


## **“PROFESSOR, ARE YOU CHEATING ON US?” MONOGAMY OF AFFECTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM HORIZON FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF BELL HOOKS’ CONFESSIONAL PEDAGOGY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Human relationships, in any field of social life, are permeated by feelings, which constitute an essential substrate of interactions. In the educational context, the dynamics between students and teachers, shaped over the years of academic career and teaching practice, influence daily decisions and pedagogical processes. This unprecedented study is anchored in Bell Hooks' confessional pedagogy, as presented in the work "Teaching to Transgress" (2017), to explore how intraschool affective relationships contribute to the construction of a more authentic and humane teaching space. The research investigates the concept of "monogamy of affections", a paradigm that emerges in the relationships between teachers and students, challenging the plurality and horizontality of interactions in the school environment. The guiding question is: In what way can Bell Hooks' confessional pedagogy contribute to the understanding and redefinition of affective relationships in the school space, considering the concept of "monogamy of affections"? The methodology adopted uses a qualitative approach based on Minayo (2016), which explores social relationships in their complexity, allowing for an in-depth analysis of affective experiences in the school context, on Gil (1999), which guides the construction of a descriptive and bibliographical study, and on Weber (2006), which supports a comprehensive analysis focusing on the meanings attributed by subjects to affective relationships in school, considering the cultural and subjective dimensions involved. The research highlights the relevance of considering the affective dimensions in pedagogical practices, proposing confessional pedagogy as a way to resignify relationships in the classroom. By breaking with the "monogamy of affections," it is possible to build more plural and democratic educational spaces that favor the emotional and academic growth of all those involved.

**Keywords:** Confessional Pedagogy. Affective Relationships. Monogamy of Affections. Democratic Education.

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## INTRODUCTION

### CONFESSIONAL PEDAGOGY AND “MONOGAMY OF AFFECTIONS”: RESIGNIFYING RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CLASSROOM

Bell Hooks' pedagogical work is strongly grounded in the teachings of Paulo Freire, who was her greatest inspiration, says Santos, et. al. (2024). For Hooks, changing the educational perspective is essential to cross the boundaries of domination and build a more inclusive and transformative education. In this sense, she develops the concept of confessional pedagogy, which aims to bring teachers and students closer together through accounts of everyday experiences, when she states that “[...] the teachers did everything they could to get to know us. They knew our parents, our economic condition” (2017: 11), to break the traditional hierarchy of the classroom and redefine the affective relationships that develop there.

[...] we as teachers – at all levels, from elementary school to university –, we have to recognize that our teaching style has to change (our emphasis). Let's face it: most of us attended schools where the teaching style reflected the notion of a single norm of thought and experience, which we were encouraged to believe was universal. This is true for both non-white and white teachers. Most of us learned to teach by imitating this model. As a result, many teachers are troubled by the political implications of multicultural education because they are afraid of losing control of the class [...] We need to establish training spaces where teachers have the opportunity to express their fears and at the same time learn how to create strategies for approaching the multicultural classroom and curriculum (Hooks, 2017, p. 51-52).

The confessional pedagogy proposed by Bell Hooks establishes an educational space where subjects can share life experiences, creating an environment of acceptance and mutual learning. This perspective challenges the idea of a one-sided relationship because when she entered university, she realized that “[...] teachers were not enthusiastic about the act of teaching” (2017: 13). In this way, hooks did not want the teacher to be the sole holder of knowledge and sought to create an authentic dialogical teaching methodology, based on respect and empathy. This methodology, in turn, breaks with the traditional power structures that reproduce inequalities inside and outside the classroom (Hooks, 2017).

One of the central concepts for understanding confessional pedagogy is what Hooks (2017) calls the “monogamy of effects”. This concept refers to a hierarchical way of relating in the classroom, where certain students and teachers create affective “ghetto spaces”

instead of promoting horizontal and inclusive interaction. These exclusionary relationships make it difficult to create a truly plural and participatory educational environment.

According to Hooks (2017), the “monogamy of effects” is the result of educational practices based on authoritarianism and the segmentation of relationships. These practices reflect what Paulo Freire called “banking education,” a model that prioritizes the vertical transmission of content and ignores students’ experiences and knowledge. The lack of horizontality in school relationships reinforces the perpetuation of an educational system that privileges some over others.

The banking education system (based on the assumption that memorizing information and its subsequent regurgitation represents the acquisition of knowledge that can be deposited, saved, and used at a future date) did not interest me. I wanted to become a critical thinker. But this desire was seen as a threat to authority (Hooks, 2017, p. 14).

In the traditional model, the school curriculum and institutional organization often reinforce forms of domination, both symbolic and concrete. Pierre Bourdieu contributes to this analysis by highlighting, in his works, how schools act as spaces for the reproduction of social inequalities. According to the author, the school institution reproduces the habitus of the dominant classes, legitimizing inequalities through a school culture that privileges certain cultural and symbolic capitals. Thus, the curriculum and the school structure end up perpetuating relations of power and exclusion, functioning as mechanisms for maintaining the current social order.

