The construction of the Trans “mother-son relationship”, through the sociocultural perspective

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Abstract: The research seeks to understand the construction of the trans “mother-son relationship” through Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective. Since this mother, having constituted herself within a heteronormative society, in which this theme is still seen as a social taboo, her access to information necessary for her to understand and deal with this demand is insufficient. Vygotsky was chosen because he represented the understanding of the relationship between personal development and the socio-historical context. In his theory, he established important concepts such as mediation, internalization, instruments, signs, symbols, concepts and language that helped the conception of this research. The design used was the bibliographic, using as references materials previously published in books, articles, theses, dissertations, articles and collections available on the Internet. In view of this, it was perceived that it is not an easy trajectory, but the way that the mother conducts this period, for herself and for the child, can harm or strengthen the creation of bond between them.

Keywords: Mother-son relationship; Trans Child; Current society

1. Introduction

The wait for a baby is always marked by several periods of expectations by parents. This intrauterine life, which often does not have its biological sex yet determined, is already being idealized in the fantasy of parents, especially the mother, loaded with meaning and affection. In this conception, the expectations regarding the professional career of this baby, the physical characteristics, personality characteristics and how the construction of the parent-child relationship will happen (FREITAS; RABBIT; SILVA, 2007).

However, there is often no room for the free manifestations of gender identification by these children, because there are, even before their arrival in the world, already pre-established sociocultural rules about gender. In this sense, behaviors, activities, values, objects, clothes, games and colors are already differentiated and separated according to gender, namely, male and female, since the

beginning of the process of civilization and division of labor. This standardization of what is considered feminine and masculine makes many subjects not feel in harmony with themselves and with those who live, causing suffering due to the lack of adaptation to a social construction that does not encompass the diversity of the individual (MAJEROWICZ, 2014).

In childhood, to a certain age, these concerns are minimized by the ignorance of social codes. Children still do not know the difficulties they may encounter in the collective due to their non-adequacy with their biological sex. The relationship built with the parents will serve as the basis for this process that will be lived by the trans child. However, what is found is a ignorance about the theme on the part of these parents, who are caught off guard by the situation. They should not be judged for this, because they are only the result of the social structure in which they live. What will differentiate them is the way in which they will understand

and experience the whole process, in the focus of the research, in particular the mother (TORO, 2015).

In view of all the above, this article aims to understand the construction of the trans "mother-son relationship" through Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective.

2. Methodology

This research was qualitative in nature, because it is based on the deepening of sociocultural issues, without resign itself in numerical aspects and quantitative research. It has as a technical design used the bibliographic research, to the extent and in that was carried out from works already published, in an analysis "attentive and systematic of books, periodicals, documents, texts, maps, photos, manuscripts and even material made available on the Internet etc." (FONTELLES *et al*, 2009, p. 07). For this research, materials such as books, articles, theses, dissertations, periodicals and collections available on the Internet that dealt with the theme were selected to assist in the reading and writing of the material.

2. Results and Discussions

Until the last century, more markedly, women were assigned to perform secondary functions in society, which made them susceptible to the way of understanding and interpreting that men made themselves available to use in narratives. As a consequence, the historical trajectory was told by men as protagonists of the events and also spokes persons of women's history (COLLING, 2004; CROSS, CROSS, CROSS, CROSS, PALMEIRA, 2009). In this protagonist-supporting relationship, a culture was established, in which men placed themselves in a superior position, supposedly by their biological condition, to women. From this, there was the differentiation of behaviors and activities strictly feminine and male (MAJEROWICZ, 2014). Thus, according to Toro (2015), a binary division of gender identities has long normalized, being understood simply as an extension of the genital organ with which the person is born.

For many, the words sex and gender denote the same meaning, but when using the term sex, it is related to the biological aspects of the human being (penis/vagina and hormones). The concept of the word gender is associated with the customs, practices and values of the sociocultural environment to which the person is inserted, assigning different roles to being male and female (SCOTT, 1989; TORO, 2015; JESUS, 2012 and 2013). As Toro (2015, p. 112, our translation) ratifies "But, contrary to something natural, gender is a socially constructed concept". *

In addition to clarifying gender and gender, it is necessary to conceptualize the development of gender identity. Identity is a continuous construction process that has its initial phase of constitution even in childhood, from the family and social environment in which the child is inserted, related to the self-perception of each subject in the face of the demands received (BATTISTELA, 2009; JESUS, 2013). Battistela (2009, p. 03) elucidates that "in this process are language,

discourse and meaning as the main contributing means for its formation". In this perspective, stereotyped discourses, full of approval or disapproval about a manifestation of interest of the child, tends to influence it in the "right/wrong/normal/pathological" path of gender roles.

