


Chapter 9

Intersectionality Between Racism and Sexism in the Brazilian Airline Industry: Perceptions and Strategies of Black Women Crewmembers

Natália Araújo de Oliveira

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4815-8352>
*Federal University of Santa Maria,
Brazil*

Cassiana Gabrielli

*Federal University of São Carlos,
Brazil*

Gabriela Nicolau dos Santos

Aveiro University, Portugal

Laiara Amorim Borges

*Metropolitan College of the State of
São Paulo, Brazil*

ABSTRACT

This work aims to discuss the barriers of access and permanence of Black woman crewmembers in the Brazilian airline industry as well as resistance strategies faced by them. Using intersectionality in a theoretical-methodological way, this research, of qualitative nature, carried out interviews with six Black women of the aforementioned sector. The work revealed how the airline industry is an elitist environment that excludes Black bodies, making use of the domination of structural, cultural, disciplinary, and interpersonal powers in order to give white subjects the advantage. However, it was also possible to perceive strategies of affronting, which involve the union of the Black airline industry workers into a collective—the Quilombo Aéreo—helmed by women who sought to open opportunities for the insertion of more Black people into the airline industry, taking care of the mental health of the ones who already work there, and also be a beacon for support.

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INTRODUCTION

Facing the lack of investigations that discuss tourism and racial relations in the Brazilian academic environment (Oliveira, 2021), the incipient stage of research regarding gender and tourism in Brazil (Gabrielli, 2021) and, also, due to the inexistence of debate concerning gender and race inequality in the airline industry (Calvet, Cond, Ballart, & Almela, 2021; Yu & Hyun, 2021), the following work emerges. Focusing specifically on Brazilian aviation, there is no in-depth analysis of professionals working in this area in the national academic production. Even data on the composition of the labor market in the airline industry are deficient in this context. Through this it is possible to identify only the number of licenses issued for each professional category, stratifying them by gender, while the racial issue is still neglected.

The absence of literature reported here makes it impossible (in addition to highlighting the need and urgency) an academic debate about how the national airline sector treats the black women who are there. More than that, it does not allow us to know who these women are, if they receive the same salary as men, if they have access to the most prestigious spaces in the activity, or at least, if they have the same working conditions and treatment as the other crew members. Faced with this problem, the general objective of this chapter is to investigate the barriers to access and permanence of black women crew members in the Brazilian airline sector, as well as the resistance strategies (both for access and for permanence) used by them. Using the intersectional perspective (of black feminism), the research focuses on manifestations of racism and sexism, themes linked to a critical debate on tourism.

Given the scarcity of data and production on the subject, which reflect, somehow, the lack of interest in discussing such issues on the part of official entities, research institutions and market operators, references and partnership were sought with the only identified entity, until then, which has guided racial issues in the Brazilian airline industry. The *Quilombo Aéreo* is brought to this investigation because it is a collective of black aeronauts created in 2018 with the goal of “bringing visibility to the black crewmembers of the Brazilian Civil Aviation” (Quilombo Aéreo, 2022). Through active participation in the conduction of the research presented here, ways for articulating critical thought to critical praxis is sought, according to intersectional studies. It makes possible that the academic environment and social movement influence one another, aiming towards fairer social relationships in an environment full of inequality such as the airline industry. In this sense, the collective is a co-participant in this research, from its design to the publication of its results, enabling active exchanges between theory and practice, as proposed by intersectionality.

The research, which is qualitative, was carried out through interviews with six women who are currently working or have worked in Brazilian aviation, as flight

attendants or pilots. All the women interviewed recognized themselves as black and pointed to difficulties they had experienced since their intention to enter aviation and still to remain in it. The responses received were categorized and interpreted from the intersectional literature, which finds in Collins and Bilge (2021) great expression from the theory of domains of power, an important analytical tool that reveals how black female bodies are seen and treated.

This chapter is structured as follows: initially, the theoretical framework of the research is presented, centered on the discussion of intersectionality (Akotirene, 2019; Collins & Bilge, 2021) based on social markers of race and gender. Then, the methodology presents the steps followed for the construction of the work, presenting the women interviewed and the techniques used for the collection and analysis of the information obtained. Subsequently, in the results and discussions, the barriers listed by the interviewees to enter the airline industry and to remain in it are brought up, linking them to the literature used in the research, especially from the reference of the power domains of Collins and Bilge (2021). The results and discussions also reveal the strategies of counterpower, that is, of resistance, daily used by black women in the sector, with emphasis on the collective initiative of *Quilombo Aéreo*. Finally, the conclusion reflects on the inequalities encountered by black women working in Brazilian aviation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This work has as basis the intersectionality, as such gives “(...) theoretical-methodological instrumentality to the structural inseparability of racism, capitalism and cis-hetero-patriarchy” (Akotirene, 2019, p.14), being here discussed, specifically, the intersections between gender and race. Even though the term has been coined by Crenshaw (1991) in the beginning of the 1990s, previous intellectual and activist discussions (Davis, 2016 [1981]; Gonzales, 1981; hooks, 1981) have already highlighted the necessary articulation between gender, race and class in order to perceive the specific conditions of inequality attributed to black women (Collins & Bilge, 2021).