[...] to me, it is still surprising today, as it was back then, that the fact of saying that an instance like the education system contributes to preserving social structures, or saying that structures tend to be preserved or maintained – which is an observation – is surprising that this observation is perceived as a conservative statement. We only need to think a little to realize that the same statement about the existence of conservation mechanisms can have a revolutionary character [...] When you say things are not like this, they think you are saying things should be like this, or it is good that things are this way, or even the opposite, things should not be this way anymore (Bourdieu; Passeron, 2014, p.14).

In this context, educational practices tend to reinforce what Bourdieu called “symbolic violence”, which consists of imposing meanings and values in a way that those dominated accept them as legitimate. This dynamic prevents the school environment from becoming a space for change, limiting the subjects’ capacity for questioning and resistance. Hooks’ confessional pedagogy, however, challenges this model by proposing an education based on plurality and inclusion. In this sense, when experiencing the

experience of being a student, hooks states: “[...] in college, the main lesson was reinforced, that is, we had to learn to obey authority” (2017, p. 13).

By incorporating personal and cultural experiences into the teaching-learning process, confessional pedagogy promotes a more humanized relationship between teachers and students. Hooks states that “[...] entering a college classroom with the desire to share the desire to stimulate enthusiasm was an act of transgression” (2017: 17). To achieve this, the approach needed to not only recognize the importance of emotions in learning but also value collectively constructed knowledge. In this way, subjects cease to be mere recipients of information and become co-authors of knowledge.

The breaking of the “monogamy of affections,” as advocated by Hooks, requires a profound review of pedagogical practices. In this context, she leads us to consider that “[...] any radical pedagogy must insist that everyone’s presence be recognized” (hooks, 2017, p. 18). For this to happen, both teachers and students must be encouraged to question the power dynamics present in the classroom, seeking to build relationships based on solidarity and mutual respect. This process demands courage and willingness to face the challenges imposed by an educational system based on inequality (Santos, et. al., 2024). Hooks’ perspective also aligns with the idea that education is a political act. By breaking with hierarchy and exclusion in school relationships, confessional pedagogy becomes an instrument of resistance against structures of domination. In this context, the classroom becomes a space for social transformation, where everyone involved can learn and grow equitably. Thus, she states that “[...] for black people, teaching – educating – was fundamentally political, as it was rooted in the anti-racist struggle. It was in elementary schools, attended only by black people, that I experienced learning as a revolution” (2017: 10). For Hooks, the democratization of school relationships involves creating an environment where the voices of all subjects are heard and respected. This approach demands an open and sensitive attitude on the part of teachers, who must be willing to share their experiences and learn from students. This process of exchange strengthens emotional bonds and creates a more cohesive learning community (Santos, et. al., 2024).

For Santos, et. al., (2024), confessional pedagogy also recognizes the importance of considering cultural and subjective dimensions in pedagogical practices. The emotional relationships that develop in the classroom are influenced by the social and cultural contexts of each subject. Therefore, education must take these particularities into account to create an inclusive and representative environment. In this sense, the research starts

from the following question: How can Bell Hooks' confessional pedagogy contribute to the understanding and redefinition of emotional relationships in the school environment, considering the concept of “monogamy of affections”?

In summary, Bell Hooks' confessional pedagogy presents itself as a powerful alternative to overcome the challenges of hierarchical school relationships. By breaking with the “monogamy of affections” and promoting plurality in interactions, this approach contributes to the construction of a more just and democratic educational environment.

Therefore, it is important to highlight that the implementation of this pedagogy requires a collective commitment. Teachers, students, and the school community need to work together to redefine educational practices and transform the school into a space of resistance and emancipation (Santos, et. al., 2024). Only then will it be possible to build a truly inclusive and transformative education?

## **METHODOLOGY OF CONFESSIONAL PEDAGOGY: CHALLENGING THE MONOGAMY OF AFFECTIONS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF PLURAL AND INCLUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CLASSROOM**

The methodology of this study adopts a qualitative approach, focusing on a descriptive and bibliographic study. The research is based on the theoretical contributions of Bell Hooks, with an emphasis on her confessional pedagogy, to analyze affective relationships and the dynamics of power in the school context. Based on this approach, we seek to understand how the “monogamy of affections” manifests itself in the relationships between teachers and students and how this phenomenon can be reinterpreted to promote a more plural and democratic educational environment. The methodology allows for an in-depth investigation of affective experiences, considering the cultural and subjective contexts of the subjects involved, as advocated by authors such as Minayo (2016) and Gil (1999).

Qualitative research responds to very specific questions. Within the Social Sciences, it deals with the universe of meanings, motives, aspirations, beliefs, values, and attitudes. This set of human phenomena is understood here as part of social reality since human beings are distinguished not only by acting but also by thinking about what they do and by interpreting their actions within and based on the reality experienced and shared with their peers. The universe of human production that can be summarized in the world of relationships, representations, and intentionality and is the object of qualitative research can hardly be translated into numbers and quantitative indicators (Minayo, 2016, p. 20-21).



To construct the research, a theoretical framework is adopted that guides the analysis of affective relationships within the classroom, highlighting the role of emotions and shared knowledge. Weber's methodology (2006) is fundamental to understanding the subjective experiences of subjects, taking into account their interpretations of the educational process. The study, therefore, investigates not only pedagogical practices but also the meanings attributed by teachers and students to affective interactions in school.

