entrepreneurship, we aim to propose research in which the feminine, as a political and cultural aspect, is properly addressed and problematized.

Symbolic forms of violence against women entrepreneurs. Corporate language and certain productive sectors are filled with subtle mechanisms of violence. Just remember the controversy surrounding the word "presidenta," a term that resurfaced affirmatively when the first woman assumed Brazil's highest executive office and is still mistakenly viewed by the public as an incorrect spelling, despite being correct. We can also observe other symbolic forms of violence against women in the organizational world, such as discourse surrounding women's characteristics in business and leadership positions.

Affirmative policies in organizations led by women from the historical perspective of gender relations. Understanding that gender is a historical and political construct that gives men a social power that women do not have is essential for contextualizing



affirmative policies aimed at ending inequality between men and women. Affirmative policies against gender inequality are established in organizations and society in general, but they are not always understood by the population at large because patriarchal culture attacks these political actions, distorting their foundations. This is why we believe it is necessary to develop studies that reveal the symbolic mechanisms through which gender power asymmetry operates in relationships and how this concept is established in society and institutions, especially those that manifest in organizational practices. For example, we can mention the patriarchal family's concept of a woman's obligation to care for children and its use as a justification to exclude women from career advancement. Women are questioned for not dedicating themselves to children in the name of their careers, but men are not. Are children solely the responsibility of women? Do men not share responsibility for the family? This is an example of moral violence that causes many women to blame themselves for career success.

Professional and corporate education adjusted to the theme of violence against women. In the literature on professional and corporate education, the issue of gender violence and inequality is practically nonexistent. As a critical theme throughout society and already addressed in formal education for children, it is essential to recognize the need for its inclusion in professional training and corporate education. There are numerous studies indicating the problem of gender inequality in work and professional relations, but what impact do these studies have on development and professional training programs? It is necessary that studies of gender inequality and violence stop being a warning and become a curricular basis for the training of administrators, accountants, doctors, engineers, lawyers, etc., just as they should also guide development practices in education programs corporate in companies.

We do not intend for our study to become a reference for the academic world. In fact, one of its limitations is precisely the fact that it is an essay, for which an exhaustive review of research on women's entrepreneurship has not been conducted, although some points highlighted in this essay have been addressed by existing studies. Nevertheless, it is necessary to consider that the difficulty in finding texts with this approach already reveals a bias in the field that points to the need to broaden the discussion, and that was our purpose. As stated at the beginning of our text, the main intent is political. In this sense, we aim for this work to provoke discomfort within the academic community regarding something that has not yet been adequately assessed. Violence against women is practiced in subtle dimensions and forms to avoid detection, but as academics, we are learning how to properly inform society. Our goal was to raise awareness of this issue within the context of women's entrepreneurship.

Conflict of interest statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Authors' statement of individual contributions

Roles	Contributions	
	Fabrcio, J. dos S.	Vizeu, F.
Conceptualization	■	■
Methodology	■	■
Software	■	■
Validation	■	■
Formal analysis	■	■
Investigation	■	■
Resources	■	■
Data Curation		■
Writing - Original Draft		■
Writing - Review & Editing	■	■
Visualization	■	■
Supervision		■
Project administration	■	■
Funding acquisition		N. A.

Note: Acc. CRediT (Contributor Roles Taxonomy): <https://credit.niso.org/>

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