

The Sexual Division of Labour in the Countryside from a Young Peasant Perspective

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Abstract: Based on young peasant narratives, this article analyses the sexual division of labour in rural areas, focusing on tensions produced by generational differences. Data obtained from four stages of pedagogical workshops (2015-2016), using the life history methodology with 150 young people from two schools based in agrarian reform settlements in Paraná, show the impacts of gendered labour on the process of peasant youth socialization. The study provides evidence of generational conflicts in a shifting context, as well as the pedagogical and cultural impact stemming from access to systematic knowledge and debates on the theme, especially, the revision of prejudices and the shift of discourses, practices and attitudes towards gender equality, notably, through the agency of young peasant women.

Keywords: Gender; Generation; Youth; Labour; Peasant culture.

A divisão sexual do trabalho no campo sob a perspectiva da juventude camponesa

Resumo: A partir de narrativas juvenis, neste artigo analisa-se a divisão sexual do trabalho em áreas rurais, com foco nas tensões produzidas pelas diferenças geracionais. Os dados, obtidos a partir da metodologia da história de vida em quatro etapas de oficinas pedagógicas (2015-2016) realizadas com 150 jovens de duas escolas de assentamentos de reforma agrária no Paraná, revelam os impactos do trabalho genderizado no processo de socialização da juventude camponesa. O estudo evidencia conflitos geracionais num contexto em mudança, bem como o impacto pedagógico e cultural advindo do acesso ao conhecimento sistemático e da problematização da temática, sobretudo, a revisão de preconceitos e a mudança de discursos, práticas e atitudes em direção à promoção da igualdade de gênero, notadamente, a partir da agência das jovens do campo.

Palavras-chave: gênero; geração; trabalho; juventude; cultura camponesa.

Introduction

Gender, in conjunction with other pillars, such as class and race, constitutes the organisation of society and labour relations. This study is an integral part of the international project *Gender and education in rural areas in Brazil* – involving collaborative research between the Federal University of Paraná and Queen Mary University of London, with the support of the British Academy/Newton Trust (2015-2017)¹ – and analyses the sexual division of labour in rural areas, with emphasis on the tensions produced by generational differences, as well as attitudes towards gender equality. The analytical basis comprised four stages of educational workshops with young people from two pilot-schools in Agrarian Reform settlement areas in Paraná: *Colégio Estadual do Campo Contestado* (state school), located in the Contestado Settlement, in the municipality of Lapa² (students from

¹ Besides promoting the inclusion of gender on the school curriculum, this Project investigated the generational differences and tensions in relation to two axes: gender diversity and the sexual division of labor. It was developed in collaboration with the Full Professor from the Queen Mary University of London, Else R. P. Vieira.

² On this settlement, where 108 families were placed in 1999 as a result of the land struggle, more than 50% produce utilising agro-ecological standards. The settlement houses the *Escola Latino-Americana de Tecnologia em Agroecologia*

grades 8 and 9 in elementary and secondary school) and *Colégio Estadual do Campo Iraci Salete Strosak* (state school), located in the Marcos Freire Settlement, in Rio Bonito do Iguacu³ (secondary and teacher training students).

The premise of this study is a finding that extrapolated the scope of my doctoral thesis (Sônia SCHWENDLER, 2013) on the sexual division of labour in rural areas and women's emancipation through the political struggle for land: the distinct assimilation of cultural changes by the different generations in the rural context. These changes, which affect young people more significantly as they are more educated and exposed to more collaborative gender relations, have created generational tensions regarding the unequal gender relations within farming families. The hypothesis proposed was that the younger generation of peasant women, who have greater access to education and have organised themselves around the issues of gender within the social movement in which they participate, have challenged their persistent role of domestic subordination. These generational tensions and differences are analysed in this article from the perspective of the young peasant population in the rural schools.

Young people in the peasant population, conceived as *social and political actors* based on the processes of social interaction and the configurations in which they are immersed (Elisa CASTRO, 2009), are inserted in a globalised world, with access to education, communication technologies and connected to the urban space. Nevertheless, they represent a "category marked by the relations of social hierarchy" (CASTRO, 2009, p. 182), in which being a young peasant brings with it the weight of a hierarchical position of submission, through a reality characterised by the difficult living conditions inherent to the production and reproduction of small family-based farming activities (CASTRO, 2005), especially considering the advance of neo-liberal policies in rural areas. In this context, social movements have become the arena for the organization of young people as political players, which has contributed to a reordering of power relations and, consequently, to their legitimisation as social player in the processes of production, reproduction and transformation in rural Brazil. (CASTRO, 2009).

Being young in countryside areas also entails facing the hierarchies linked to the patriarchal culture, which impacts the living conditions of these young people more significantly. Research carried out by Vilênia Aguiar and Valmir Stropasolas (2010) with young farmers from West Santa Catarina indicates that "the different situations potentially susceptible to manifestations of generational conflicts between family members are marked by gender inequality" (p. 175). Gender and generation therefore constitute fundamental categories for analysis given the unequal distribution of resources and power within the sphere of family and social organisation (Shahra RAZAVI, 2009).