The research is based on a critical analysis of the power relations present in the classroom, in light of bell hooks' confessional pedagogy. This perspective proposes a radical change in pedagogical practices, breaking with the traditional hierarchy between teacher and student and creating a more horizontal teaching environment, in which both share experiences and knowledge. The methodology applied, therefore, proposes a reflection on the political implications of education, as advocated by Hooks (2017), by considering affective relationships as a central element in the process of school transformation.

Within this proposal, the research also incorporates the concepts of "symbolic violence" and the reproduction of social inequalities, as addressed by Pierre Bourdieu (2014). Based on this theory, the aim is to understand how the school functions as a mechanism for the reproduction of class inequalities, which are exacerbated by pedagogical practices that privilege certain types of cultural and symbolic capital. The methodology thus allows for an in-depth analysis of how educational practices can be reinterpreted to combat these inequalities, promoting a more inclusive and democratic education.

The construction of a more humane and authentic teaching space, as advocated by bell hooks, requires overcoming the "monogamy of affections" and creating an educational environment where relationships are more inclusive and plural. In this sense, the methodology aims to investigate affective experiences within the school context, observing how they can be transformed through confessional pedagogy. The focus is on understanding the communication processes and interactions between teachers and students, seeking to identify ways to humanize relationships in the classroom.

The qualitative approach chosen for the research allows for a more reflective and subjective analysis of school interactions, identifying how affective relationships contribute to the construction of a more democratic learning space. The research, therefore, is not limited to observing the behavior of subjects, but also understanding the meanings they

attribute to their affective experiences in the school context. This perspective is fundamental for the analysis of the power relations that permeate the educational environment and for the construction of a more equitable pedagogical model. The methodology is also based on a descriptive approach, as recommended by Gil (1999), which identifies the main characteristics of affective relationships in the school environment. The research mapped affective dynamics between teachers and students, considering the influences of social and cultural factors on interactions within the classroom. This mapping allowed for a deeper understanding of power relations and forms of exclusion present in the educational system.

Bibliographic research is developed based on previously prepared material, consisting mainly of books and scientific articles. Although almost all studies require some type of work of this nature, there are studies developed exclusively from bibliographic sources. A large part of the exploratory studies can be defined as bibliographical research, as well as a certain number of studies developed using the content analysis technique (Gil, 2011, p. 44).

The use of a comprehensive analysis, as proposed by Weber (2006), also allows for a deeper reflection on the meanings attributed by subjects to their experiences at school. From this analysis, it is possible to identify how affective relationships can be reinterpreted, promoting a more inclusive and democratic environment. The methodology adopted, therefore, seeks to build a more complex understanding of pedagogical practices and affective dynamics in the school environment.

The research is based on a detailed bibliographical review of the works of bell hooks and other relevant authors, such as Paulo Freire and Pierre Bourdieu, to support the analysis of affective relationships and power dynamics present in schools. The bibliographical review also guides the understanding of the concept of “monogamy of affections” and how it manifests itself in pedagogical practices. The methodology is therefore guided by a robust theoretical framework that supports critical reflection on educational practices and the possibilities for transformation in the school environment.

Thus, the methodology of this study seeks to understand and analyze affective relationships in the school context based on Bell Hooks' confessional pedagogy, proposing a reinterpretation of interactions between teachers and students. By breaking with the “monogamy of affections” and promoting a more inclusive teaching environment, the research aims to contribute to the construction of a more plural and democratic education. The application of this methodology thus allows for an in-depth analysis of affective



dynamics in the classroom and the implications of these relationships for the construction of a more humanized and equitable learning space.

### **MONOGAMY OF AFFECTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM HORIZON FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF BELL HOOKS' CONFESSIONAL PEDAGOGY**

In her book *Teaching to Transgress* (2017), bell hooks share a remarkable experience about the way her teachers approached their students, especially about their interactions outside the school environment (Santos, et. al., 2024). She reports that her teachers knew not only about their academic performance but also about the daily lives of their students and their peers. According to Hooks, this involvement with life outside the classroom was essential to establishing a solid emotional relationship between students and teachers, which favored the construction of a closer and more welcoming educational environment. The author highlights that, on some occasions, her teachers would visit her home to talk to her parents and learn more about her family's routine. These visits were not only a means of interaction outside the school environment, but also a way of establishing deeper and more human bonds. This mutual knowledge created a space of trust and empathy, essential to strengthening the emotional bond between teacher and student (Hooks, 2017). The exchange of experiences, combined with respect for students' experiences, allowed the school relationship to go beyond the simple transmission of content, transforming it into a process of shared learning.

For Hooks, these actions were essential in building a school environment where affection and mutual understanding became fundamental pillars. According to the author, "[...] although they did not define or formulate these practices in theoretical terms, my teachers practiced a revolutionary pedagogy of resistance, a profoundly anti-colonial pedagogy" (Hooks, 2017, p. 10-11). The teachers' proximity to students' families not only humanized relationships but also favored a more inclusive and personalized education, in which students felt that their lives and stories were taken into account. This pedagogical practice was crucial to the creation of an educational space that, in addition to promoting academic learning, also encouraged students' emotional and social development.

