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Discourses of gender in Brazilian songs: the influence of music in Brazilian education under a gender analysis

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Abstract

Gender inequalities are present in different contexts in Brazil, and are also reproduced in education. This article, realized through a literature review, aims to investigate Brazilian songs from gender analysis and its contribution to education. Gender inequalities and oppressions, especially for women, are often found in Brazilian songs, and encouraged for children and all generations. Gender Studies alert to these issues and contribute to an education aimed at gender equity, respect and solidarity.

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1. Introduction

Gender inequalities are still present in Brazilian culture. They are reproduced in education and are visible in different roles, functions, duties and expectations for men and women. The objective of this study is to investigate the Brazilian songs through a gender analysis and its contribution to education. It is a literature review and brings a critical gender analysis of Brazilian songs. First, it will be examined gender differences present in children's songs. Then, the gender differences present in songs for adults, but which are also heard by children. Finally, it will be presented some contributions of gender analysis in Brazilian music for the area of education.

Gender inequalities are not natural, it means that they aren't the result of biology or of the differences between female and male bodies. They are, in fact, the product of different historical forms of organization among human beings, who gradually had been institutionalized in the form of gender roles. Gender inequalities make women more

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susceptible to violence and its consequences. We live in a society with patriarchal structure, where women are subordinate to men and youth are subordinate to older men (Narvaz, 2006). In patriarchy, men dictate and determine the social norms, and in this case, when someone - usually women - deviates from this pattern of social conduct correct, violence is used, whether physical or psychological. And the men that uses this violence receive a certain type of authorization or at least tolerance of society in general to punish what are perceived as deviation (Saffioti, 2001).

To modify and build more equitable relationships, it is fundamental the mediation of gender as a category of analysis. Joan Scott defines gender as a entirely social construction of ideas about men and women roles. It is a way to refer to the origins, exclusively social, of the subjective identities of men and women (Scott, 1996, p. 3). Besides the gender category, other issues define the uniqueness of people, such as age, culture, religion, sexual orientation, class, ethnicity, disability etc. Those characteristics are fundamental in gender analysis, because to change situations marked by injustice, it is necessary to understand the contradictions and antagonisms that mark social relations (Paixão, 2014, p. 23).

Gender Studies include a wide range of areas of knowledge towards interdisciplinary (Bicalho, 2003). Thus, gender analysis in Brazilian songs brings up a worrying scenario with regard to culture and popular education of girls and boys, as it will be discussed forward. As well as gender stereotypes, many songs are also taught from generation to generation. Because music is a cultural element that is in daily life, it has a symbolic, educational and empowering value about gender roles. One of the challenges of the feminist movement is to be attentive and watchful to relationships that happen in everyday life, because is in the intimate of relationships that domination settles and dictate the exclusionary rules, and this rules are consequently naturalized (Paixão, 2014, p 29 - 30).

2. Brazilian Children Songs and Discourses of Gender

Children's songs are often sung and heard in Brazil in many spaces, like in lullabies sung for new-born children, in games with family and friends, in schools, music lessons, parties, through CD's and DVD's watched or listened at home, in schools and in many different environments. These songs are played and passed down from generation to generation, as well as its several contents.

It is questionable what messages are these songs transmitting to girls and boys and how these songs reproduce understandings about gender relations. It will be presented a gender analysis in Brazilian folk songs, investigating gender roles in the text of the songs. For this, some songs were selected in the following books: *Guia Prático de Heitor Villa Lobos - Practical Guide Heitor Villa Lobos* (Villa-Lobos, 1941), *Quem Canta Seus Males Espanta - Who Sings Scares Away His Woes* (Almeida, 1998), and *Brincadeiras Cantadas - Sung Jokes* (Garcia & Marques, 1992). These books bring folkloric brazilian songs commonly sung for children. The last one results of a research that relates folkloric songs sung in different states of Brazil. Among the surveyed songs, were found several songs that emphasize the normative gender roles, as well as stereotypes and different roles and functions related to male and female were identified. The songs will be analysed according to the text and the theme they bring.