Considering that “the goal of intersectional studies is to contribute to the social justice initiatives” as analytical tools, “the intersectionality investigates how intersectional power relations influence upon social relationships in societies marked by diversity, as well as daily individual experience” (Collins & Bilge, 2021, p.16). Thus, four distinct “domains of power” were identified - structural, cultural, disciplinary and interpersonal - which are interconnected in organizational spheres (as it is the case of the airline industry). However, in agreement with Collins and

Bilge (2021, p.52), who named critical praxis as fundamental to the understanding of intersectionality, that it can't be reduced to a solely analytical tool.

As the authors affirm:

(...) the common understandings of intersectionality underestimate the practices that make possible the intersectional knowledge, especially those which involve criticism, rejection or attempts to correct the social problems created by complex social inequalities. The critical praxis also constitutes an important characteristic of the intersectional investigation – which is attentive to the intersection of the power relationships and is vital for resisting social inequality (Collins & Bilge, 2021, p.52).

The structural domain of power makes reference to the fundamental structures of social institutions (labor market, housing, education, health). The cultural one emphasizes the growing importance of ideas and daily culture in the organization of power relationships. Disciplinary domain points out the fair or unfair application of rules and regulations based on race, sexuality, class, gender, age and similar categories. Lastly, the interpersonal domain explains how individuals experience the convergence of structural, cultural and disciplinary powers. The domains of power of Collins and Bilge (2021) bring the perspective of Grada Kilomba (2019), which points out how the combination of prejudice and power formed racism. Then, the connection about an historical, political, social and economic power comes into fruition.

Aiming to bring the condition of black women in the airline industry into the spotlight it is necessary to discuss racism – defined as systematic domination – structural, institutional, and daily – of an ethnical group upon another. Structural because as white subjects receive more privileges, such excludes the others from the majority of social and political structures. Institutional for being rooted within the institutions – such as systems and educational agendas, labor markets, criminal justice, etc., placing *white subjects* once more in an advantageous position. Daily because the “continual pattern of abuses” is repeated ceaselessly and in several places, transforming black bodies into improper bodies (Kilomba, 2019, p.80), which leads to the question: which bodies are “fit” for occupying workplaces in the Brazilian airline industry?

In that sense, the discussion about patriarchy is also required, since “[it] structures social relationships and practices in which men dominate, exploit and oppress women” (Walby, 1990, p.20). According to the author, there are six structures of which patriarchy is composed of: the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relations in the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and, patriarchal relations in cultural institutions. The patriarchal means of production are related to domestic work, traditionally attributed to women

in exchange for their subsistence, without social and economic recognition; the patriarchal relationships of paid work focus on the insertion of women in the labor market in specific areas and jobs of smaller status and remuneration. Knowing that the state is patriarchal, racist and capitalist, the patriarchal bias within state policies and actions is noticeable, even if they manifest in several ways throughout time; male violence is structural, given that it is legitimized, systematically tolerated and almost not fought against in several contexts; the patriarchal relationship in sexuality dialogue with compulsory heterosexuality and the exacerbated control of feminine sexuality. Lastly, the cultural institutions permeated by patriarchy shape the subjective gender constructions, attaching specific characteristics to the female and male that spread through different institutions, such as religions, educational, media, among others.

So, for the considerations hereby proposed, in agreement with Saffioti (1987, p. 60), when she explains that,

With the rise of capitalism, the symbiosis happened, a fusion between the three systems of domination-exploration [patriarchy, racism, capitalism]. Only to make the understanding of such phenomenon easier, one can separate these three systems from one another. In concrete reality, they are inseparable, as they have transformed, through said symbiotic process, into a single system of domination-exploration, which is here given the name of patriarchy-racism-capitalism Saffioti (1987, p. 60).

That way, focusing on this research's goal, one can notice that despite the advance in the systematization of information about gender inequalities in the touristic sector (Mooney, 2020), official data of the Brazilian airline industry that intersections race and gender does not exist, since, both regulatory agencies (such as the *Agência Nacional de Aviação Civil* [ANAC]) and union syndicates of the category do not collect data regarding race/color of their workers. Regarding gender, as pointed out on table 1, a survey carried along with ANAC shows that the number of female pilots in activity is minimal (2,3% among commercial pilots, 2,7% are helicopter pilots and 2,3% work in the airlines). On the other hand, acting as flight attendants, women represent more than 60% of workers (Quilombo Aéreo, 2022).

Estimations of the *Quilombo Aéreo* (2022) point that the participation of black people in the national civil aviation is of 5% for flight attendants, and 2% for pilots, without any black female pilot in activity within the national airlines. It's interesting to note that in the United States, where black women are 6,8% of the population, there are 20 female pilots (Zirulnik & Orbe, 2019), while in Brazil, black women comprise 28% of the national population (Bond, 2020).

