

## 52 - THE FEMALE PRESENCE IN THE HIP HOP MOVEMENT: SOCIAL INCLUSION FROM THE BREAK DANCE

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The urban and cultural hip hop movement was created in the United States, in the 1960s, New York, in the neighborhood of Bronx, by young blacks, Hispanics and Caribbeans who were in poverty and segregation. In the face of adversities, young people expressed through various artistic activities, which resulted in the five elements of the hip hop movement: (1) the break, dance of acrobatic and broken movements; (2) the DJ, short for disk jockey, person who operates the stereo sound, executing the mixes and broken; (3) the MC, short for masters of ceremony, also known as rapper, singer and often author of the letters of rap; (4) the graffiti, insertion of letters, words and drawings with spray in the walls of the cities; (5) the conscience, which through the other elements stimulates the practitioners of hip hop to discuss social inequalities, using the affirmation of blackness as a mechanism of resistance and demands for equal rights.

The term break, idealized by DJ Kool Herc, in 1970, is defined as stretch of bigger impact of a music that values the beat. The main movements of the dance hip hop are: (1) the eletroboogie, with robotic movements; (2) the up rock, the tap of the break; (3) the break dancing, which are the acrobatic movements and spinning on the ground. In slits or battles, the groups face is dancing inside a wheel in which each group presents movements in set, in pair or individually, always trying "to ridicule" the opponent.

Although Brazilian hip hop emerged in São Paulo in 1970, and it is in this city that it has greater expression, the movement also built its history in Rio de Janeiro. According Herschmann (2005), hip hop appeared in funk's parties in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro in 1980. As it was nationalizing, hip hop began detaching itself from funk, building a politicized profile. Today, Brazilian hip hop discusses the black youthful identity, combats the social inequalities, mobilizes new behaviors and stimulates the critical reaction.

Hip hop, in part for being a street culture, presents high masculine predominance. Break, for being composed of vigorous and strength movements, supposedly does not favor the feminine presence. In Weller's studies (2005), their participation is small and is restricted to a secondary paper, with women offering their bodies to improve the image of the group, as presenters, or as backstage decoration.

However, the configuration of this movement is peculiar in Pedra de Guaratiba, west outskirts of Rio de Janeiro city, which provides around eighty young participants, with an absolute predominance of women (70%), who practice genuine break.

Fishing colony, located between the mangroves and the sea, Pedra suffers the effects of pollution. Its mud beaches, which once attracted many tourists, today are unfit for bathing due to excess sewage. The activity of fishing and the commerce of the restaurants has suffered accented fall and are not the main activities of the place anymore.

According to the IBGE (2000), the neighborhood has a large concentration of young people aged from 12 to 24 years, corresponding to 2.500 of the 9.693 residents of the place. The economic level is low; 68% of the population lives with monthly incomes between one quarter and a minimum wage and a half. The infrastructure is precarious, with many invaded areas and a part of the mangrove forest grounded by settlers. It was formed in the region impoverished communities without basic sanitation, supplying of electric light and water, without paving and lack of decent housing.

Only two of the five existing schools are within easy access to the population, because they are located at "roadside". The community counts on the social support of the Xuxa Meneghel Foundation, which configures as a great exponent of the local care work with almost 500 students, who attend the institution in a different school shift.

We understand that this conjuncture contributed to the emergence of hip hop movement in the quarter, which has as main objectives to express their wishes, revolts and reflections on social inequalities. With four young social actors in the leadership, about eighty members and break dance as main activity, the Corporative Instinct (fictitious name) is the biggest group of hip hop in number of women in Rio de Janeiro, fifty-four.

The movement was created in 1998 by two leaders of galleys, with an initial formation of four men, residents in Pedra de Guaratiba. In 2000, for practical reasons, the group started to add women to their formation. Its members wanted to participate in competitions of pairs, called Bonnie & Clyde Battle, when a man and a woman dance together. As they did not have girls in the group, they started to stimulate the entry of women in the workshops that they offered in the quarter. And today women are predominant.