However, hooks also point out an important aspect of this emotional relationship: when students changed teachers, they felt a kind of "betrayal" on the part of their educators. The phrase "Teacher, are you betraying us?" carries an intense emotional charge, reflecting how deep the emotional bonds established during the teaching period were. This statement expresses the feeling of abandonment or loss that students experienced when they saw these bonds broken. The affection built over time became so

significant that the change of teacher seemed to affect not only the continuity of learning but also the emotional balance of students. This type of emotional relationship demonstrates the importance of pedagogical strategies that go beyond instructional practice. By integrating students' experiences and realities into the teaching process, teachers can create a space of belonging, where students feel valued and recognized in their entirety (Santos, et. al., 2024). Building strong emotional bonds can therefore make the school environment more welcoming and productive, contributing to the well-being and integral development of students.

[...] The teachers did everything they could to “get to know” us. They knew our parents, our economic status, what church we went to, what our home was like, and how our family treated us. I attended school at a historical moment when I was taught by the same teachers who had taught my mother, her sisters, and her brothers. My effort and my ability to learn were always contextualized within the framework of the experience of the various generations of the family (Hooks, 2017, p.11).

The fragment of Bell Hooks' text provides a profound reflection on the importance of affection in intra-school and extra-school relationships. By sharing the experience of her teachers, who dedicated themselves to getting to know not only the students but also their families and life contexts, hooks highlights a model of education that goes beyond the walls of the classroom. For her, as for Paulo Freire, “[...] education can only be liberating when everyone takes possession of knowledge as if it were a plantation in which we all have to work” (Hooks, 2017, p. 26). This knowledge, which is intimate and relational, is not limited to material and social conditions but also encompasses the affective and cultural ties that define students as full subjects, not reduced only to their academic performance. Hooks' teachers were actively involved in the students' lives, knowing their parents, their economic conditions, and even the religion to which they belonged. This attention to the details of family life reflects a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of the context outside of school for understanding and supporting the learning process. In contrast to the experience, she had in college, where “[...] teachers (regardless of their political leanings) showed serious signs of disturbance when students wanted to be seen as integral human beings, with complex lives and experiences, and not as mere seekers of compartmentalized bits of knowledge” (Hooks, 2017, p. 27). In this context, affection is configured as a fundamental principle, as it allows educators to see students in their

entirety, not just as passive recipients of knowledge, but as subjects inserted in a set of social and affective relationships that directly influence their learning and development.

By contextualizing the effort and capacity to learn within family history and previous generations, hooks highlight a crucial point: education does not occur in isolation, but within a continuum that involves family legacy and experiences accumulated over time (Santos, et. al., 2024). This emotional bond between generations becomes an important factor in the construction of a school identity that goes beyond individual performance. Affection, then, manifests itself in the way teachers strive to understand students within their family and cultural dynamics, contextualizing their learning within a broader network of meanings and relationships.

The importance of the feeling of closeness, therefore, extends to both intra-school and extra-school relationships. Within the school, affection helps to create an environment of trust and belonging, essential for the emotional and intellectual development of students. This bond between teacher and student is fundamental to the establishment of a pedagogy that recognizes the subjectivity and experiences of each student, favoring a more humanized education. For Hooks (2017), when educators engage emotionally with students, they not only teach academic content but also transmit values of empathy, respect, and solidarity, elements that are essential for the formation of critical and conscious citizens.

In addition, extra-school relationships also play an important role in this process. Building an emotional bond between school and family is vital for the continuity and strengthening of learning outside the classroom. When teachers get to know families and engage with the daily aspects of students' lives, the school becomes a place of ongoing support, rather than just an isolated teaching space (Hooks, 2017, p. 32). This connection allows students to feel that they are being supported in all aspects of their lives, creating a cycle of reciprocity where affection and trust circulate between the school, the family, and the students themselves.

However, it is important to note that emotional involvement in educational relationships should not be confused with excessive surveillance or an attempt at control, as Foucault (2018) states when he cites the "panoptic gaze". Affection, in this context, should be a means of promoting the student's well-being and autonomy, and not of molding them according to rigid expectations or standards. The idea that Hooks' teachers

knew their families deeply, including their economic and religious backgrounds, can be seen as both a gesture of care and a mechanism of control, depending on how this closeness is managed. Therefore, affection in intra-school and extra-school relationships must be guided by mutual respect and recognition of the diversity and autonomy of each student. Thus, Hooks' education, marked by affection and understanding of the family and social context, proposes a deeply human teaching model, that takes into account the stories and identities of students. This model challenges the traditional view of an impersonal education, based only on academic content and school performance, and promotes an approach that recognizes the complexity of human beings, their family and social relationships, and the importance of affection as a fundamental element in the process of learning and personal growth. When I went to teach my undergraduate course, I relied on the example of the inspiring black women who taught at my elementary school, on the work of Paulo Freire, and feminist thinking about radical pedagogy. I had a passionate desire to teach in a different way than the one I had known since high school. The first paradigm that shaped my pedagogy was the idea that the classroom should be a place of enthusiasm (our emphasis), never of boredom. And, if boredom prevailed, pedagogical strategies would be needed to intervene and change the atmosphere, even disrupt it. Neither Freire's work nor feminist pedagogy worked with the notion of pleasure in the classroom (Hooks, 2017, p. 16).