Table 1. Representativity by gender in the Brazilian airline industry

Course, license or habilitation	Men	Women	Women Percentage
Commercial pilot	13.8000	3.283	2.3%
Helicopter pilot	18.147	520	2.7%
Airline pilot	41.590	992	2.3%
Flight Attendant	12.240	24.211	66%
Private pilot	6.609	1.637	19%

Source: Quilombo Aéreo (2022) from data collected from ANAC

The data in Table 1 converges towards the information of the *International Labor Organization* [ILO] (2019), which points that men are the majority among pilots, mechanics and engineers, being those the most privileged occupations (socially and economically), while women are majority among the flight attendant. The document also explains that the required long periods of time away from home, the lack of flexibility for work scales and also the requirement of several flight hours inhibit the participation of women in the sector, as the aforementioned are culturally in charge of the domestic work and care. Another topic that arose and is also relevant to the research is the fact of flight attendant being historically objectified and sexualized in airlines' advertisements, making it so that sexual harassment of passengers and workmates is frequent.

Considering the participation of white and black women in the Brazilian airline industry, in 2019, it is noted that they represented 38% of the formal workforce, while men are 62% (based on data collected from Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada [IPEA], 2020). However, more than a quantitative difference, data from IPEA show that the inequality also reflects in the access to better salary ranges. Observing the remuneration based on gender, it is identified that as the income increases, the disproportion of men to women also increases. While among the smaller remunerations (up to 2 minimum wages), women are 43%, and among the most well-paid (above 5 minimum wages), they are only 34% (based on data collected from IPEA, 2020).

However, the data above do not reflect the particularities experienced by black women in the sector, making it harder to deepen reflections that aim at discussing not only structural sexism, but, above all, the manifestations of the aforementioned articulated to structural racism, both being strongly imprinted in Brazilian society. Thus, our focus is the black women, which are most of the time not considered in the debates about racism (Kilomba, 2019).

Table 2. Interviewed women's profiles

Characterization	Placeholder Name	Age	Former/Actual Work Area
Subject 1	Brenda Robinson	44yrs	Former flight attendant
Subject 2	Bessie Coleman	33yrs	Flight attendant /aviation student
Subject 3	Mae Jemison	35yrs	Flight attendant
Subject 4	Madeline Swegle	33yrs	Flight attendant
Subject 5	Chipo Matimba	33yrs	Pilot (non-acting)
Subject 6	Elizabeth Petros	34yrs	Pilot (non-acting)

Source: authors (2022)

METHODOLOGY

The research is of qualitative nature, which means that it is interested in the universe of meanings, motivations, aspirations, beliefs, values and people's attitudes (Minayo, 2002), privileging thus the social actors. In order to achieve such, interviews were used as a technique for data collection, seeking to allow a deep exploration of the actor's life conditions (Poupart, 2012). Those were semi-structured and composed of a script, pointing that the semi-structured interviews make it possible that information emerges in a free manner, and the answers are not conditioned to the strict pattern of alternatives (Manzini, 1990).

The first step for the research was to make contact with the *Quilombo Aéreo* collective, in order to know if there would be interest in such investigation, which was confirmed by the founders. From there, contact with black women from the airline industry was established, and interviews were scheduled and conducted virtually in the months of October and November of 2021. The criteria for the interruption of contact requests for new interviews was the qualitative saturation in the way that, at the moment that such became repetitive in a manner that would saturate the content, they were ceased (Gondim & Lima, 2006).

The questions inquired about these women's 'life stories' in the airline industry, investigating the obstacles they had to overcome in order to get in, to remain there and also about the strategies to confront racism and sexism. Table 2 shows a characterization of the interviewed subjects, bringing the field of work (or where they used to work) and their ages. As will be seen throughout the article, identities were preserved, using a fictitious name whose inspiration comes from black women pioneers in the airline industry.

A thematic analysis was used for data analysis, in which the recurrence of the collected information is verified, thus highlighting the most mentioned topics by the interviewed subjects, searching for patterns and connections that lead to a

wider referential (Gaskell, 2008). The information was categorized in a manner to structuralize the discussions into three sections: obstacles faced in order to join the airline industry, obstacles faced to remain in it and strategies of resistance. As the interviewees are now formally presented, the next topic brings the results found in the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The research results revealed that black women in the airline industry find obstacles to ingress into the area, to remain in it and also that they devise resistance strategies. Applying intersectionality as a tool of analysis, the domains of power (structural, cultural, interpersonal and disciplinary) of Collins and Bilge (2021) will be used here, attached to the speech of the interviewees in the research, in order to illustrate how such domains of power manifest themselves in the professional experiences of black women crew members.