The importance of marriage and having children, especially for girls, appear in several songs, such as: *Pombinha Branca* (Little White Dove): "little white dove, what are you doing? Washing clothes for the wedding"; *A Dona Baratinha* (Dona Cockroach): "Who wants to marry Dona Cockroach who is cute and is trying to get married"; *Sapo Cururu* (Cane Toad): "toad's wife should be inside making lace for the wedding". Another song, *Eu Era Assim* (I was like this), depicts the stages of women's lives: "when I was a baby, I was like this..." following for: little girl, girl, married, mother, grandmother, senil and skull. One can also notice that the household chores - cooking, sew, washing clothes, among others, are always related to the female, as the song *Borboletinha* (Lil Butterfly): "lil butterfly is in the kitchen making chocolate for godmother". These skills appear exclusively to girls, and are even encouraged as a profession. In the songs: *Galinha Pintadinha* (Lottie Dottie Chicken), "the doctor was a turkey, the nurse a vulture"; *Ponte da Vinhaça* (Bridge of Vinasse): "washerwomen do so, the seamstresses do so", and *A Agulha* (The Needle): "looks that girl that goes so far [...] looking for a needle I lost here," the differences in the professions expected for each sex are very clear.

Some songs refer to girls as an object that can be selected according the criteria of each one, independent of the girl's desires, as in *Anda a Roda* (Walk the round): "choose in this round the girl you like, this isn't for me, this I don't like"; *Rico Rico Rico* (Rich, rich, rich): "give me one of your daughters, choose you the one that you want"; and *Arroz com Leite* (Rice with Milk): "rice with milk I want to marry a girl who can cook." Songs also mentions stealing a girl or something for her, subduing her, as in the song *Minhoca* (Worm): "give me a smack, I won't give, I

won't give, so I'll steal", and in *Para Dentro e Para Fora – Mais um, mais um* (In and Out – One more, one more): "I steal this girl, one more, one more, I steal this girl, one more, one more, one more, I put her on the round, one more, one more [...] they dance so cuty, one more, one more."

Girls are also treated as an object of beauty. The terms delight, beautiful and gallant appear in several songs, including sexual connotation, as in the song *Menina tão Galante* (So Gallant Girl): "O gallant girl, I invite you to dance, [...] ah! What delight, my lovely pair", and almost in *Samba-lelê*: "Oh beautiful mulatta, where do you live?", that shows black women as sexual objects. In this way, to the female are not related stimulants terms such as the ones related to male: sir, doctor or rooster, as in the songs *Galinha Pintadinha* (Lottie Dottie Chicken): "purple rooster", and *Bamba-la-lão*: "Bamba-la-lão sir captain". Besides the allusion to beauty, were found feminine terms as disobedient, liar, and mischievous, as in *A Barata diz que tem* (The cockroach says she has) "it's a cockroach lie," and in *A Dona Aranha* (Lady Spider): "she is stubborn and disobedient." The song *As Conchinhas* "The shells" illustrates what happens with a disobedient girl and that wants to be independent - she dies: "I want to catch shells on the beach by the sea, my mom is very scared, never let's us play, then I'll go alone, stand alone too, I'm not afraid, I'm strong, I do not obey anyone. And there was the little crazy, running along the sea, the poor mother was sad, sat down and began to cry, in the morning by the waves, floated dead, the little daughter! Take example, girls, from this unfortunate poor one" (Villa -Lobos, 1941, p. 38).

Children's stories, through fairy tales portray gender stereotypes, almost always containing as characters a beautiful thin white princess, dependent and helpless, who marries a strong and wealthy prince, who also saves her. This are also stories of encouragement and idealization of marriage. Girls idealize this pattern and to men there's the obligation to make their wives happy forever, serving her in all your emotional needs. (Tyson, 2006). These ideas of fairy tales also appear in songs, as in *A Linda Rosa Juvenil* (The beautiful youth rose): "One day came a bad, very bad, very bad witch that made the rose fell asleep [...] one day came a beautiful king, beautiful king, beautiful king, who awaked the rose" and in *Fui Morar numa Casinha* (I moved to a little house), "came out there a little princess".