As stated above, bell hooks offer a valuable opportunity to discuss the concept of "monogamy of affections" and the need to overcome it to implement a confessional pedagogy. The monogamy of affections, understood as the limitation or hierarchization of affective relationships within an educational context, can restrict the possibilities of interaction and learning. For Hooks, overcoming this model is fundamental to creating a pedagogy that is truly inclusive, dynamic, and transformative (Santos, et. al., 2024b).

In the report, hooks describe how her desire to teach differently was shaped by the inspiration of black teachers, the work of Paulo Freire, and radical feminist pedagogy. However, she goes beyond these influences, pointing out the importance of enthusiasm and pleasure in the classroom. This focus on pleasure and emotional involvement is a direct rejection of the idea of monogamy of affections, which tends to prioritize some emotions or relationships (such as discipline and hierarchy) to the detriment of others, such as joy, curiosity, and affection shared between students and teachers.

The monogamy of affections hierarchizes relationships and feelings in the school environment, often exclusively valuing obedience and formalized respect between students and teachers (Hooks, 2017). In this model, the emotional bonds that could enrich the pedagogical experience are often neglected or devalued. The confessional pedagogy proposed by Hooks, on the other hand, suggests that learning should be based on a genuine exchange of experiences, feelings, and perspectives, which humanize relationships in the educational context. This approach requires the teacher to recognize and value the plurality of affective relationships, allowing affection to be expressed in diverse and authentic ways, unlike her experience as a university student where “[...] most of my teachers were not at all interested in enlightening us. More than anything else, they seemed fascinated by the exercise of power and authority within their little kingdom – the classroom” (Hooks, 2017, p.30). Overcoming the monogamy of affections implies recognizing that teaching and learning are deeply relational acts. For Hooks, the classroom cannot be a space of boredom or disinterest; on the contrary, it must be a place of enthusiasm, pleasure, and connection. Confessional pedagogy, in this sense, not only allows but requires that teachers be emotionally present and willing to engage with students on a personal and affective level. In this way, “[...] every classroom in which a holistic learning model is applied will also be a place of growth for the teacher, who will be strengthened and empowered by this process” (Hooks, 2017, p. 35). Thus, this includes creating pedagogical strategies that break with boredom and promote an atmosphere of dialogue, energy, and collective discovery between students and teachers.

The practical application of confessional pedagogy involves creating an environment where teachers and students can share their stories, emotions, and perspectives without fear of judgment or exclusion. This requires a rejection of the monogamy of affections, as this model restricts the possibilities of emotional expression in the school environment. “When education is the practice of freedom, students are not the only ones called to share: to confess” (Hooks, 2017, p. 35). Thus, by incorporating pleasure and enthusiasm as central elements of pedagogy, educators can create a space where all participants feel valued and connected, both intellectually and emotionally. Hooks also highlights that Freire’s work and feminist pedagogy, although revolutionary in many ways, have not widely explored the notion of pleasure in the classroom. This gap points to the need for a pedagogy that integrates not only the cognitive and critical aspects of learning but also the affective and emotional ones. Confessional pedagogy, as proposed by Hooks, seeks to fill

this gap by promoting a more holistic and inclusive approach to teaching. Enthusiasm in higher education was seen as something that could disrupt the atmosphere of seriousness considered essential to the learning process. Entering a college classroom with the desire to share the desire to stimulate enthusiasm was an act of transgression. It did not only require crossing established boundaries; it would not be possible to generate enthusiasm without fully recognizing that teaching practices could not be governed by a fixed and absolute scheme. Schemes would have to be flexible, they would have to take into account the possibility of spontaneous changes of direction. Students would have to be seen according to their particularities (I was inspired by the strategies that elementary school teachers used to get to know us), and the interaction with them would have to follow their needs (Freire was useful here). Critical reflection on my experience as a student in classrooms could be exciting, but also that this enthusiasm could coexist with serious intellectual and/or academic activity, and even promote it (Hooks, 2017, p.17).

Hooks highlights the importance of enthusiasm and flexibility in pedagogical practices, pointing out the need to overcome traditional rigidity in the classroom to promote meaningful learning. When Hooks mentions that bringing enthusiasm to higher education was considered an act of transgression, she suggests that academic structures often repress emotions, favoring a rigid seriousness that limits human potential. This scenario can be related to the concept of “monogamy of affections”, in which there is a hierarchy of emotions allowed in the educational environment (Hooks, 2017).

The phrase “Professor, are you betraying us?” expresses a dilemma that arises from the monogamy of affections: the exclusivity and intensity of the emotional bond between teachers and students can be seen as essential, but they also generate tensions when a rupture occurs, such as a change of educators. This type of hierarchical relationship can inhibit the flexibility that Hooks considers vital (Santos, et. al., 2024b). Instead of creating an emotional dependence centered on a single educator, confessional pedagogy proposes expanding the affective field to include multiple emotional and intellectual interactions, which involve both students and teachers in a more collaborative process. Hooks points out that, to break with this fixed scheme, it is necessary to see students as unique individuals, with particular needs and experiences. This perspective is in line with the ideas of Paulo Freire, who emphasizes the importance of dialogue and respect for the uniqueness of the student in the educational process. However, hooks go further, stating that enthusiasm is not only an element of engagement but a political and transgressive practice. Recognizing enthusiasm as an integral part of teaching requires that educators be



willing to deal with unpredictability and spontaneous changes in classroom dynamics (Santos, et. al., 2024b).