Regarding the obstacles for ingress, table 3 shows them, linked to the aforementioned domains of power. The first barrier, which is the cost of professional habilitation, is a clear example of how the uneven social structure between white and black people influences the process of admission in the airline industry, being essential to analyze the lack of black women in the place from an intersectional perspective, in order to understand that the environment in question is extremely elitist, and excludes black women from the activity. Data from the Brazilian Geography and Statistics Institute (IBGE) analyzed by the Departamento Intersindical de Estatística e Estudos Socioeconômicos [Dieese] (2021) reveal that in the second trimester of 2021, black women earned 54% less than white men. That way, pointing social inequities in the analysis is essential to problematize the question, for the domain of structural power is revealed when showing that access to fundamental institutions in Brazilian society – such as education, labor market, housing, among others is different for men and women, white and black, denying the freedom of choice and socio-economic ascension to the most outsourced part of the population, in this case the black women. As one of the interviewees, which is a flight attendant, explains: “I had no money, obviously, to pay for the course, and then my boss back then, who had suggested me to take it, paid a few of the first tuition fees for me, because I had no money” (Madeline).

When talking about the pilot course, the reality is even further away, because a pilot spends, from the beginning to the achievement of the commercial piloting license, between R\$100.000,00 and R\$150.000,00. Throughout the research it was possible to hear about families taking loans in order to fulfill their daughters' dreams or, yet, about the delay in the training, making it harder to pay for the course, as

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Table 3. Obstacles for black women to join the airline industry and domains of power

Obstacles	Domains of Power
Cost of professional training	Structural
Lack of career information	Cultural
Lack of representativity of other black women	Structural and cultural
Unequal recruitment process	Disciplinary
Non-acceptance of black bodies	Cultural and interpersonal

Source: authors (2022)

another interviewee says: “But at the time, college took all my salary, it was very expensive... So, I either studied at college or took flight hours, it wasn’t possible to do both” (Bessie).

The high costs for learning explain, as well, the second obstacle found – lack of information about the career – which shows how black women didn’t know they could occupy that space, as there were no references, in their social circle, of black people working in the airline industry, or women crew members. Many, also, thought that black women couldn’t even work there. As one of the interviewees told: “(...) since I was little no one ever mentioned it, I have no one working in this area” (Chipo). Another interviewee also tells:

I remember once talking to my mother, like this: ‘hey mom, I want to pilot a plane’. My mother replied: “But you can’t, only men can” (...). The first time I flew a plane in my life (...) when I entered the airplane, I saw it then thought: the pilot is a man, but the flight attendant is a woman! So, it’s possible to become one (Bessie).

Discriminated bodies, such as black women’s bodies, go through what Collins (2019) calls control images – stereotypes and figurations that imprison black women in certain spaces and affect the way they are treated and also how they see themselves. It is unfitting in these stereotypes that black women occupy leadership positions or that they appear in gendered spaces – such as aviation. The domain of power (Collins & Bilge, 2021) found here, the cultural one, manifests itself by normalization of cultural attitudes and expectancies in regard to social inequality. That is, the representativeness and dissemination of information regarding work in the airline industry “traditionally” do not favor black women, causing them won’t even consider themselves able to occupy such space. Thus, the lack of specific knowledge by women that now work in the area, of the possibility of following a career in the aforementioned, has been made itself present in all interviews. More than that, the images of control – which put the black women in positions of

servitude, or as being less apt to certain professional positions, also operate along with those already in the market, making it so that this domain of power becomes also noticeable when discussing the lack of representativity in the area and in the unfair recruitment processes.

The next topic – lack of representativity of other black women – discusses the difficulty of the interviewees in seeing themselves in the environment, be it for the lack of female teachers (black or not) and black people (women or not) in schools, among instructors and colleagues, in the environments they are at until the end of the course. Of the six interviewees, only one had black instructors, and four only had two female instructors. One of them cited that throughout their flight attendant course, these two women instructors were responsible for teaching first aid and the other one for etiquette, which shows the sexual division of work, in which women are directed to jobs related to care and less valued.

This barrier of lack of representativity shows the interconnection between the domain of structural power, which systematically excludes black women (as explained above) with the cultural one which, despite spreading the belief that Brazil lives a racial democracy, it does not bring black women in positions of power and leadership, showing how the discourse is dissociated from daily praxis.

The reference to the uneven recruitment processes, the next analyzed obstacle, shows how even if they are well-prepared, black women have difficulties in being approved to work in the area. In that sense, it was possible to hear:

At least one of the selections I have been through, I'm sure that I was extremely well-prepared, I'm sure that it was racism that excluded me (...). But it's how it goes, we can't prove structural racism, yet. Structural racism is very strong, the institutional one too, then I still can't prove that they were the reasons (Mae).

In the same direction, another interviewee said:

In a selection I took part (...) a hundred were there, and in the end, it was divided into three groups of eight. I was among the eight, in my group, I was the only one that did not pass. And in this group, the girl [white] said this: "Dude, I'm despairing, in the English interview I didn't manage to say a thing". And I answered: "No, I managed to answer everything, I'm fine". And in that group, I was the only one who didn't pass (Chipo).