Girls frequently appear as fragile, dependent and submissive in relation to a man: father, brother and/or husband, like in *Terezinha de Jesus* (Theresa of Jesus): "Therese of Jesus is so mischievous that fell to the ground, three gentlemen came forth, all three with a hat in hand, the first one was her father, the second one, her brother, the third one was the one to whom she gave her hand." The fragility of women also appears in the song *O Cravo Brigou com a Rosa* (The Carnation had a fight with the Rose): "the carnation had a quarrel with the rose under a balcony, the carnation got hurt, and the rose was in pieces, the carnation got sick, the rose went to visit him, the carnation fainted and the rose cried".

The different roles, functions and duties of men and women are clear in children's songs, like on the importance of marriage and the execution of housework for women, or on the reference of possible professions for women that are always related to care within the household (cooking, sew and being a nurse). This way, women are more intended for the private sector than the public (Teixeira, 2008). Women also appear as an sexual and beauty object, which can be chosen and subjugated by men independent of their desires, in this way it is allowed to "steal a kiss" if the woman does not want to give it. These songs justify and even encourage violence against women, which will also be mentioned in the next point. The characteristics related to women that appear in songs are always pejorative: disobedient, liar, mischievous, dependent, weak and submissive. However, for men appear terms like sir, doctor, rooster, heavy, king, independent, or someone able to make their choices according their desires.

3. From Girls to Women: Music and Gender Discourses in Brazil

As seen in children's songs, music reveals forms of human behavior. Through each song we can visualize scenarios, historical and social contexts and how human being relate intra and interpersonally. Through prose and poetry found in the repertoire of Brazilian songs, it can be perceived gender discourses and how women are portrayed.

We emphasize here the large number of songs that trivialize and make violence against women an acceptable form to act (Krob, 2010). In 1932, Noel Rosa, through the song *Mulher Indigesta* (Indigestible Woman), makes it clear to society that women should not have an opinion, much less express their ideas. What this song portrays is that if women do not want to catch, they should keep quiet. Here is an excerpt: "But what a indigestible woman! / Deserves a brick in the forehead! / And when she manifests herself / She deserves arriving on scourging" (Noel, 2014).

The song *Ai Que Saudades d'Amélia* (How I miss Amelia), composed by Ataulfo Alves and Mário Lago in 1940's, describes an ideal partner in the eyes of sexist, androcentric and patriarchal culture: a woman without their own desire, voiceless and submissive to the needs and desires of the male universe. From this song, many women began to identify herself and started to be identified as Amélias. It was created a female standard where women gives up her desires, and are always subjugating herself for the happiness and well-being of someone else: "I've never seen so much demanding, and even do what you do to me, you do not know what consciousness is, nor see I am a poor boy, you only think about luxury and wealth, all you see, you want, oh my God, I miss Amelia, that was a real woman, sometimes starved by my side, and thought it was nice not having what to eat, when she saw me upset, she said: "My child, what can we do!", Amelia had no vanity, Amelia was a real woman" (Mario, 2014).

Many generations grew up listening, singing and playing songs like this in their daily lives. However, we can still find violence against women stamped in Brazilian songs in a usual way, naturalized and even trivialized, as in *Tapa na Cara* (Face Slapping – 2006), of the band Saia Rodada: "Look she is naughty and likes to catch / And says it's good in love time / catches for sleep, catches to wake up/ catches every day, every hour constantly" (Saia Rodada, 2014).

Another example is the song *Faixa Amarela* (Yellow Band - 1997), of Zeca Pagodinho (2014): "But if she falter, I will give a punishment on her / I'll give you a stroke / Break five teeth and four ribs / I'll get that yellow band / Engraved with her name / And send fire / at the entrance of the slum / I'll buy a good strong rod / to warm up her throat / And make a snack / with homebred chicken / Not to mention this yellow band / Embroidered with her name / I'm gonna have to hang / At the entrance of the slum."