In order to understand the generational differences and their relation to questions of gender from the perspective of the young peasants in countryside areas, we used the life story methodology (Paul THOMPSON, 1988; Alessandro PORTELLI, 2006; Jacques MARRE, 1991), which enables an in-depth analysis of the life trajectories of these young people, as well as their perceptions of family members' lives and the relations established among themselves. "They are relations linked to the social and group structure and, moreover, the idea of rearrangement and reappropriation of the social, which the individual performs as singular unit in his/her account" (MARRE, 1991, p. 91). This analysis was aided by ethical protocols and a life story methodology that we developed in the doctoral thesis (SCHWENDLER, 2013), geared towards gender studies in rural areas. This methodology was redirected, in the current study, to the collection of youth narratives through collective interaction through four stages of educational workshops. The workshops were held from November 2015 to June 2016, with an average of 150 students at each stage,⁴ in the 14 to 18 years age range. Based on documentaries, songs and advertisements that broached the sexual division of labour, students were encouraged to debate and dramatise their family stories and their perceptions regarding gender issues in the area of labour. Furthermore, using this debate and the access to new information, the young people produced didactic resources to be incorporated into the school curriculum. (SCHWENDLER; Else VIEIRA, 2016).

Student narratives were transcribed and analysed in the singularity of each space and stage of the workshops and cross-referenced with the categories that emerged from the synthetic

(Latin American School of Agro-ecology - 2005) and one of the classes for the Licentiate course in Countryside Education of the Federal University of Paraná, Coastal Sector (2014). The Contestado Rural Municipal School (2009) and Contestado Rural State College (2011) were implemented due to the struggle of the community itself for the right to education in and of the countryside.

³This settlement, where around six hundred families live, is the result of one of the largest occupations of land in Latin America (1996), on which approximately three thousand families occupy one of the biggest estates – the *Fazenda da Madeireira Giacomet-Marodin* estate, currently *Madeiraira Araupel*. One thousand, five hundred families were settled in part of this estate, consisting of the settlements, *Ireno Alves dos Santos* (1997) and *Marcos Freire* (1998). *Colégio Iraci Salete Strosak* (1999) became the base school (2003) for the itinerant schools, located in the agrarian reform encampments of Paraná state.

⁴In general, the students participated in the four stages and were organized into four distinct groups by stage. In each school, the workshops were held in the classes where the students studied, with an Informed Consent Form duly signed by the legal representatives, as approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Queen Mary University of London (QMERC2015/76).

totality of the set of accounts and debates completed in the two schools. “We aimed to learn the meaning of the experience as a totality of the life stories and each one as singularised experience related to their more ‘universal’ and ‘profound’ levels” (MARRE, 1991, p. 134). The intersection of the narratives by categories was fundamental to our dialectic understanding of these young people’s views on the sexual division of labour in the countryside and our analysis of it in the light of theoretical references on labour, gender and generation in the context of peasant farming.

The study examined the tensions and differences in relation to the sexual division of labour in rural areas from the perspective of the young peasant population. The data gathered elucidated the impacts of gendered labour in the socialisation/training of these young people, as well as the conflicts created by the generational differences and the distinct gender regimes. The study also investigated the educational impact produced by student access to systematic knowledge on the theme during the educational workshops.⁵ Access to new knowledge and further investigation of the sexual division of labour in the context of rural areas, through the educational workshops, produced conceptual, cultural and pedagogical impacts, particularly in the revision of gender prejudices and stereotypes as well as attitudes relating to the promotion of gender equality, especially those based on the agency of the young students.

Young peasant narratives on the gendering of labour in their families

Studies of the peasant population have contributed significantly to our understanding of the family’s role and its labour relations in the countryside economy. However, the idea of the family as an indiscriminate unit of analysis and neutral in terms of gender has been questioned in recent decades by feminist studies, considering the relations of hierarchy and inequality (Bina AGARWAL, 1994; Carmen DEERE; Magdalena LEÓN, 2001; RAZAVI, 2009). In this context, the conception of family as a simultaneous space of cooperation and conflict (Amartya SEN, 1990) contributes to capturing the essence of the tensions and contradictions inherent to family organisation.

The data collected from the workshops held with the young people reveal that, although there are significant levels of cooperation in the peasant agriculture space, the sexual division of labour and the naturalisation/invisibility of the woman’s work are noteworthy, with palpable effects on the younger generations. Studies by Beatriz Heredia (1979) on peasantry highlight the sexual division of labour as responsible for producing patterns of behaviour that are built on a binary and sexed order that not only differentiates but also introduces a hierarchy to the work along the lines of the sex/gender system. Historically and socially modulated, the sexual division of labour has the characteristics of “priority designation of men to the productive sphere and women to the reproductive sphere and, simultaneously, the appropriation by men of the functions with greater added social value” (Danièle KERGOAT; Helena HIRATA, 2007, p. 599). It is organised according to two principles: separation (men’s work and women’s work) and hierarchy (men’s work is “worth” more than women’s work). These principles are cemented on a process of legitimisation, the naturalist ideology, in which gender is reduced to biological sex and social practices, the sexed “social roles” linked to the natural destiny of the species (KERGOAT; HIRATA, 2007).