From the speeches, the domain of disciplinary power is inferred, and such presents itself when it is understood that groups and people are disciplined to fit or fight persistent disciplinary practices in order to have access to certain spaces and positions (Collins & Bilge, 2021), as it was explicit by one of the interviewees, who

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mentioned having heard the following advice: “Don’t take the tech pilot course, join college [Aeronautical Sciences]. Because the tech course is cheaper, takes less time but you won’t get a job”. And followed, “women pilots who are in the airline industry today, at least the ones I know (...) every one of them have Aeronautical Sciences. And the men have the tech course” (Bessie). That is, she seeks strategies to circumvent the *status quo* which disciplines women and black people to not occupy the position of pilots, while others figure out that they were excluded by the same disciplinary practices.

It was possible to notice a non-acceptance of black bodies – last obstacle mentioned – in a way that all the interviewees, while still being candidates to a spot in the airline industry, knew that they could not arrive to the interviews with their natural haircuts. One of the pilots says: “If you get into a company with an afro, black power haircut, to an interview, no way” (Chipó). Here, the intersection between the domain of cultural and interpersonal power is reinforced. The cultural matter is evidenced with the myth of meritocracy, which preaches that the recruitment processes are neutral and that everyone would have the same opportunities, and the most dedicated and prepared would be able to be hired. To this narrative still are added the cultural constructions referring to gender and race, which was already seen here in the aforementioned speeches, aiming to demonstrate that such processes are not really fair or based only on the candidates’ skills, but are permeated by cultural constructions that lead towards the non-acceptance of black bodies in certain spaces, related to positions of power, such as the airline industry.

The interpersonal domain of power highlights the personal experiences regarding the articulation of the other domains of power, aiming to ponder about the several identities of individuals and their social experiences. Here, one can notice that black women are forced to make choices concerning their appearances, which could reinforce their black or feminine identity, risking to suffer retaliations concerning the domains of structural, disciplinary and/or cultural power. Or they can opt to “camouflage” their identities of race and gender, fitting into the disciplinary and cultural norms that structure the relations of power involved in the processes of hiring flight attendants and pilots, which, according to the perceived obstacle, deny the black bodies in such space.

The difficulties for remaining in the sector were categorized in seven aspects, and can be seen in table 4, which also brings the domains of power of Collins and Bilge (2021).

The obstacle of lack of representativity points out not only the lack of other black people working, but also of other black people traveling. Thus, the report of interviewees saying that they were the only black people in the place was quite recurrent:

Table 4. Obstacles for black women to remain in the airline industry and domains of power

Obstacles for remaining	Domains of Power
Lack of representativity	Structural, cultural and interpersonal
Different level of demands	Disciplinary and cultural
Denial of the black body	Interpersonal and cultural
Non-acceptance of the afro hair	Disciplinary and interpersonal
Mental/laboral health	Disciplinary and interpersonal
Machismo	Structural and cultural
Harassment	Cultural and interpersonal

Source: authors (2022)

Look, when I fly with black people, I take pictures (laughs) to record. It's true, because it is very rare (...). Sometimes I also take pictures as well to show I am the only black person in the flight. It's because generally that's what happens. So, it is a place of great solitude (Madeline).

In this speech it is possible to notice that the domains of structural, cultural and interpersonal power make themselves present. While remembering that the domain of structural power manifests itself by denying access to parts of the population to education or dignified jobs, for example, it is understood that more than excluding black people from the labor market in the airline industry, these people are, also, systematically excluded from the higher remuneration ranges, making it so that they have little access to services with higher cost – such as air transportation. This reflects in the absence of black passengers. Along with that, it should be pointed out that culturally, black people have also not been valued, or even duly represented in the market of travel and tourism (Oliveira, 2022), distancing such groups even further away from potential consumption in the sector. Lastly, while pointing that flights are a place of “great solitude”, Madeline gives us hints of an interpersonal domain of power, since she sees herself negotiating her personal solitude experience due to her racial identity so that she can remain in an elitist space that denies the presence of other black people.

The different level of demands made to them brings reflections of the racism that always demands more from black people, as the sexism demands more from women, giving the feeling that the “bar’s level” is higher for the women afro-descendants. As one of the interviewed pilots points out: “The feeling I have is that I have to prove to others every time that I’m capable of doing things. (...). It’s tiresome” (Elizabeth). Zirulnik and Orbe (2019), when conducting interviews with African-

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American pilots, also highlighted how they feel that they need to work twice harder to prove they're good enough for the job they occupy. In the same way, one of the interviewees remembers two women pilots who graduated together and had different opportunities along their career, in a way that ten years after graduation, while one found the first job in the area, the other already was a commander outside of Brazil, both having the same graduation, same degree" (Bessie). However, one of them is a "white, blonde woman" (*id*), while the other is a black woman.

