

Restructuring of gender roles and creating new masculinities

A reestruturação dos papéis de gênero e a criação das novas masculinidades

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ABSTRACT | OBJECTIVE: Identify the cisgender man's view before the new gender roles in contemporary Brazilian society and the construction of new masculinities. **METHOD:** This study is a descriptive, quantitative and cross-sectional analysis, composed of a sample of 38 male students aged 18 years or older from different courses at a public state university at Montes Claros, Minas Gerais, Brazil. The research was based on a semi-structured questionnaire containing twenty-three objective questions. **RESULTS:** It was possible identifying a greater return on the part of black individuals. Most of them (62.5%) affirm they usually don't talk about feelings. The biggest discrepancy was observed among students from different areas of study. Students from Social Sciences, Math and Technology and Health Sciences claim to have difficulties in being and doing what they want to because of people's reactions. On the other hand, students from Human Sciences said they have never had that difficulty, besides those students affirm they hardly ever seek information about the new social constructions of gender roles. **CONCLUSION:** Results obtained show area of study as more influential than race – not ignoring their influence – and may indicate an alternative to expand debates about gender roles among groups of cisgender men, mixing debates of each group in order to find a balance between information and its place in society.

KEYWORDS: Genre. Identity crisis. Masculinity.

RESUMO | OBJETIVO: Identificar a visão do homem cisgênero diante dos novos papéis de gênero na sociedade brasileira contemporânea e da construção das novas masculinidades. **MÉTODO:** Trata de uma pesquisa descritiva, quantitativa e corte transversal, composta por uma amostra de 38 universitários do sexo masculino, com idade igual ou superior a 18 anos, acadêmicos dos diversos cursos de uma universidade pública estadual da cidade de Montes Claros - MG. O instrumento utilizado foi um questionário semiestruturado contendo vinte e três perguntas fechadas. **RESULTADOS:** Foi possível identificar um maior retraimento por parte dos sujeitos pretos que, em sua maioria (62,5%), afirmam não falarem sobre sentimentos. A maior discrepância observada se relaciona com as áreas de estudo, sendo que acadêmicos do Centro de Ciências Sociais Aplicadas, Centro de Ciências Exatas e de Tecnologia e Centro de Ciências Biológicas e da Saúde afirmam ter dificuldade em ser e fazer o que desejam por receio da reação das pessoas, enquanto os do Centro de Ciências Humanas dizem nunca ter essa dificuldade, além de ser o único centro que quase nunca busca se informar sobre as novas construções sociais dos papéis de gênero. **CONCLUSÃO:** Os resultados obtidos evidenciam as diferenças promovidas pela área de estudo como mais influentes do que a raça – não ignorando sua influência – e podem apontar um caminho para expandir os debates sobre papéis de gênero entre grupos de homens cisgênero, mesclando os debates de cada grupo a fim de encontrar o equilíbrio entre informação e posicionamento na sociedade.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Gênero. Crise de identidade. Masculinidade.

Introduction

To discuss gender, first we need to think about power. Power relations are structured in gender divisions – considering power as defined by Foucault in 1988 as something that is exercised in social relations; not as something evil, but calculated and having collective objectives – and these divisions are redefined over the years, changing from something the individual has to something they are.

Reinforcing this understanding, Lima and Belo (2019) claim that determining that a body belongs to one or another sex brings with it a description that is loaded with predefined concepts about what one has to be, that is, the individual is labeled and must fit the binary distinction of male-female, ignoring their diverse subjective comprehensions.

The construction of the female image is discussed by Deifelt (2019) in his work, stemming from children's imagination molded by fairy tales where the woman is portrayed as the one who waits for the everlasting love that will come from the man who saves her, while the man is represented as the one who bears the courage to save the fragile maiden. Consequently, the image created by these tales is projected into the real world and the society expects similar behaviors.

Over the years, the concept of gender has been modified and detached from biological features, turning exclusively to the social aspect of the subjective identity of women and men and it remains in constant change (Silva & Brabo, 2016).

Furlin (2016) emphasizes that by discussing gender, the feminist movement structures the problematization about the unequal social roles that have built our societies over the years, yearning for equal social relations. That was the opening of paths for the deconstruction and denaturalization of the concepts attributed to the feminine and the masculine.