Overcoming the monogamy of affections, in this sense, does not imply rejecting emotional bonds between teachers and students, but rather democratizing them. The confessional pedagogy proposed by Hooks argues that enthusiasm, passion, and affection should be distributed horizontally, fostering an environment where everyone feels valued and part of a collective learning process. Thus, enthusiasm can coexist with academic seriousness, challenging the idea that a learning environment should be cold or devoid of emotion.

By connecting this reasoning with pedagogical practice, hooks reflect on how the strategies of her elementary school teachers—who knew their students deeply—inspired her own practices in higher education. This approach, combined with critical reflection and flexibility, makes it possible to build a more humane and inclusive classroom, where affection is amplified and enthusiasm is channeled to foster critical thinking and intellectual engagement.

However, enthusiasm for ideas is not enough to create an exciting learning process. In the classroom community, our ability to generate enthusiasm is profoundly affected by our interest in each other, in listening to each other's voices, and in acknowledging each other's presence. Since the vast majority of students learn through traditional and conservative educational practices and are only interested in the presence of the teacher, any radical pedagogy must insist that everyone's presence be acknowledged. And it is not enough to simply assert this insistence. It must be demonstrated through pedagogical practices. To begin with, the teacher must truly value each person's presence. He or she must continually acknowledge that everyone contributes. These contributions are resources used constructively, and they foster the capacity of any class to create an open learning community. Often, before the process begins, it is necessary to deconstruct the traditional notion that the teacher is solely responsible for the classroom dynamics (Hooks, 2017, p.17-18).

The analysis proposed based on the fragment above highlights the importance of breaking with the traditional logic of pedagogical practices, which often centralize the teacher as the sole and hierarchical figure in the classroom (Hooks, 2017). This structure, which prioritizes the teacher to the detriment of other participants, is directly related to the concept of "monogamy of affections," in which affective and pedagogical relationships are

limited to a centralized and exclusive dynamic. For Hooks, this hierarchical configuration is insufficient to sustain a truly transformative learning environment.

The phrase “Teacher, are you betraying us?” reveals the role of the emotional attachment that students place on the figure of the educator, often as a consequence of a pedagogical practice that fails to recognize the plurality of voices and presences in the classroom. This feeling of “betrayal” arises from a relationship that privileges unidirectional affection between teacher and student, instead of fostering a learning community where everyone shares responsibility and mutual recognition (Hooks, 2017). Hooks argues that to overcome this dynamic, it is essential to build pedagogical practices that not only value the presence of each participant but that integrate their contributions as a fundamental part of the teaching-learning process.

The monogamy of affections in the classroom can be seen as a structural limitation that prevents the development of a confessional and inclusive pedagogy. For Hooks, a confessional pedagogy is based on enthusiasm and genuine recognition of the voices and experiences of all involved. Enthusiasm, in this context, is not just a feeling, but a method of engagement that promotes the active involvement of everyone in the creation of a space for collective learning. This enthusiasm is supported by pedagogical practices that deconstruct the centrality of the teacher, opening space for the construction of a truly democratic learning community.

Deconstructing the centrality of the teacher does not mean devaluing him/her, but recognizing that he/she is a facilitator of learning and not the sole repository of knowledge. This change in perspective requires pedagogical practices that demonstrate, in practice, the appreciation of each voice present in the classroom. Hooks emphasizes that the teacher must act as a catalyst that promotes the integration of everyone's contributions, transforming them into constructive resources for collective learning. This model breaks with hierarchical logic and promotes horizontality in educational relationships, essential for overcoming the monogamy of affections.

In addition, hooks point out that the construction of an open learning community requires a process of deconstructing students' traditional expectations regarding the figure of the teacher. In conservative educational practices, students are conditioned to see the teacher as the sole source of knowledge and as the main figure of interest in the classroom. To break with this view, it is necessary to cultivate an environment where each student feels valued as an integral part of the teaching dynamic (Hooks, 2017). This

involves listening to the voices of others, acknowledging their presence, and encouraging mutual interest among all participants.

Therefore, overcoming the monogamy of affections in the classroom requires that the teacher adopt a posture of pedagogical and practical humility. This means being willing to share power and authority in the educational environment, allowing learning to happen through a collective and collaborative process. The confessional pedagogy proposed by Hooks seeks to build a space where enthusiasm for learning and respect for the diversity of human experiences are fundamental pillars. In this way, the phrase “Teacher, are you betraying us?” can be reinterpreted as a call to transform pedagogical relationships, promoting a more inclusive and effectively plural environment, where education becomes a communal and emancipatory experience.

[...] although I propose strategies, these works do not offer models for transforming the classroom into a place of enthusiasm for learning. If I did, I would be going against the insistence that engaged pedagogy must be constantly modified, invented, and reconceptualized to account for each new experience [...] Teaching is theater. And it is this aspect of our work that provides space for change, invention, and spontaneous alterations that can act as catalysts for highlighting the unique aspects of each class (Hooks, 2017, p. 24).