Just like in the uneven recruitment processes, after joining the labor market in the airline industry, the black women keep being demanded in a different manner, being necessary to submit or fight the disciplinary rules instituted daily. In the passage above highlighted by Bessie, it is possible to notice the intersectionality of race and gender in this domain of power which, when being challenged regarding gender, accepting a white woman as a pilot, denies the same opportunity to a black woman, keeping thus the disciplinary power instituted in the sector and reinforcing the need of intersectional view. That way, the domain of cultural power can also be noticed, as it is through the "images of control", already mentioned before, that bosses and supervisors choose people (based on social markers) which are more or less demanded from.

The category "denial of the black body" reflects about the cases of racism that occurred in the area, be it "deny to receive a glass on your hand" (Brenda), say that the pilot "looked more like a carnival dancer than a pilot" (Elizabeth), not having their leadership position acknowledged – even while using a different attire to denote their position, among other examples heard along the interviews. Zirulnik and Orbe (2019) also emphasized how African-American women pilots hear racist and sexist comments that question their abilities. In that case, both the incidence of the interpersonal and cultural domains of power are verified. Interpersonal because while putting oneself in a place that would otherwise be denied to them, more than strangeness, these women experienced daily situations of prejudice due to their racial and gender identities. Cultural because it articulates images of control, previously discussed, which reflect both in the black women themselves, and also influence the racist and sexist practices from those that do not make part of such groups.

In the same line comes the aspect of the denial of afro hair which, from its relevance, earned its own category. The afro hair, in a mixed country like Brazil, denotes afro-descendant and is the first item to be "tamed" in airlines which, also, as mentioned before, deny those right away on interviews. It is noteworthy that every airline has its own dress code, under allegation of flight security, which has to be strictly followed by the crewmembers, and which also include specifications about hairstyles. However, more than safety, racism can be seen when an interviewee affirms:

In my hair's case, it's more because of the 'scrunched nose' it causes, you know? I don't want to straighten it out, so I'd rather keep it tied (...). But they notice it, it's a fact. You have to present yourself in a more serious manner, right? Because they think afro hair is not a serious image... (Elizabeth).

Besides that, a few companies use caps – which demands that afro hair be straightened out to fit there. Thus:

The matter of caps which the [airline] sets. Man, I'll have to tie my hair, like, I won't be able to use it loose, I'll have to do brushing, I'll have to do something so that thing fits my hair; because it won't fit. So, like, I think that's where it starts, they add a few elements which certain people won't be able to put in unless they change their looks radically. It's a violence, that's what it is (Madeline).

Here, the disciplinary domain of power is evident, given that it's about codes instituted to subject the appearance of certain professionals to those accepted by the airlines, in a clear example of bodies disciplining. Such intersects with the interpersonal, as once more the interviewed women report the personal direction, as they notice “scrunched noses” or the necessity (different to desire) of straightening their hair denying their black identity.

The reflex of racism in the area comes described in the next category – mental/laboral health – which makes black women to step away from their job and make them think about quitting – which some end doing. Brenda pointed out that: “The issue about the hair, what I did, I began cutting (...). I transformed myself into a person that turned into that just to be accepted. (...)” The speech of this former flight attendant evidences how disciplinary and interpersonal domains of power intersection leading to compromising, many times, of these women's mental health, since while they subject themselves to negotiate their identities to fit under disciplinary norms, they go through a subjective process which, in certain cases, leads to sickness, given its complexity.

As pointed out by another flight attendant, being a black woman in the airline industry is “to have your mental health being daily tested” (Mae) – a reflex of society that sickens black people, having herself, at that, stepping off for this reason. Studies show a greater prevalence of mental disturbances in non-white people and the suicide rate among young black teenagers is 45% greater than among whites (Smolen & Araújo, 2017; Ministério da Saúde, 2018). The same interviewee points out that she's always stigmatized as the “crazy person” who sees racism in everything, which reminds Kilomba (2019, p.138) when the author explains that “since racism is not seen as a social phenomenon, those who face it are always confronted with

the message that their experiences come from their own excessive sensitivity and, thus, are their own responsibility”.

Here, once more, it is easy to notice how disciplinary norms are imposed in a way to accept certain behavior standards of certain people and repel others, interconnecting with the interpersonal issue since the way such as black women subjectivize such norms lean directly towards their personal experiences.

The answers categorized as machismo show how female crewmembers are not respected for being women, in a way that they have their requests for passengers denied, while they see the same requests being made by male crewmembers being obeyed. Reminding that the topic at hand is security instructions, that is, women are not giving suggestions, but are giving instructions. Another point arisen by the interviewees refers to the presentation and women’s dresses, since women need to paint their nails, use makeup, wear uncomfortable clothes/shoes while the male outfits do not have those obligations, which encumber only women. A pilot interviewee affirmed that she had services denied because she would be too close to the clients and their wives would be jealous. Besides that, the interviewed women also problematized the fact that using tight clothes, which are counterproductive in situations of potential or effective emergency, also hypersexualizes them. Calvet et al. (2021) also point out that there are demands for physical standards that affect especially the flight attendant.