From the moment of the discovery of biological sex (penis/vagina), babies are already determined, by anatomical sex, to fit into one of certain genera.

** However, and contrary to something natural, gender is a socially constructed concept.*

From an early age they are taught/educated to follow the roles previously designated by their sex. In this sense, every child grows up listening that "this is a woman's thing, this is a man's thing, "which perpetuates the thought that gender is an attribute of human nature, innate, and not a social construction developed by cultural values. Thus, with the idea that gender is a social construction, disassociated from biological sex, and therefore behaviors, tastes, preferences and activities are learned throughout life, it should be up to the human being to know whether or not he can identify himself or not with certain patterns (JESUS, 2012).

According to the Protocol of Attendance to LGBT Demands of the Center to Combat Homophobia (PERNAMBUCO, 2012/2013), within the concept of identity, there are two classifications that welcome people before their recognition, they are: cisgender and transgender. The first refers to people who identify and recognize themselves with the gender roles granted to their biological sex, that is, men biologically with penises and identify with the male or women biologically with vaginas that are understood to be feminine. On the other hand, transgender, are those who are born anatomically in a sex, but identify with the opposite gender, that is, biologically male people, but recognize themselves in the feminine and people who were born biologically with female genital organs, but if they are victims with the male gender. According to Bento (2006) it is not the surgery that will make him a man/woman, but his vision before his body.

Identification with gender patterns of the opposite sex is not a characteristic that only manifests itself in adulthood. Often, this identity emerges even in childhood. However, for Western culture, thinking about childhood is to take as a certain adjustment of the child in a heteronormative pattern, in which she will follow all the behaviors and rule expects for their biological sex. Thus, the child already develops within an expectation and social pressure, without having the chance to be able to experience the various possibilities of games, behaviors, clothes, objects and etc., making it difficult to believe their identification with gender (FIORAVANTE, 2015).

In view of this, believing in the existence of transgender children is still taboo in today's society, since the process of invisibility and omission of this significant portion is recurrent. They are considered a threat to the sociocultural system, as they deconstruct normative patterns of gender. For childhood, besides being a phase in which, for some, sexuality does not exist, this non-identification with their biological sex would

also be something so complex and unusual that it would be outside the cognitive/conceptual scope of this childhood period (TORO, 2015).

What makes it significant in the low number of known cases of transgender children in the world is the lack of recognition on the part of an adult living with that child. Thus, in a culture in which the theme of transsexuality is still of ignorance or misconceived, few children can assume with the chances of being recognized by family members and closest adults (KENNEDY; HELLEN, 2010). Parents who support, listen to and support the physical and/or psychological changes of these children are found guilty of the process their child is going through and transgressors of traditional rules so rooted in culture. Rojo (2015, p.113, our translation) adds that "after several advances in relation to gender equality, the hostility of society that blames children and their parents for not adapting to gender norms is still frequent". **

The discovery of pregnancy imposes on parents' necessary transformations, both personal and social, as well as the changes in the physical structure of the home and careful the financial situation, in the preparation and receipt of this child. Insecurity, new responsibilities, joys, fears and sorrows accompany, to a greater or lesser extent, the pregnancy process (FREITAS; RABBIT; SILVA, 2007). It is known, however, that the discovery of biological sex is one of the highest expectations of this period for the creation of a mother and child relationship and is therefore loaded with important meanings, including the choice of name, pre-selected desires for each gender and the construction of the educational development of this child (PICCININI et al, 2004).

In men, the feeling of fatherhood, in many cases, is only realized after childbirth, reaching to be insignificant even after the coming of this son or daughter. The creation of affective and interactive bonds with children practically does not occur during pregnancy (FREITAS; RABBIT; SILVA, 2007). However, with women, the formation of the relationship with this baby occurs from the discovery. The maternal bond begins with the expected expectations for this child and it is in these first affective and intimacy contacts that will provide the basis for the post-pregnancy phase (PICCININI et al, 2004).

The process of the birth of the child is marked by emotional vulnerabilities due to the disruption of a process that lasted nine months and generated significant transformations in the intra- and interpersonal relationships of this mother. In childbirth, the baby ceased to be just an idealization of the mother's expectations to become a real and subjective child (BORSA, 2007).