Since the search for the deconstruction of the biological concept of gender originates, as Silva (2006) says, mainly from feminist groups, how does the cisgender man stand before these new molds – or lack thereof? As a consequence of cultural changes, men – for the purpose of this study, we will use 'man' to refer to cisgender males – was sent into a crisis; which led to the creation of clubs to retake the traditional masculinity as well as discussion and psychotherapy

groups to debate about the new models of masculinity, both exclusively composed of men.

In 2015, Silva, as well as Silva and Macedo in 2019, discusses new gender constructions under a new, more reflective, and less repetitive parameter. Traditional masculinity is not a rule and, therefore, can be remade in new ways as much as is necessary for the individual's mental health.

In their work, Boris, Bloc and Teófilo (2012) reinforce the debate on the crisis of male subjectivity by elucidating the issue in discussion through patriarchy. Although the society is more flexible, men who express capacities attributed to women such as emotional care, crying, doing household chores, etc. are seen as less manly. As reinforced by Pongeluppe and Milani (2017) when approaching men as negative, since he needs to prove throughout his life not to be a woman, not to be a homosexual, not to be a female.

Based on that same understanding, Betim and Lurke (2019) discuss the repression that men go through from as early as their childhood regarding their affections and link that repression to the high rates of violence carried out by them. The perpetuation of gender roles strengthens behavior patterns and the latent need to emphasize that they are in the "right" place.

In this context of deconstruction, the present study aimed to identify how cisgender men view the new gender roles in contemporary Brazilian society and the construction of new masculinities, considering their position within these processes.

Discussing the reformulation of gender roles postulates an analysis of the path that has been taken and its means, as well as the subjects that are inadvertently left behind. In this perspective, the present study is justified by the need to understand the context engendered by the feminist movement seen through as many angles as possible, encompassing the subjects beyond their socially pre-established roles.

Expanding the range of analysis means including the factor race, which also influence gender roles, in the discussion. Black and white females, as well as black and white males, are culturally different. Even if in a more concealed way, society demands virility from the black man more than from the white man, for example; while the black woman is seen by society as

even less worthy and capable than the white woman (Conrado & Ribeiro, 2017).

Methods

The sample was composed of 38 academics, all cisgender males aged 18 or older, from several courses at the State University of Montes Claros - UNIMONTES. All academics who responded to the online questionnaire until the 25th of March and who voluntarily accepted to take part in the research were included, and those under 18 years old, as well as those who did not sign the informed consent form (ICF) and the non-cisgender men were excluded.

As an instrument, we used a semi-structured questionnaire with 23 (twenty-three) close-ended questions that explore the men's understanding of their current place in society regarding the new gender roles constructed from the first discussions started by the feminist movement.

This study was submitted and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the State University of Montes Claros - Unimontes under the ruling 3.771.637/2019 (CAAE 26664819.5.0000.5146). It is a descriptive research with quantitative and cross-sectional approach.

After authorization from the board of the researched institution, the questionnaires were shared via a Google Forms link to the coordinators of all academic centers at the researched university who passed them on to the academics. Those who voluntarily accepted to take part on the research signed the informed consent document. The data collection phase was carried out in March 2020.

After data collection, descriptive analyses were performed with values of frequency, percentage, average and standard deviation. The entire statistical procedure was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 for Windows.

Results

The study analyzed 38 cisgender male students from the State University of Montes Claros - UNIMONTES, with ages averaging 18 to 28 from four areas: Center for Applied Social Sciences (CASS), Center for Human Sciences (CHS), Center for Exact Sciences and Technology (CEST) and Center for Biological and Health Sciences (CBHS).

Table 1. Table of variables with data in real and absolute frequency values that characterize the sample group (n = 38)

VARIABLE	OPTIONS	N - %
Age	From 18 to 28 years old	35 - 92.1
	From 29 to 38 years old	2 - 5.2
	Over 39 years old	1 - 2.7
Ethnicity	White	13 - 34.2
	Brown	17 - 44.7
	Black	8 - 21.1
Center:	CASS	15 - 39.4
	CHS	10 - 26.3
	CEST	10 - 26.3
	CBHS	3 - 8.0

Most of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 28 (92.1%) and almost half of them were brown (44.7%). The distribution of subjects among the centers was more balanced, with a higher participation of students from courses in the Center for Applied Social Sciences (CASS) and lower participation of students from health-related courses at the Center for Biological and Health Sciences (CBHS).