A variety of musical songs appear as spaces for men and women announce their way of thinking about female behaviour and to relate with each other. Music promotes and provoke self-expression, in all societies. One of the functions of music has been the symbolic representation of the ideas and behaviour (Blasco, 2002, p. 77). The music market contributes to the spread of violence against women by providing public access to songs like this. Music can be considered as a dynamic array that happens in time through which we can experience heightened emotions and an alternation of our states of consciousness (McClellan, 2009). The melody and rhythm can mask the text message and people do not perceive, much less question what they're really singing. If they sing, they incorporate ideas and accept them. If accept, allow them to settle (Krob, 2010).

The use of music as a means of expression and communication is one more piece of data to consider in reflecting the inertia of the human being, not only in the presence of noise, but in situations of subjugation and violence which use the power of sound (Forster, 2009, p. 268). However, music can also be used to express the desire that women have to get rid of these stereotypes. To Serafina Blasco music causes and express emotional states regardless of individualism. An personal emotion musically expressed let to be personal to become universal, since the listener can see him or her reflected in similar emotions (Blasco, 2002, p. 77). Through music, women are empowered to share with others what they think about their condition as women in society. In 2000, Rita Lee and Zélia Duncan composed the song *Pagu*, song inspired in one brazilian feminist activist in the early twentieth century, Patrícia Galvão Rehder. Here is an excerpt: "My strength is not gross, I'm not a nun or a bitch / Because not every witch's hump, not all Brazilian women are ass / My chest isn't of silicone, I'm much more macho that many men" (Rita, 2014).

Another example of female musical expression against the subjugation of women is *Desconstruindo Amélia* (Deconstructing Amelia), composed by Pitty and Martin (2008). The music is about a woman who opposes to women's oppression system, she questions gender roles and discovers that she has desires and rights and gets rid of the stereotype of Amelia and the social judgment, demanding equality and dignity: "It is late, everything is right / Everything put in its place / Son sleeps, she gets the uniform / everything ready for when she wakes up / the opportunity made her gifted / she was educated for care and serve / usually she forgets herself / Always the last one to leave / despite so much master degree / Wins unless the boyfriend / And doesn't understand why / There's talent juggler / She is many ones, if you want to know / Today at thirty she's better than eighteen / Not even Balzac could predict / After home, work and children / she still goes to shake in the night / disguises and move on / Every day until be tired / and suddenly she decides then change / turn the table, took the game / Insists on caring herself / not maidservant, nor object / She's doesn't want to be another anymore / Today she is one too" (Pitty , 2014) .

However, it is not just women who use music to protest about gender violence and the condition of female subordination in culture and society. Music educates people's sensitivity and somehow modifies social behaviour (Blasco, 2002, p. 597). Some men also sing to this cause, as in *Fiz uma Canção Pra Ela* (I made a song for her), composed in 2011, by Fernando and Anitelli Galldino: "I made a song for her / In the most beautiful translation / Of

equality and autonomy / To your body and heart" (O Teatro Mágico, 2014). Human social dimension is reflected in the historical and geographical context in which the song is originated, which enables the individual to recognize himself within a particular culture with its own peculiarities, the same way that helps to anchor their memories and the feeling of belonging to a person, a region, or a personal or social history in a given period (Leão, 2009, p. 350).

Brazilian culture is represented in its songs. Power hierarchies are present in various legal, religious, political, historical, scientific and psychological speeches and practices, creating inequalities between men and women, between women and men and between men and men, still presents in the daily life and in the songs (Gebara, 2001). There are just a few songs that care about gender equity, with no perpetuation of violence and unequal gender roles.