In the first months after birth, the baby depends on this permanent affective closeness with the mother in order to have her biological, social and emotional growth. At the same time, this new mother uses this space to increase care and the relationship of intimacy with her son or daughter (ROSA et al, 2010). In the words of Freitas, Coelho e Silva (2007, p.138) "Thus, women, as mothers, are decisive agents in the sphere of social reproduction, because they are the ones who educate and pass on to their children the prevailing ideologies of society". For Borsa (2007, p. 317):

the baby, sending her messages while the baby, in turn, responds to the mother as the help of her own means. The mother-baby interaction appears as well as the prototype of all subsequent forms of exchange. In this relationship, words and phrases are often replaced by extraverbal messages such as gestures, vocalizations, smiles, etc.

Vygotsky, in his theory, establishes the influence of the sociocultural environment on the development of the child through the relationship between mother and son.

** Despite several advances in gender equality, the hostility of society that blames children and their parents for not adapting to traditional gender norms continues.*

That is, the mother is the intermediate element, the mediation for the child to learn and understand patterns of society, whether in values, in the rules of social coexistence, in communication or acquisition of language and knowledge.

This maternal intervention, mainly for language teaching, allows a better social interaction, resulting in a better relationship (LEMES; LEMES; GOLDFELD, 2006). Therefore, it is necessary to explain how the elaboration of meanings acquired in society develops, which can influence the understanding of a mother in the face of the *transgenderness* of her child.

Vygotsky took as a point of investigation the superior psychological functions. He in his study "will postulate that the superior cognitive functions, typically human, arise from the articulation and combination between the use of material instruments and the use of signs" (TOSTA, 2012, p. 59). Therefore, when the instruments are used, Vygotsky talks about a mediated alteration for objects in the external world, while the signs are an internal reorganization of the subject himself. The two concepts, however, need an external mediating element, which is realized by the instruments and cultural symbols/signs. Thus, man creates the tools that will help in the constitution of the superior functions of other human beings (TOSTA, 2012). In the case of a transgender child, even receiving an education marked by heteronormativity, their identification will continue by the characteristics that build the opposite gender. A boy, in his 3-4 years, when noticing objects that socially transform the mother into a woman, perceives an identification with these instruments and starts to use them in the intention of changing his external reality. Then, it transforms the dress, the heel or lipstick into tools to assert itself as also belonging to that genre.

On the other hand, the symbols/signs, although there is a social pattern, each family is also its own cultural organization, in which parents are the most responsible for teaching knowledge to their children, often dictating an already established social pattern about objects, behaviors and activities related to each gender.

In view of this, it is also necessary to clarify that the superior functions are not fixed and stagnant elements in the mind, because they are constructed dynamically in interaction with the other (OLIVEIRA, 1992). Through this relationship, especially that initiated with the mother-child dyad, the child is internalizing, through signs, such as language, the sides that are being taught. It is then that in the trans "mother-son relationship" that the signs of genders are established. Thus,

[...] The mother-baby interaction is now conceived as a process throughout which the mother comes into communication with

from the knowledge experienced intersubjectively, the child can internalize the knowledge and constitute the intersubjective sphere, that is, its superior functions. The mother is a key part of the internalization process for the transgender child because she acts as a mediator in obtaining knowledge that will be internalized, and may contribute or hinder the process. Thus, it is understood that there is a construction of mutual meanings between transgender mother-child, because it is understood that in addition to the mother participating effectively in the construction of the child's gender identity, she also constructs meanings about their identity (TOSTA, 2012; CAVALCANTI, 2005).

Mediation is the way in which the mother will subject to learning in order to be able to internalize knowledge. This process uses another concept, also created by Vygotsky, to help achieve mediation, known as a development zone. The Proximal/Potential Development Zone (ZDP) is the intermediate place, where an individual (the one who has the domain of activity) assists in the expansion of knowledge of the other (the one who is learning). To do so, it is necessary to know what the "apprentice" already has to know, called the Real Development Zone (ZDR) in order to contribute the new. Thus, the ZDP will provide instruments for the subject to be able to internalize the new learning (ZDP) in later acquired knowledge (ZDR) (BERNI, S/D; RABBIT, PISONI, 2012). Therefore, the mother is also responsible for mediate the knowledge to the child, in the ZDP, with which she acquired throughout her life, hoping as a result that the child will repeat her examples. This knowledge taught (and acquired) permeates the knowledge already built within a society, so the attempt of a heteronormative education of parents, and specifically the mother, for children can result in an internal conflict for a trans child.