For Heredia (1979), male-female opposition goes beyond a simple division of tasks. It is expressed in the house-farming opposition, which marks out the labour and non-labour space in the field, distinguishing between the male and female positions regarding this division. The activities carried out in peasant farming, in so far as they allow for the production of effective goods for family consumption, are considered labour, unlike those linked to the house, which do not receive this recognition. This opposition also defines and reinforces the roles assigned to each member of the group and that are expressed in the spheres of authority. “Hence, the goods and other socially recognised objects are classified as female or male and are also tiered as a consequence” (HEREDIA, 1979, p. 26). The division of labour by sex/gender, which assigns labour called “productive” to men and “reproductive” to women, also exempts the men from domestic work, since the house is institutionalised as the woman’s natural space (Carmen SILVA; Ana Paula PORTELLA, 2006), as testimony from students in the countryside school:

Mother and father work together in the field, arriving home at noon, when we’ve already gone to school. My mum prepares the food and asks my dad: “Wash these dishes please”. “No, I’m tired”. So he is tired, but she isn’t. She was working with him and she’s not tired. I don’t think that’s right (Student, Lapa, afternoon, stage II).

It is interesting to note how the younger generations, particularly the young people, take a critical position regarding the family set-up that reproduces the patriarchal gender regimes (Sylvia WALBY, 1997; Susie JACOBS, 2010; SCHWENDLER, 2013) that contribute to the double shifts of the

⁵ In the second, third and fourth stages, students also evaluated the impacts of the educational workshops in terms of learnings, gender awareness and change in attitudes.

women. These family arrangements are often reinforced by the women themselves, since they were educated within these patterns of organising work and life, these gender *habitus* that are culturally structured, especially when introjected unconsciously. Pierre Bourdieu (1990) defines *habitus* as “a system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organise practices and representations” (p. 53).

In families from older times, my mother told me that a wife had to always follow her husband. When he went out to the fields she would go with him, but when he got home, she prepared the lunch while he drank chimarrão (maté). She said it was women's work [...], and she had to be at her husband's side (Student, Rio Bonito do Iguaçu [RBI], morning, stage I).

Like when I'm with my mum and she says: "Let your father rest, he was working all morning in the fields". But I think he could help out a bit because there are days when I help him in the fields and then I help my mum when I get home as well (Student, RBI, morning, stage I).

In general, as per the literature (HEREDIA, 1979; Gema ESMERALDO, 2013) and accounts by students during workshops, the women and the young people participate in field work, considered a productive labour space. Nevertheless, despite the long working day, they are not working, but rather helping. This demonstrates that the insertion of each family member in the house and/or in the field, as Heredia (1979) argues, varies not only according to the sex they belong to, but also the life cycle of each individual. As an inherent part of the patriarchal culture, the labour category is viewed as a prerogative reserved for the head of the family, tied to the decision-making power over how, where and when to plant, and how and who to sell to (Arlene RENK; Rosana BADALOTTI; Silvana WINCKLER, 2010).

Helping isn't much it seems. But if it's the person's responsibility, then that person working in the field is higher up. But it's the same thing for whoever is out there. The two of them are working, but the efforts of one are downgraded (Student, RBI, afternoon, stage I).

It is worth highlighting the differentiated and hierarchical value of labour in the symbolic peasantry order. Productive labour, which generates income and constitutes the male authority and identity “requires female labour to be omitted and made invisible by labelling it as help in the field” (ESMERALDO, 2013, p. 240). The term “help”, strongly internalised in the students' speech, was often conceived, particularly in the first workshop, as a simple sharing of family work, a practice of mutual helping-out, as shown in the account of one student (Lapa, afternoon, stage I): “When my father gets back from the field, I have already finished cleaning. And then he helps me when my mother isn't there, or when she is there he always helps too. She helps outside the house as well”.

However, this vision of the countryside family unit as a unified and harmonious space, present in studies on peasantry, hides the significant differences between the economic positions of the man, woman and children within a patriarchal family (Nancy FOLBRE, 1986). The activities performed by the women in family agriculture, identified as help, are “part of a broader system of social representations and values that express gender inequalities” (SILVA; PORTELLA, 2006, p. 134). As part of the same process, domestic work when performed by men is also viewed as help since it is removed from their productive activities, which are seen as their assignment. Nevertheless, unlike the women, as per Silva and Portella (2006), in general, the men only rarely work in the domestic space, bearing in mind the social value and identification of this labour as being “women's chores”. In addition, domestic and care work is frequently viewed as light and easy.

Sometimes, the housework that women do is more tiring than working in the field the whole day. Men think that women don't get tired from doing “light work”, which can wear you out more than working half the day in the field, weeding or clearing (Student, RBI, morning, stage II).

The notion of “heavy” associated with the men and “light”, with the women, is a social construction, in which the type of labour is identified by the gender of the person doing it (SCHWENDLER; Lúcia Amaranta THOMPSON, 2017). In a comparative study between different regions of Brazil, Maria Ignez Paulilo (1987) demonstrated that the agricultural labour performed by women was generally considered “lighter” than the “heavy” labour done by men, even though it involved the same amount of time and effort as well as the same tasks, which differ from one region to another in relation to the subject executing them. Moreover, this “light” labour, conceived as “help”, which produces goods and services for the market and for family consumption, is identified as “reproductive” labour, of lesser social value, as an extension of domestic labour (SCHWENDLER, 2013). This ranking has made the economic participation of women and young people in peasant agriculture invisible, hindering their access to public policies. In contrast, research indicates that the economic participation of women in peasant agriculture has been essential to ensure food sovereignty, reduce the risk of poverty due to the appreciation of family well-being, and guarantee biodiversity in the field (DEERE; LEÓN, 2001; Nalu FARIA, 2009; Christiane CAMPOS, 2011).