Discussion

The study aims to identify how the cisgender man views the new gender roles in the contemporary Brazilian society and the construction of new masculinities, considering their place in these processes. From there, it will be possible to enrich the debates about male-female binarism that is so rooted in Brazilian culture today and strengthen the processes of changing what it means to be female and male.

By categorizing the analyses by race and field of study, we obtained data that shows different views regarding the criteria evaluated, which reinforces the need to broaden the studies so that the discussion can be richer and more coherent.

The three ethnic groups agree that sexism negatively affects women (95% of respondents) and that, almost always, it is harmful to men as well (73%). From these groups, most of the black men (62.5%) do not feel their forms of expression are limited. However, the same percentage of them almost never talk to other men about their hardships or feelings. The silence of black men can be understood as a consequence of a long history of racial construction in which black people don't have their voices heard, like Andrea, Peres, Tokuda and Souza (2016) tackle in their work.

A piece of data that deserves attention is that black men (62.5%), contrary to brown and white men, rarely seek information about social changes related to gender roles. The lack of information hinders the understanding and the reallocation of men in the face of the transformations in the roles of male and female.

The three ethnicities believe (81.2%) that men have more benefits than women, even though they believe that men are not superior to them (89.5%). It was also possible to verify that, despite the changes in the role of men perceived by them in the last five years, Brazilian society is still sexist.

Brown men were shown to be more concerned when it came to expressing and following their wishes because of the social nonacceptance (79%), a context built since the beginning of the history of Brazil, as reinforced by Figueiredo and Grosfoguel (2009).

When analyzed against the field of study, two questions stand out in discrepancy: most of the students from the CASC, CEST and CBHS claim to have a hard time in being and doing what they want to in fears of other people's reaction, while the ones from the CHS claim to not have that problem (70%). However, among the three centers, the latter is the one that seeks the least information about the new social constructions of gender roles (60%).

Based on these analyses, it is possible to correlate the knowledge of the reformulations in gender roles with the forms of expression of the men. Those who are better informed know the social implications and the new arrangements of their male role, that is, studying the impacts of sexism on men and women might contribute to mindfulness when it comes to the way a man behaves in society - which does not invalidate the suffering of these individuals, as seen in the works of Silva (2019) and Betim and Lurke (2019), for not knowing their place in the new society.

Brazil still lives in a patriarchal system, despite the changes that have been taking place since the introduction of the Brazilian Civil Code of 1926, which established male superiority even by physical force, and in which the family was identified by the husband's name while the woman was forced to take his last name (Santana, Rios & Menezes, 2019). The departure of women from the place of submission and men from the place of dominance is part of a gradual deconstruction that has been happening in our country and is being strengthened by the redefinition of social roles (Freitas, Félix & Carvalho, 2018).

In the view of the Covid-19 pandemic faced during the final phase of this study, the sample was reduced because of a difficulty in accessing the target group and the questionnaire was answered online, observing the advice from the World Health Organization and other competent authorities to maintain social distancing.

Conclusion

Based on the present study, it was possible to demonstrate the change that has been happening in the construction of masculinities in Brazil and that the variables of race, age and field of study have little influence on these transformations, while the level of search for new information on the subject was shown to be more relevant. There is still a long way to go before we reach gender equality, but the journey has already started and it is relying more and more on the essential participation of men.

Therefore, it is essential that more studies are carried out in order to understand these new arrangements and how men view themselves when confronted with them, so that we can promote an effective change and reduce the psychological suffering of these individuals during their adaptation and reformulation.

Author contributions

Santana GR participated in the conception, design, search, collection and statistical analysis of the research data, elaboration of the questionnaire, interpretation of the results and writing of the scientific article. Brito WF participated in the search and analysis of the research data, content review, preparation of the questionnaire and interpretation of the results. Soares WD participated in the search, collection and statistical analysis of the research data and interpretation of the results.

Competing interests

No financial, legal or political conflicts involving third parties (government, companies, private institutions, etc.) was declared to any of the aspects of the work submitted (including, but not limited to, grants and funding, participation in advisory council, study design, manuscript preparation, statistical analysis, etc.).

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