In his studies, Vygotsky (2009) realized that the process of formation of concepts is carried out at the sociocultural level, which are internalized by the subjects throughout their development. Thus, from an understanding between people, a certain sound becomes loaded with a meaning or concept. It is known that by interacting with adults, from an early age child already develop and use various aspects of language. But only from adolescence do they achieve a more elaborate conceptual thinking, conscious and mature about what is spoken, its meanings and the best way to apply knowledge. The child who recognizes himself as trans still at 3/4 years of age, does not know and does not have abroad vocabulary to express his feelings, only says, in reduced sentences, that "something is wrong" and / or that "it was to have been born boy / girl". At this moment, the mother who has a previous understanding of the theme can reach more quickly to the construction of meaning of her child and try to help him in understanding this discourse, strengthening the affective bond between them.

As an effect, the transgender subject establishes a relationship with his body, within the limits, according to each stage of development and psychic functioning, interacting together with the reality in which he lives and how the culture of this place is organized. This culture acquired and internalized during the construction of man will be established in symbolic material and help in knowledge-subject mediation. The human being interacts according to the material existing

in the society in which he lives, having in his word, the main source of interaction (OLIVEIRA, 1992). Thus, the construction of the "mother-son relationship" will depend on the process of constitution of meanings for the mother, because it is the way of interacting with the mother, mainly through the speech, which evidences the consistency of this bond.

Human language is the main means of learning brought by Vygotsky (COELHO, PISONI, 2012). It consists of two functions: communication/social interaction and the generalization of thought. This is because, in addition to serving as a communicative exchange between people, language can be used in a generalized way, occurring in its process associations by categories that simplify their experience when the subjects share the same meanings (OLIVEIRA, 1992). The word transgender, for example, is loaded with unfavorable and pathological meanings that often disqualify the image of subjects who fall into this category. Thus, especially in societies guided by heterosexuality, there is a generalization of a concept about what it means to be a transgender individual. The mother, in turn, attributes specific meanings about her trans child, which comes loaded with affections and feelings that singularize the socially established relationship between mother-trans child.

The society in which this mother is inserted will have an important contribution in the constitution of the formation of the values that she will acquire and pass on to the son or daughter. Since, if its cultural environment is not organized to provide the necessary knowledge about the most diverse concepts of gender diversity, it makes it difficult to obtain this information by intermediaries (VYGOTSKY, 2009). Thus, social development, guided by the line of heteronormativity and binary gender division, makes the existence of transgender children a taboo (JESUS, 2012; ROJO, 2015). Thus, the challenges encountered in the construction of the relationship with the mother can be laborious and often disastrous for these children, if there has not previously been a good connection between the two (SOLOMON, 2013).

Transgender children, who from a very young age insist on not belonging to the biological sex that was born, may feel displaced and misunderstood when expressing their words. This is the result of a society that does not enable the active participation of the child in the formation of identity already in early childhood. Thus, discredit and lack of support of the mother can be harmful factors in the development of the "mother-son relationship", especially from the age of seven, when children are obliged to manifest the labeled obligations of each gender (SOLOMON, 2013; ROJO, 2015).

Being a mother of a transgender child is not an easy experience to assimilate at first, especially when there is a society that will judge and analyze any attitude that is taken. In addition, the mother undergoes extensive modifications, first in an attempt of her own to accept the condition, since initially the tendency is to face the phenomenon in the form of a pathology and therefore seek a cure. Depending on the elaboration that is made of the "mother-son relationship", coexistence and intimacy will make the acceptance of this identity of the child occur, further strengthening the relationship already built (SOLOMON, 2013).

3. Conclusions

In the development of the research, the construction of the trans “mother-son relationship” within a sociocultural perspective of Vygotsky was analyzed. Since, the discovery of pregnancy, a mother has undergone physical, emotional, professional and social transformations that contribute to a fanciful expectation of her in relation to her child. This baby, still imaginary, is already wrapped in the roles and social rules that structure the society in which the mother is inserted.

Thus, thinking of a society guided by heteronormativity and based on the idea that men and women have predefined roles and roles, it is easy to come to the conclusion that parents are not/are prepared to deal with demands that run away from this standard. Even more so if this claim comes in childhood, stage of development that is often not taken into account what is said or expressed.

The mother, as a mediating element of the child relationship and social context, will transmit to the child, through of signs and symbols, all the concepts that were acquired and internalized by her in its development process. When it comes to a theme still seen as a social taboo, it can initially create resistance due to the lack of information needed to compose what it is experiencing, affecting the relationship it is establishing with the child.

Therefore, in the event of a healthy and constructive relationship between mother and trans child, it is necessary that this mother is willing to first listen to the requests that are emerging from her child. It will also be important to seek information that in the common sense of the socio-historical context is not introduced to our knowledge. Finally, in order for affective bonds to be strengthened, this mother will need to understand and accept the child's gender identity process.

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