The students show how much this differentiation of labour value stands out in the reality of the field, which contributes to the subordination of women, particularly in intra-family relations and

decisions on income, apparently the result of “productive labour”. Silva and Portella (2006) argue that it is “in the sphere of decision-making, the prerogative of those with the most power, where the inequality between men and women is most clearly expressed” (p. 140). In this context, for the authors, the men’s control of the property’s income constitutes one of the pillars that sustains their dominion over the women. One of the students recounts that in her house it is her father who decides on the income based on his priorities: *“It’s a war to buy shampoo in our house. [...] He economises too much. He doesn’t let me near it. Because Dad thinks it’s better to have food in your belly than go hungry”* (Student, Lapa, afternoon, stage I). She adds that her mother often accepts it because *machismo* is very strong in the family. *“Mum doesn’t like it much, but she has to put up with it”*. This testimony reveals the gender and generation hierarchies and the generational conflicts in countryside family organisation. Furthermore, according to Agarwal (1994), it is evident how much the bargaining power of each family member interferes with the arrangements assumed by the peasant family, due to the conflicts of interest and the different perceptions of demands.

Their status as juvenile assigns young people with a subordinate subject role in the family group hierarchies (Helena ABRAMO, 2005; CASTRO, 2005). They recognise the importance of having their own income, which would provide them with autonomy and a greater participation in family decision-making processes.⁶ However, many students who participated in the workshops stressed that it is generally the father who makes the decisions on where to invest income, which also provokes generational conflicts. One of the students emphasises how much control of income is maintained by the men, which weakens the women’s right to participate in decisions. *“Nowadays, when you look at it, it still often ends up being the man, [who decides]. But there are contradictions, since the woman also has rights”* (Student, RBI, afternoon, stage I). The students’ accounts show that where there is greater cooperation in the labour, the same occurs in the distribution of income and in the decision on how to manage it.

I don’t think it should be the woman or the man alone who manage the income, but rather the two of them. I’ll use my house as an example: it’s not only my dad who works or my mum, so they both have rights since they both work. It’s like this: there is the farming, but it’s not just my father who decides. At the end of the month, they both decide what is paid. So I don’t think it’s either one; the two have to decide together (Student, RBI, morning, stage I).

This student’s account describes a family experience of collaboration in the administration of property and decisions on income, emphasising the right to gender equality based on the conditions under which the mother and father both work. In this sense, young peasant people, especially the young women, criticise the invisibility of labour performed by women and the culture of superiority attached to men’s labour based on gender lines. By addressing the perception of the sexual division of labour based on family arrangements, young peasant people reveal the generational tensions and differences in the form of viewing peasant family organisation in relation to the social value of the work and participation in income and decision-making, besides the reproduction of traditional patterns of gender relations from the socialisation process.

The impact of the sexual division of labour in the education of the young peasant population and generational conflicts

The peasant youth population is part of a family unit that also acts as a unit of agricultural production in which the know-how, values, rules and processes of labour are socialised. In this scenario, “the labour process is constituted in the privileged space of socialisation for younger generations in the logic of labour and agricultural production” (Nilson WEISHEIMER, 2015, p. 38). The transmission of knowledge to the labour “is more than the transmission of techniques: it involves values, the construction of roles etc.” (Ellen WOORTMANN; Klaas WOORTMANN, 1997, p. 11). In this context, it is important to bear in mind that the division of chores and the hierarchisation of the work’s social value by the sex/gender system have significant effects on the education of the younger generations. On the other hand, they provoke generational conflicts and possible transformations, since the young people, besides growing up in a distinct historical period, are part of different gender regimes that are changing along with the transformations in agriculture, in tandem with the influence of a globalised world, the access to information and schooling, the formation of gender, self-organisation, participation in social movements and experiences with more collaborative practices.

In their accounts, the students reveal that cooperation is integral to some family arrangements. *“Everything is divided in our house; one day my brother is in the field and I’m at home, and the next day it’s the opposite”* (Student, Lapa, afternoon, stage IV). *“In our house, it’s well distributed. At lunchtime, one person does the pasta, another does the rice, another does the frying and another*

⁶ In the Contestado Settlement, various young workshop participants claimed to have their own income generating projects, such as the production of strawberries, vegetable garden or *dulce de leche*.

prepares the salad. It's well spread out, really. And then everyone goes to the field" (Student, Lapa, night, stage II). Nevertheless, it was evident that there is often a reproduction, in the daily routine of the younger generations, of a labour division model, albeit with a degree of collaboration, which accompanies gender lines, in which the responsibility for taking care of others and performing domestic chores falls to the young women and not to the young men.