The machismo, as patriarchal praxis, is essentially structural, once it spreads through several fundamental institutions of the contemporary society, such as family, religion, education, among others, interfering actively in inequality between men and women, stimulating these to discredit women, such as in the citation about refusing to comply to instructions given by female flight attendant, or ignoring their position of leadership. Here it can be noted that its intersection with the cultural domain of power, since the contemporary discourses still corroborate with the patriarchal structures, feeding narratives such as hypersexualizing of certain jobs or the imposition of appearance standards specifically for female bodies.

Lastly, the final category treats harassment suffered by women, which they reported as being recurrent, denouncing passengers as well as workmates. All the interviewees affirm that harassment for being a woman is “common”, “normal” or “frequent”. One of them even points out having lost a job opportunity for not giving in. She narrates: “I have already lost a job because the guy wanted an... exchange, see? (...), and I said no, that I was only interested in flying. Then he didn’t call me anymore and started badmouthing me (...)”. (Elizabeth). About harassment from passengers, it was frequent to hear that “what happens is a lot of harassment, sometimes the girl is going through the aisle and the guy spans the girl’s rear indeed, and doesn’t care at all about it.” (Brenda). Or, as Bessie says with emphasis: “Wow! Harassment in a plane is very common, like... more than you think, you know?”.

Harassment here was understood as a manifestation of domains of cultural power intersections with the interpersonal one. Cultural because, as seen in the aforementioned speeches, there is a normalization of this type of violence, since invisibility and maintenance make it so that women themselves internalize acceptance of such behavior as something cultural, aiming to minimize, in many cases, its effects. Such allies itself to interpersonal domain, as the way women are forced to deal with daily harassment interfere in each of their personal experiences, as in the case of the loss of a job opportunity. Or, in cases revealed by other interviewees, regarding the lack of support from the airlines themselves, making them have to choose between reporting something that hits them as women, or avoid retaliation or discredit by trying to fight this type of instituted violence.

As the obstacles for entry and remaining were presented, now the work shows the strategies of resistance, with emphasis to the *Quilombo Aéreo*, whose story begins in 2018 with two black women from the airline industry meeting each other in social networks – Kenia Aquino, which discussed representativity of black crewmembers in Brazil, and Laiara Amorim, which drew attention to the lack of gender, race and class equity, in the command cabin of national airplanes.

The meeting of these two in social media show, as Collins and Bilge explain (2021, p.149), how digital media are a vibrant stage for intersectionality, facilitating the global reach of this topic, since black feminists “are not only online, as they lean onto intersectionality to analyze the fundamental importance of digital space for the reproduction of intersectional power relationships”. In that sense, it’s from this encounter in virtual space, that they felt the need for collective action:

The official order, repression, was called it quilombo, which is a black name that means union. So, when blacks unite, pile up, they are always forming a quilombo, eternally forming a quilombo, they are always forming a quilombo, eternally forming a quilombo, the African name is union (Nascimento, 1977, p. 126).

The perspective of union of black people, which also comes in the name of the collective, shows the tone of its creation since, if there was no internal support network before, it was created with the intention of giving visibility to black people of the area, with debates and actions which propose to mitigate the effects of racism and sexism in aviation, to develop strategies of self-care – with special attention to black aeronauts’ mental health – and show companies the effects of institutional racism. Coming from different social/black movements, among them a group of black lawyers, psychologists, masters and doctors the *Quilombo* was formed, with the perspective of establishing a base of information about black people in the Brazilian aviation sector through data collection, denouncement systematization and also collection and registration of its people’s path.

With the view of contributing to anti-racist agenda and to open spaces for the entrance and permanence of more black people in the airline industry, the Collective created affirmative structural actions, such as the projects *Fly like a black girl* which aims to accelerate the training of black female pilots and the *Blacks who fly*, which finances suburban black people to take the courses for flight attendant. The *Blacks who fly* was financed through a *matchfunding* which raised more than R\$ 90.000,00. Such resulted in the graduation of ten black flight attendants, the first majorly black group to graduate in this course in Brazil, which happened on November 20th, 2021.

Even feeling accomplished with the deed, the founders of *Quilombo* point to the necessity of opening and opportunity in other instances of the airlines industry in order to seek racial equality, since the sector is still recognizably elitist and whit, with Eurocentric determined pattern. As Yu and Hyun (2021) clarify, the experience of multiracial groups in the airline industry results in bigger creativity and productivity. Furthermore, the authors say, ignoring diversity leads to racism.

The *Quilombo Aéreo* deems it important to act on several fronts. One of them, the academic front, seeks the collection of data that prove the area's structural racism. Another reflects upon the representativity to show society that there are black professionals acting in the area and question, along with companies and regulating entities, the violence over black bodies and its effects on air transport security. Lastly, for the training and occupation, it works the democratization of aviation and professionalization of black people to work in the airline industry.