Hooks rejects the idea of a single model for transformative teaching, emphasizing that pedagogical strategies need to be constantly reinvented to meet the particularities of each class. This stance challenges the traditional view of teaching, which often restricts the role of the teacher to that of a transmitter of content and relegates students to passive receivers. By proposing that teaching be seen as a performative act, hooks introduces the notion that spontaneity and flexibility are essential to creating a learning space that celebrates the uniqueness of individual and collective experiences.

The concept of monogamy of affections in the classroom horizon points to a hierarchical and centralizing dynamic, in which affection and emotional bonding are predominantly directed towards the teacher (Santos, et. al., 2024). This configuration limits the potential of the classroom as a learning community, in which all participants are equally valued. honored. Hooks argues that this approach restricts the capacity for innovation and engagement, while reinforcing a conservative and decontextualized pedagogy.

Confessional pedagogy, on the other hand, proposes an educational practice that values subjectivity, creativity, and intersubjectivity. However, some students express “[...]”

the feeling that if they simply do not assert their subjectivity, they will be less likely to be attacked. They said that many university professors have never expressed the slightest interest in hearing their voice” (Hooks, 2017, p. 57). For hooks, as indicated for professional educators, theater teaching offers a powerful metaphor for the flexibility and unpredictability necessary in a transformative classroom. As in theater, the teacher must be able to improvise, respond to the present moment, and adapt to the unique dynamics of each group. This stance destabilizes the idea of a fixed curriculum and invites educators to embrace uncertainty as an integral part of the teaching-learning process. The phrase “Teacher, are you betraying us?” reflects not only the unique emotional relationship between students and teachers, but also the potential for disruption that arises when traditional expectations are challenged. Hooks suggests that the feeling of “betrayal” can be avoided if teachers abandon the centralizing position and engage in pedagogical practices that value the diversity of voices and perspectives in the classroom. This approach recognizes that creating a learning community requires the active inclusion of all participants as agents in the educational process. To overcome the limits of the monogamy of affections, hooks proposes that educators adopt an engaged pedagogy that privileges inventiveness and enthusiasm, but is also based on active listening and recognition of the particularities of each student. This practice requires teachers to let go of rigid models and embrace pedagogy as a dynamic and relational act (Santos, et. al., 2024b). The goal is not just to teach content, but to cultivate a space where everyone involved feels valued and committed to collective learning.

By relating these ideas to the concept of confessional pedagogy, hooks emphasizes that teaching cannot be devoid of emotion, context, and humanity. The classroom, when treated as a living and changing space, becomes fertile ground for meaningful and transformative learning. In this sense, confessional pedagogy emerges as a powerful alternative to the monogamy of affections, promoting an educational practice that privileges plurality, creativity, and genuine engagement.

Education as a practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn. This learning process is easier for those teachers who also believe that their vocation has a sacred aspect; who believe that our job is not simply to share information, but rather to participate in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students is essential to create the necessary conditions for learning to begin in the deepest and most intimate way (Hooks, 2017, p.25).

Bell hooks presents education as a sacred act, arguing that teaching is not just sharing information, but participating in the intellectual and spiritual growth of students. This perspective redefines the role of the teacher, shifting him or her from a position of absolute authority to that of facilitator of collective and liberating learning (Santos, et. al., 2024). However, building this environment requires overcoming practices that hierarchize relationships and centralize emotional bonds exclusively in the figure of the teacher. This phenomenon, which can be understood as the “monogamy of affections”, limits the potential for interactions between students and weakens the creation of a truly inclusive and horizontal learning community. The practice of freedom, as described by hooks, is only possible in an environment where everyone feels heard, valued, and recognized. The monogamy of affections, by restricting the circulation of attention and affection to a single focus – the teacher –, perpetuates a hierarchical model that is contrary to liberating pedagogy (Santos, et. al., 2024). To break with this dynamic, it is necessary for the teacher to recognize the importance of each student as an integral part of the collective construction of knowledge. This implies deconstructing the idea that only the teacher is responsible for the dynamics of the classroom and, instead, fostering a space where everyone actively contributes, creating an atmosphere of enthusiasm, creativity, and mutual respect.

Confessional pedagogy, proposed by hooks, offers an approach to transform this reality. By sharing their own experiences, vulnerabilities, and reflections, the teacher positions themselves as a human being in front of the students, encouraging them to do the same. This practice not only democratizes the classroom environment, but also reinforces the value of each voice present, promoting interactions that go beyond the emotional dependence centered on the teacher. In this way, learning becomes a relational and shared experience, where the growth of each individual is seen as interdependent on the growth of the group.

However, this transformation requires an ethical and emotional commitment on the part of the teacher, who must abandon rigid pedagogical schemes and be open to spontaneity and invention. Teaching, for hooks, is also a theatrical act, where creativity and constant adaptation to the needs of the class act as catalysts for deep learning. This dynamism breaks with traditional rigidity and values the uniqueness of each class, creating an environment in which enthusiasm and intellectual seriousness coexist, mutually enriching the educational process.

When reflecting on the provocation “Teacher, are you cheating on us?”, we realize that overcoming the monogamy of affections is essential to avoid the feeling of exclusion or abandonment on the part of students. The teacher’s commitment to an engaged pedagogy, which values the presence and contribution of everyone, transforms the classroom into a space of freedom and collective growth. Hooks reminds us that education as a practice of freedom is not a fixed model, but a process of constant reinvention, adapted to the particularities of each context and the people involved. In this way, the classroom ceases to be a space of boredom or alienation and becomes a vibrant place, where learning is experienced in an intimate, meaningful and liberating way.