The students described how the older daughters participate in field work, which is a source of income for the family, as well as being obliged to complete domestic and care tasks. *"Because the responsibility falls on the eldest: taking care of the younger siblings, cleaning the house, washing clothes, tending to the yard and sometimes helping to pick vegetables"* (Student, Lapa, afternoon, stage I). *"He [the brother] doesn't do that much. Mum and Dad let him off more. I have to do all the things he doesn't. I'm expected to mind my sister. He doesn't take care of her."* (Student, Lapa, afternoon, stage II). This unequal expectation of the parents in relation to their sons and daughters contributes to a process that naturalises the division of labour and its social value according to sex. *"They [the brothers] say: 'You do it! It's your job, not ours! Our job is to work in the field, not here at home!'. He puts all the weight on my shoulders"* (Student, Lapa, afternoon, stage I).

The experience of collaborative relations that supersedes the sexual division of labour in peasant families is still in its incipient stage, even after the completion of the workshops, and is being led by the young women in particular, as shown by the testimony, bearing in mind the cultural *habitus*, as well as the resistance among young men to the changes proposed. The workshops with the students confirm what was already found in other studies (SCHWENDLER, 2003; AGUIAR; STROPASOLAS, 2010): the socialisation of the boys is mostly structured on the production space, property management and sale of products, conceived as "the outside", while the socialisation of the girls prioritises the domestic, or "the inside", even though they also participate in field activities while the former "help" at home. In this sense, it may be argued that the young people are building social knowledge, a gendered cultural capital, which is constituted as symbolic capital (BOURDIEU, 1990), contributing to the reproduction of discourses and practices grounded on the sexual division of labour. The students highlight the weight of culture in this education process for the younger generations.

I see this question of culture because in my house none of my brothers goes near the sink, the cooker or anything like that. My mum and I have to do it. And why? Because my mum never taught them to wash dishes. She didn't do it because that was the way it was for her, and [...] at that time it was the women who did it. So it was passed on and I think now it's changing bit by bit, but I wanted to talk about culture, which is already there for many years (Student, RBl, morning, stage I).

So I think it is still present in our young people's reality. Why? Because there are lots of girls who go milking, and go weeding, y'know! And the boys don't. There are many boys who say "no way am I washing dishes". It's present, yes. It's a way of being brought up that our parents taught us. And if we don't change it by teaching our sons that they can wash dishes and do household chores as the girls do, then it will keep going for a long time (Student, RBl, morning, stage I).

Gender stereotypes also end up contributing to the boys having more difficulty assuming domestic chores as their own, because they would be occupying a place that is not theirs. The most relevant is that their masculinity would be questioned, based on hegemonic standards. It is what Robert Connell (2005) identifies as hegemonic masculinities, from the cultural hegemony theory of Antônio Gramsci. Hegemonic masculinities are configured based on the practices that legitimise the position of male superiority and justify the subordination of women and other marginalised forms of being a man (CONNELL, 2005).

I was already washing dishes when I was a child, and I was challenged on it. But it weighed on my conscience that I had to help my mum, my parents. But other kids didn't see it like that. But I wasn't bothered. (Student, Lapa, night, stage II).

Men generally feel that prejudice or concern. If they are at home and are washing the dishes and someone comes in, a neighbour, and sees them holding a squeegee, or dusting [...]. But it's about the conscience of each person and the education they receive as well. This can be changed; it's just a matter of wanting to (Student, RBl, afternoon, stage I).

What takes place here is an association between performing household chores and sexual orientation, so that the boy or man is called a little girl or little woman pejoratively, as highlighted by certain students during the workshops held and shown in the two theatre pieces created by the students. It is also worth noting the control of the body and punishment as forms of educating the younger generations in the hegemonic and heteronormative standards of gender – in which heterosexuality, as per Judith Butler (1990), is constituted as a social norm that governs language, social and institutional arrangements.

A lot of it comes from the parents. For example, in our house, the boys can't stay at home helping our mother since they have to go to the fields with Dad. If they wanted to stay at home, they would be beaten. And we have to help our mother with the house work. [...] Dad has to have lunch ready

when he gets home. The parents are the ones teaching this. And it is passed down to the next generation (Student, RBI, afternoon, stage IV).

The hierarchies of gender and generation demarcate the division of labour in the field – a standard that is (re)produced within families, based on certain social practices and the legitimacy of male authority. In general, the students demonstrated the difficulty the boys have in assuming collaborative labour relations, when societal culture reinforces the gender scripts, such as the behaviours and spaces adapted to each sex which, according to Butler (1988), are learned and reiterated from performativity – a reiterative and citational practice through which the discourse produces the effects it designates. However, it is in the subversion of the repetition that the possibilities for gender transformations reside. In this sense, hegemonic masculinities end up being modified because of contesting masculinities, in tandem with the agency of women and the transformations in the societal culture (CONNELL; James MESSERSCHMIDT, 2013).

Another significant finding that was mentioned by the young people during the four workshops held in the two schools involved, as well as in the theatrical piece that the students put on, is the idea of the boys' superiority to the girls. *"Because my brother is like that. I'll be cleaning and he comes in with dirty feet, and I say: 'Out!' And he refuses to leave"* (Student, Lapa, afternoon, stage I). This attitude is learned in the family socialisation space.