4. The Influence of Music in Education Under a Gender Analysis

What the songs as the ones here referenced represent to the independence, self-esteem and the developing knowledge of children? Whereas gender inequalities are present in various contexts, these are also present in several Brazilian songs that reproduce the contexts in which they are created. Thus, these songs reinforce gender stereotypes related to women, such as home care, and care of children and husband (Koller and Narvaz, 2006), always being from someone and for someone (Rios, 2005), submissive and dependent. Consequently, women are not related to work outside home, being very intelligent, have opinions or defending their rights. They're systematically subordinated in relation to men. Men, however, cannot cry or show affection, must be strong and cannot fail (idea of being a boss). Thus, gender stereotypes are restrictive and destructive for both men and women, generating inequalities and oppressions (Tyson, 2006). These papers were found in the surveyed songs and are found in several Brazilian songs, which reduces people's freedom to determine the way of people be and act (Bicalho, 2003).

Songs that stimulate the normative gender roles and inequalities between people become popular and accepted, although its contents. We must pay attention to the fact that gender inequalities, or in relation to disability, class, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other (Forinash, 2006), are being communicated and transmitted from generation to generation by many Brazilian songs. According to Assmann and Sung (2000, p. 79) the culture in which we live in opens and closes the windows through which we see the world. It leads us to see certain aspects of reality and not see other; further leads us to not realize that we do not see these other aspects. As we are unaware that we do not see a particular aspect or part of reality, we believe that what we see is all the reality and all the truth.

Thus, as much in children's songs as in songs for adults, there is the message that the normative gender roles have to be followed, instead of stimulating people, especially girls and women to pursue their own interests and independence in their lives. History shows through discrimination that human dignity is not extended to women. The dignity of all human beings is an ethical and social goal (universalized human dignity) (Assmann and Sung, 2000). This lack of dignity is represented in the songs, including that ones that perpetuate violence against women.

The musical repertoire should create opportunities and foster independence, self-esteem, the potential of each person, and not otherwise. We need to understand the situations of suffering and oppression that girls and women are affected daily and, through the theoretical framework of gender, we can break this domination. Knowing the gender instrumentals and having learning spaces are strategic elements of political and social equality that women still need to learn, know and reframe (Paixão, 2014, p. 24).

Thus, Gender Studies contribute to a more human, equitable and solidarity education. Hugo Assmann and Jung Mo Sung (2000) emphasized the importance of educating for solidarity, reducing gender inequalities, promoting solidarity sensitivity, which is a way of knowing the world that born of the encounter and recognition of the human dignity of who are inside - and - outside the social system; a knowledge marked by an affection, empathy and compassion (feeling on your skin another's pain) Therefore, it is a knowledge and sensitivity that are committed, living the interdependence and mutual recognition of an existential, visceral way, and not only intellectual (Assmann and Mo Sung, 2000, p. 134).

We must therefore question the sexist models of social relations and gender inequalities, seeking more equitable social relations (Ruether, 1993), fair and solidarity that recognize the value of each one and every one, deconstructing the normative gender roles, often oppressives (Gebara, 2001).

Conclusion

Brazilian songs reproduce the still sexist and patriarchal Brazilian context. And make clear the different roles,

functions and duties of men and women, that are reproduced since childhood. Ideas that girls need to take care of household chores and their bodies, making it more beautiful to get a wedding and having children, always being dependent and subjugated by their husbands, are passed by the songs, including with allusion to violence. Women are well represented as fragile, while men, on the contrary, are represented as having strength and power.

Music, as a form of culture, reproduces these inequalities and the portrayal of women as objects of beauty and sex and who do not have their wishes respected. Some songs configured evidences of violence against women and appear since in children's songs and in a more direct way on adult's songs, where physical violence is evident. It thus becomes urgent to deconstruct these gender roles and these oppressive images that are encouraged in children.

For a more inclusive education, that aims independence, freedom of choice, respect and dignity of children, it is necessary a more critical look at the Brazilian songs. Gender Studies contribute to education and to a analysis of Brazilian music. Gender inequalities represented by songs oppress girls and boys, delimiting the areas and how they should act, diminishing their potential and affecting mainly women, by stimulating ideas of submission. An education that respects individuality, differences, freedom, children's desires and dignity is fundamental to a healthier, more independent and solidarity development, being necessary to rethink the songs that are being heard.

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