CONCLUSION

Grada Kilomba (2019), while pondering about the reflections of racism on black people, explains that it is common to question what a person has done after having suffered the act, instead of asking what racism has done to the person. To inquire what racism has done, the author continues, is not to victimize, but to empower someone, as the black person turns into an active voice which describes their own reality. To question "what has racism done to you" is a real act of decolonization and political resistance, which allows the black person to occupy themselves with themselves and not with their white peers, explains the author. So, it is important to ask: What has racism done to Brazilian Civil Aviation? This research shows what has been done starting from racism and sexism, echoing to the strategies of resistance – which are many and need to gain space.

The chapter highlighted reflections of women who recognize the importance of black bodies occupying elitist spaces, in a way to distinguish places and have them become mirrors for other black girls that dream about being flight attendants, pilots, that is, to act in places where they, being interviewed, once did not even know that

such could be occupied by black women. However, it has been made clear that their black bodies are deemed unfit for that environment, which submits black women to obedience to physical standards linked to occidental beauty standards (Calvet et al., 2021).

Five obstacles to black women entering the airline industry were identified: cost of professional training; lack of career information; lack of representativity of other black women; unequal recruitment process; non-acceptance of black bodies. As it was exposed throughout the analysis of the results, these exist specifically for black women. As well as the obstacles perceived for the permanence of those who manage to enter this system: lack of representativity; different levels of demands; denial of the black body; non-acceptance of the afro hair; mental/laboral health; machismo; harassment. It is interesting to notice that in the permanence category seven barriers were identified, that is, more than for entering. That is why research of various kinds to approach racism and sexism in the airline industry is urgent, since, in principle, this has not proven to be a democratically healthy environment for all.

In this sense, it is still worth remembering that there is no official data that offers information on race and gender in the airline industry. The data made available by Anac refer to licenses issued, however, it would be interesting, in order to deepen the intersectional debates in the sector, if the information on the profile of people in real activity, in each professional category, were systematized. Here it is important to point out that one of the strategies outlined by *Quilombo Aéreo* is precisely to analyze and give visibility to the few accessible data of gender and race in the Brazilian airline sector.

The research emphasizes the segmentation by gender and race when it reflects on the fact that there are no black women pilots in the country. As explained in the document of the ILO (2019), there are cultural constructions that influence women's disinterest in aviation. However, one cannot fail to observe that, despite such constructions, in the category of flight attendants, women account for more than 60% of professionals. Thus, it can be speculated that women may be willing to subvert the traditional roles of family care, but perhaps some positions, such as commander, are still not really available to them. In this sense, it is noteworthy that in airlines women correspond to 2.3% of pilots, while as private pilots they reach the mark of 19%. Still, concerning the placement of women in the airline industry, the clear horizontal segregation cannot be left unmentioned, where women are pushed to certain functions, while men have to fill others. Just like certain vertical segregation can be perceived, when certain conditions for professional ascension are imposed, and such affect men and women differently. When noticing that women are the majority among flight attendants, it is evidenced that their placement in the jobs of serving and care, while men are led to jobs of responsibility and command. Beyond the women's issue, the intersectional dimension shows that black women

have specific conditions of social inequality when it is possible to single them out from the generic group that makes up the workforce in the sector.

Regarding such modes of segregation, horizontal and vertical, both clearly affect women crewmembers. However, after the intersectional research, one realizes that vertical segregation, that which imposes obstacles to the professional ascension of women, is even more significant when it comes to black women in the aviation sector, since, according to the estimates previously presented, black people account for only 5% of the flight attendants in Brazil (Quilombo Aéreo, 2022), while women, in general, occupy 66% of the positions. On the other hand, horizontal segregation is also perceived more emphatically when observing the reality of black women. Although underrepresented, women in general, appear in all pilot categories, however, the fact that there is no record of any black female pilot in a commercial airline operating throughout the country, highlights how the intersectionality of gender and race excludes this profile of women, even more than others.

Finally, one cannot fail to mention the importance of bringing intersectionality into the discussions of tourism studies, since tourism is an activity that involves different actors and contexts, and it is essential to deepen the mechanisms of analysis and practice necessary for sustainability in the tourism field. Pondering the dimensions of power (structural, disciplinary, cultural, and interpersonal) used here, as support for analysis, can be of great value when considering other social markers to be thought of as intersectionality in this scenario. This research also points to the need for the development of affirmative action and policies to combat racism and institutional sexism in the airline industry and in tourism, intending to foster new forms of social relations in this area.

Thus, the present work is concluded, aware of the necessity to deepen reflections regarding touristic activity starting from intersectionality, aiming to promote new forms of social relationships in this area, which was deepened here especially through analysis of the airline industry. Such intent seeks to unveil the several forms that operate the maintenance of inequalities between men and women, between blacks and whites, aiming to subsidize debates about social justice and to stimulate changes regarding empowerment of parts of the population that have been systematically excluded from touristic activities.

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