My mum goes and does something; cleans the house, and my dad doesn't respect it. And then when we say it to him, he answers Ah, I can make a mess and you have to clean it'. And that starts a row with him. We argue a lot. Not only about work, but also about going out because girls have to stay at home. If you go out, God help you, you know? But not the boys, they can go anywhere they want. (Student, RBI, morning, stage II).

The gender hierarchy and male power exercised over women contribute to the lack of autonomy and freedom of the young women: they feel hard done by due to the inequality of treatment they receive compared to their brothers, seeing as there is a moral judgement passed on them by family and community. Although the condition of youth in the peasant family space represents a social position of subordination, the young person's situation is aggravated. It is unfavourable in the sphere of work, in the power to make decisions related to the property, negotiations and income, in the autonomy and freedom to come and go, in their sexuality and in leisure (AGUIAR; STROPASOLAS, 2010).

Going out in the public space without criticism is still a male privilege. One student associates it with *machismo*, the superiority of her father in decisions. *"My dad is very sexist. Ask my friends, he doesn't let me go anywhere"* (Student, Lapa, afternoon, stage I). Castro stresses the weight of the paternal authority that creates "mechanisms for the surveillance and control of young people through family relations and other social networks, particularly women, which extend to the spaces they frequent" (CASTRO, 2009, p. 193). As such, it is worth emphasising that the relative spatial isolation of peasant families, the combination of productive and domestic tasks in a single family unit and the control of the woman's sexuality contribute in an articulated manner to the (re)production of patriarchal gender regimes in the countryside (JACOBS, 2010).

The testimony reveals how the women themselves, who grew up within the more patriarchal gender regimes, reinforce this difference in treatment and educate their sons and daughters according to these normative standards. *"In our house, my sister asks Mum if she can go out, and Mum sometimes says no. The boys just say, 'I'm going out Mum', and my mother says nothing"* (Student, RBI, afternoon, stage II).

Despite the resistance and generational conflicts that these asymmetries produce, it was noted that some girls conform to the situation they find themselves in, seeing little chance of change. However, in general, the young women are critical of the older generations, especially their mothers, who have internalised the notion that domestic labour is the woman's responsibility. The female students want to break away from naturalised spaces being viewed as women's territory. They highlight the right of choice, freedom and the need to transform traditional gender standards. *"A woman's place is not in front of the cooker preparing food and washing clothes. I think this is really harsh because we all suffer from prejudice every day. [...] Our place is any place, we can choose each day"* (Student, RBI, afternoon, stage II).

Despite the right to choose, there is an evident prejudice against the women who wish to break away from these sociocultural roles, since the traditional sexual division of labour pervades the imagined family unit. There is an expectancy that the woman needs to learn how to carry out domestic work to serve the family and her husband; otherwise, she is discriminated against in society for not fulfilling her role of mother and wife, even becoming a victim of domestic violence⁷ as one student declares: *"I have a cousin who didn't learn how to do things and they told her: 'If you don't learn it today, then tomorrow your husband will beat you'. [...] I think this is really sexist"* (Student, RBI, afternoon, stage II).

⁷Despite its invisibility, violence against women is strongly present in the countryside context.

Studies by Walby (1997) demonstrate that women who adapted their lives to a domestic gender regime have different resources and vulnerabilities compared to those who grew up within other parameters, in more public gender regime. Even while facing gender segregation, the latter will have different conceptions and values, including political agendas and priorities. The schooling of the younger generations, and access to information, have been identified in testimony as fundamental to changing the position of women in society and in the organisation of work. The students stated that previously girls were introduced to domestic labour earlier and that nowadays, with the widening of access to education, they end up having better conditions than their older sisters, who often left home to work as domestic servants, as a way of helping to support the family. According to them, domestic service as a job reproduces the naturalisation of the place and social role of the woman. Paradoxically, this is seen by the young peasant women as a means of breaking away from the traditional relations and hierarchies of gender and generation, which contribute to the phenomenon of an ageing peasant population and the masculinisation of agriculture, as research shows (RENK; BADALOTTI; WINCKLER, 2010).

The restructuring of gender affects women differently according to their class and ethnicity, but also their family organisation and the generational differences (WALBY, 1997). The students show the tensions that appear in families due to the generational issue, in which distinct gender regimes clash. *"At that time, families were conservative and it's for that reason, I think. Putting myself in their place, in the way they lived then, I think it would be very difficult to engage like we do now"* (Student, Lapa, night, stage II). The young people who have access to different spaces and ideas – through school, media, contact with urban life, involvement with social movements – challenge the patriarchal culture that is present in their families, enabling the creation of new practices and socio-cultural *habitus*. For Bourdieu (1990), *habitus* follows changes in society, but within the limits of continuity. These changes, however, are implemented on the limits of "a model of family agriculture that is patriarchal, and reproduces hierarchical values, principally in the question of gender and generation" (Catarina VIEIRA, 2015). Celecina Sales (2010), in a study of young women on the settlements, also confirms that their participation in the social struggle, in addition to an increase in schooling, has contributed to their detachment from the land and their opposition to the traditional representations of what it means to be a peasant woman. Their participation in the public sphere contributes to subverting male standards for the organisation of labour and social struggle.