Engaged pedagogy does not simply seek to strengthen and empower students. Every classroom in which a holistic learning model is applied will also be a place of growth for the teacher, who will be strengthened and empowered by this process. This strengthening will not occur if we refuse to open up while encouraging students to take risks. Teachers who expect students to share confessional narratives but are unwilling to share their own exercise power in a potentially coercive manner (Hooks, 2017, p. 35).

Bell hooks, by addressing confessional pedagogy in the classroom context, challenges traditional dynamics of power and control between teachers and students. Engaged pedagogy, as she proposes, is not a unilateral process, but a reciprocal practice of learning and growth. This approach seeks to overcome the “monogamy of affections,” in which the affective and pedagogical bond is centered exclusively on the figure of the teacher, hierarchizing relationships and limiting the potential for genuine collective interaction (Santos, et. al., 2024). For hooks, the classroom should be a space of mutual transformation, where both teachers and students strengthen and empower each other in the educational process. The monogamy of affections, when perpetuated, reinforces coercive power structures, since the teacher positions himself as the sole holder of knowledge and the main recipient of emotional interactions. This centralization not only limits students’ autonomy, but also prevents the teacher from experiencing the growth provided by a truly holistic pedagogical model. Confessional pedagogy, in turn, breaks with this dynamic by valuing the narratives and experiences of all those involved in the educational process, promoting a space for relational and horizontal learning. Hooks emphasizes that, for confessional pedagogy to be authentic, it is necessary for the teacher to also be willing to be vulnerable and share his or her own narratives. When teachers encourage students to expose themselves, but do not do the same, they exercise a power that can be perceived as coercive, maintaining the hierarchy that engaged pedagogy seeks



to deconstruct. “Who speaks? Who listens? And why? Ensuring that all students fulfill their responsibility to contribute to classroom learning is not a common approach in the system that Freire called “banking education,” where students are seen as mere passive consumers” (Hooks, 2017, p. 57). Thus, commitment to this approach requires emotional openness on the part of the teacher, who must be willing to take risks with his or her students, demonstrating that learning is a shared and ongoing process.

In addition, confessional pedagogy, by integrating emotional and intellectual growth, transforms the classroom into a space of authenticity and reciprocity. This practice creates conditions for learning to be meaningful and liberating, breaking with rigid and conservative models that often isolate the teacher from his or her own humanity. Genuine interaction, in this context, not only enriches the experience but also students, but also strengthens the teacher, who finds in dialogue and the exchange of experiences a path to his own training.

## **CONCLUSION**

Bell hooks’ confessional pedagogy contributes significantly to the understanding and redefinition of affective relationships in the school environment, especially with regard to the concept of “monogamy of affections.” This concept, understood as the limitation and hierarchization of emotional relationships in the classroom, highlights the excessive centrality of the teacher in pedagogical dynamics, often creating an emotional dependence that inhibits the plurality of interactions. Hooks proposes an educational model that rejects these limitations, promoting a practice that prioritizes horizontality in relationships and the recognition of the experiences of all involved.

By emphasizing that learning is a relational and shared process, hooks argues that overcoming the “monogamy of affections” involves deconstructing traditional hierarchies in the classroom. The teacher, by adopting a more vulnerable and human stance, opens up space for students to also feel comfortable sharing their narratives and perspectives. This practice not only broadens the scope of affective interactions, but also fosters a more inclusive and democratic learning environment, where each voice is valued as an integral part of the educational process.

Confessional pedagogy encourages a transformation that goes beyond the simple transmission of academic content, integrating the intellectual, emotional and even spiritual growth of students and teachers. By proposing a model in constant reinvention, hooks

emphasizes that pedagogical practices need to be adaptable to the needs and particularities of each class. This approach recognizes that learning does not occur in a vacuum, but is deeply connected to the life stories, cultures and subjectivities of each individual.

This proposal directly challenges traditional teaching practices that privilege the centrality of the teacher and the passivity of the students. For hooks, the creation of a learning community depends on the active engagement of all participants. This requires that the teacher not only recognize the presence and contributions of students, but also promote pedagogical practices that stimulate enthusiasm, curiosity and mutual respect. By overcoming the logic of emotional exclusivity, confessional pedagogy enables the construction of more plural and horizontal relationships in the school environment.

The redefinition of emotional relationships also implies breaking with the authoritarian and coercive vision of teaching. When teachers encourage students to expose themselves, but refuse to do the same, they perpetuate a model of power that limits the transformative potential of education. Confessional pedagogy, on the other hand, promotes an environment of authentic exchange, where genuine interaction between teacher and student strengthens both and contributes to the creation of a more humanized and equitable educational space.

In this way, bell hooks' confessional pedagogy redefines emotional relationships in the school environment by proposing the overcoming of the "monogamy of affections" and by encouraging pedagogical practices that value diversity, horizontality, and mutual engagement. By transforming the classroom into a relational and inclusive learning space, this approach contributes to the construction of a democratic and emancipatory education, which recognizes the potential for collective and individual growth of all its participants.

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