Student narratives in the workshops reveal generational conflicts, as well as the difficulty they have in discussing the sexual division of labour with parents who were educated in another gender regime, since this involves set values, power relations, and confronting paternal authority, especially. *"Dad doesn't help out in the house and looks at me cross and says 'here I am working all day, supporting all of you'. And then you say that Mum does the same thing. [...] They can't bring themselves to discuss this within the family"* (Student, Lapa, night, stage I). According to Stropasolas (2005), "it is exactly in the realm of gender and generation relations that one of the main factors of tension resides and, at the same time, it can redefine values and identities in family agriculture" (p. 15).

Awareness of gender and its impact on the discourses and attitudes towards equality

The educational workshops held with students on the sexual division of labour demonstrated the differences and generational conflicts that permeate the peasant family arrangements, clearly marked by the gender asymmetries. Moreover, student testimony revealed the process for constructing/reproducing the discourses and *habitus* of gender, which primarily occur in the family space, where gender codes and meanings are transmitted between generations, through norms and practices. As per Sylvia Chant and Nikki Craske (2003), the family, as place of socialisation, may be constituted in a space that produces the sexual division of labour and inequalities, but also resistance and negotiation.

The study showed the importance of empowering young people, especially young women, so that resistance to cultural standards of gender and the negotiation of collaborative arrangements can take place. Empowerment here is from a constructive viewpoint, which implies the use of *power to* achieve something without the need for domination, the *power with* the collective, and the power that comes *from inside* the subject, based on a critical comprehension of how subordination may be (re)produced, but also challenged (DEERE; LEÓN, 2001). In this process, it is worth noting the new knowledge and formation of a gender equality awareness as crucial factors to the demystification of the cultural *habitus* of gender. Studies by Else Vieira (2015) confirm that the conceptual impact, produced by access to new knowledge, is intrinsically tied to changes in culture and attitude, the rethinking of mistaken conceptions and the alteration of social practices.

Although the theme of the sexual division of labour was not a new phenomenon for many, unlike gender diversity (another project axis), workshop evaluations highlight various learnings, including the revision of concepts. The elements most emphasised by the students⁸ were respect,

equal rights, and collaborative work: *"I learned that people must respect each other", "That everything must be equal and everyone has the same worth"* (Students, Lapa, afternoon, stage IV), *"That we must respect the wishes of each person for his/her life, and women must have the same rights as men"* (Student, Lapa, night, stage IV). They highlight the importance of collaboration, since *"everything improves with the division of labour"* (RBI, afternoon, stage III). For some, this conclusion was reached in the family, perhaps through a link to a social movement, arising out the protagonism of the peasant women (SCHWENDLER, 2015): *"Because here we learn from a young age to share the work and not be prejudiced"* (Student, Lapa, afternoon, stage III).

Education is seen by students as a predominant factor in cultural change. *"People are changing because there is more schooling now and we are learning"* (Student, RBI, morning, stage I). Testimony revealed that the students with access to the gender debate start to question the sexual division of labour and gender asymmetries within their families and contribute to the formation of new family arrangements. In the workshops, they felt free to debate the relations they are involved in. Nevertheless, they found it more difficult to have this debate in the family and community space, because of their young age and the patriarchal gender regimes present in the countryside. *"It's an issue from way back, from our grandparents' time, since it is a culture that is difficult to let go"* (Student, Lapa, night, stage III). Besides this, *"the people from my community wouldn't pay any attention to me because I'm just a little girl to them"* (Student, RBI, morning, stage IV).

The naturalization of dividing tasks according to sexist assumptions, *machismo* and unequal pay between men and women also emerge as elements that hinder discussion of the theme in these spaces: *"Many people don't understand. The men say that the woman's place is at home minding the kids and not working outside"* (Student, RBI, afternoon, stage III), *"Many people think women are not capable of working. They think that only men know how to work. But many women are winners, take care of their children, do domestic labour, and at the same time work"* (Student, RBI, morning, stage III). It is noticeable that even though the student challenges the sexual division of labour, her discourse demonstrates a conception of labour as synonymous with production.

In general, the testimony showed that they have revised their concepts in relation to the value of work, which provides evidence of the workshops' cultural and educational impact. One student's testimony reflects the importance of the workshops in raising gender awareness: *"At least for me, it really changed some of my ways of thinking. Before you came here, I thought in a certain way. For example, women's work; after I saw that it isn't like that"* (Student, RBI, afternoon, stage II). Another student stated: *"I thought it was normal for a man to have his work and a woman to have hers, but I saw that they need to respect each other"* (RBI, afternoon, stage III). It is interesting to note how students denaturalise the common view when they have access to critical reflection on the theme. The following opinion of a student in workshop II shows this learning, when differentiating work from help.

Everything is work. It's just that society constructed this. When it involves light things, it's help. The woman only helps. And the man works. It's like this: housework is the woman's obligation. And it's as if it doesn't count as work that produces income (Student, Lapa, night, stage II).

Another student highlights:

The education we had in school was essential for us to start the change at home and begin to think about it and understand too, because before having these workshops in the school, I didn't understand gender relations (Student, Lapa, night, stage IV).

The student also stresses that while some people absorb the debates and change their attitudes, the process is slower for others, or often does not happen at all, demonstrating that the changes are not continuous or uniform. When asked about what could be done to reduce prejudice and discrimination against women and raise awareness of gender equality, some of them remarked: *"that people should put themselves in the place of the other and think what it would be like"*; and *"men should imagine being in a woman's position"*. Playing the part of the other, during the theatre activity, contributed to the discussion of gender inequalities and injustices.

Change is a process that implies individual and collective agency. But this agency cannot be contemplated outside the constraints of the materiality in which people find themselves or the degree of knowledge and awareness in the case of gender equality. There is also the recognition that this learning needs to be shared, since *"I learned many things I can pass on to my colleagues and family"* (Student, RBI, afternoon, stage IV). However, the testimony also revealed how this initiative to challenge and renegotiate family arrangements in search of more collaborative gender relations has been mostly carried out by the young women.

Actually, since the last time I was here [in the workshop], when I complained a lot about him [the brother] not helping me, I then arrived home and talked to him and my parents. [...] Either change or I'm not doing anything else. Because before, it was all I did. [...] On the same day that we

⁸As this evaluation was anonymous and did not identify the gender of students, the qualitative data gathered in the written evaluation will only identify the location, class and stage it was completed.

talked, I was going out with my mum when my dad said: "one of you stay to make food for us". But I said: "Dad, you and my brother know how to cook, why don't you cook?". So they started thinking and replied: "Ok, go". Since then, they make food for themselves. They clean the house, and do things right. [...] The good part was my mum and I thought the same way. We both came to an agreement to talk them. I went to my mum and said: I can't take it anymore, working and studying as well. And she said: I know, and they don't do anything in the house. So we both sat down with them to talk and from then on things began to change (Student, Lapa, night, stage II).

The student above claims that the initiative to challenge the sexual division of labour in her family was the result of the workshop. In addition, the role of mother in wanting to change the family arrangements for the sexual division of labour was fundamental for the student to decide to confront family norms: *"Just as well that she thought the same as me, because if I had to convince her, I would have given up"*. The students also stated that being aware of gender problems they can help their mothers to challenge submission in the family. Another student said that discussion of the theme led to her asking the questions that led to small changes in the family arrangements of older generations. This fact demonstrates that the younger generations can also contribute to changing engrained attitudes.

When I went to live with my grandmother, we talked about those things and she said: "you need to learn how to cook and clean the house; you have to do everything for your husband". And I said: "But why can't we share it? [...]". And she replied: "Your grandfather, the poor man, he works all day in the field so we need to do something for him. He is putting food on the table". Once we started talking, there was progress (Student, Lapa, night, stage II).

When I got home and talked to my parents, they understood that it is not only one way. And that it could change. We sat down and talked about things. I brought it up yesterday, and they started to think about it. And like this, things will change and it won't just be one way (Student, RBL, afternoon, stage II).

The students demonstrate the effect of a systematic labour background and the importance of gender awareness, as empowerment, which contributes to agency in the sense of taking the initiative to bring about change in the family space, using dialogue – an educational tool from a liberating pedagogy (Paulo FREIRE, 1987). Although these changes are slow and difficult to gauge, and are beyond the scope of the project, it is worth noting the importance of the multiplying effect: in engaging the gender awareness of one person, this can result in changes in his/her living space, in the family, the school and at work, contributing to a reflection by people on their practices and organising themselves in a more collaborative manner. The role of education in the transformation of gender *habitus* must be stressed, as shown by Bourdieu. As a product of social experience and education, *habitus* may be "changed by historical action oriented by intention and consciousness and using pedagogic devices" (BOURDIEU, 2005, p. 45).

Conclusions

This study was conducted with a young peasant population, based on their life stories and those of their families, which were reported and discussed during four educational workshops. It sought to analyse the generation differences and tensions regarding gender relations in the countryside, with the category of labour as its principal focus. The testimony of the students reveals a reproduction of the sexual division of labour, where young people are socialised from an early age using gendered discourse, practices and *habitus*. However, it also describes collaborative experiences that have taken place in many families, where the children are educated in more collaborative arrangements in terms of gender and generation.

Overall, the research indicates there are tensions within families due to the generational issue, in which different gender regimes clash. The marked differences in perception have produced intergenerational conflicts. The questioning of patriarchal culture, overwhelmingly present in peasant families, by the young people who have had access to different experiences and spaces of dialogue, such as the educational workshops, was evident in their narratives.

The systematic access to knowledge of gender, in the matter of sexual division of labour in the countryside, based on educational workshops, produced conceptual, cultural and pedagogical impacts, enabling a revision of mistaken concepts and conceptions on the part of the young people, in addition to a change in discourses, social practices and attitudes towards gender equality. One of the possible results of this process is the construction of more collaborative family relations through the younger generations, particularly in the protagonism of young women in challenging *machismo* and certain hierarchical gender structures in family spaces. The confrontation of these asymmetries through dialogue constitutes an important result of the Project, which facilitated the construction of new representations for gender and generation – crucial factors in cultural and attitude changes in relation to gender equality. This achievement demonstrates the multiplying effect of an educational study that aims to form and transform relations and discourses on gender and labour in the field.

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