The group has singular characteristics. Without a proper place, it is proposed to expand the movement through communitarian spaces of the quarter and the preparation of multipliers of break. It is not affiliated to any hip hop association and is seen as a focus of resistance to the media, which uses hip hop as a consumption mark. Another striking feature is not the distinction of ethnicity, race or gender, and a significant number of young women that practice break dance. In the dance workshops, which happen in a Municipal School and in the Xuxa Meneghel Foundation, these young women learn the same movements taught to the boys, genuine break. All learn together in the same space, and to the young women it is not appropriated, nor is allowed, to make decorations for boys skillful; they have to dance the same way as young boys do, together with them or alone.

The purpose of the present study is to describe and to interpret the reasons which lead young women from Pedra de Guaratiba to get involved with break dance and to remain in this dance of masculine characteristics. It also aims to analyze the process of social inclusion of the young women sponsored by participation in youth movement. The study is based on Giddens theory of the reflexive subject (2002) and on the Stoer theory of the places of the social exclusion (2004).

### MATERIAL AND METHOD

The new methodology of Analysis of Speech of Collective Subject is based on the study of Cavalcanti (2007) and has as original characteristic to operate a "trialogue" among the discourses of the individual subject, collective subject and ethnography, with the objective to promote greater density in the consensual ideas and greater clearness where there are discords. Contextualized on the principle of complexity, in which the whole is not the addition of the parts, but the interrelation of

these in the interior of a system and with the environment, this methodology gives importance to relations between discourse and meta-discourse, description and interpretation.

First we held the selection of four elite informants, the two oldest men and the two oldest women in the group, for semi-structured individual interviews; after that, we produced a synthesis of short sentences of these interviews. The following procedure was the organization of a focal group with six informants, four of the elite plus a man and woman with a two year experience at break. A sentence of the interpretative summary was read to lead the group opinion on the issue; once the discussion was thoroughly, the interviewer introduced another sentence for further discussion, until all the synthesis were discussed.

For the purpose of this project, we edited the excerpts in which the members of the focal group had produced excellent information. To make this edition, the researcher suppressed the parts that did not contain important information and that were produced to guide the flow of ideas. They included: repetitions, false starts, restarts, stammers, hesitations, stretching. The lines were grouped without defining who spoke, since this is the speech of the collective subject.

We produced a synthesis of the joined data for further interpretation of results in relation to the subject. Comments based on the ethnography were added to the analysis of the data. The two workshops of break dance organized by the group were systematically observed for eight months. These observations produced excellent data for the study. As it is a new methodological proposal, it is the researcher's responsibility to describe the results of the use of the method.

### INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The interview with the focal group evidenced that there is a consensus between the discourse of the individual subjects and the collective subject with regard to women's participation in break, classified as wonderful and enriching, mainly for the ability:

**think the diversity cool, I think it enriches the break, women's participation enriches the break, it only adds, brings female touch where there are only men. It enriches not the way women appear, but the way of her dancing in the way men do, the attitude of the woman who is good, because few women have this attitude, many thought that it is a man thing because of the force.**

According to Giddens (2002), the reflexivity of self extends to the body that is part of an action system, where the body is experiencing a consistent way to make the self as an integrated whole, a way to say "its here that I live.

The body, that increasingly expresses the reflective self project, where the differences are not more categorizations, but unveil of the capacities, identities and values of the people, is a place where the pair exclusion/inclusion operates. According to Stoer (2004:55), the body as an agency, as subject of its proper articulation, is based on the construction of identities and the demands for new forms of citizenship.

The feminine attitude to dance break shows the authentic self - linked to the formation of the personal integrity of women dancers based in the agency - as a reference point for the construction of subjects able to construct and to reconstruct their stories.

As it is a friendly group and has a leadership that encourages women in the break, the local hip hop movement is perceived as having the biggest percentage (70%) of girls in Rio de Janeiro:

**No, every group accepts, but the Corporate Instinct (fictitious name) is warm, but it is not a rule, to see that is difficult. Here we are more encouraged.**

The shelter and the incentive, cited as reasons for the feminine predominance, show how confidence is important to the group. The establishment of the basic confidence is the condition for the elaboration both of the self-identity and the identity of other people and objects (GIDDENS, 2002:44). Feeling of safety enables young women to go through situations of transition, crisis and risk in a reflexive way.

Other reasons listed for the participation are the challenge; the woman has more sensitivity, initiative, and attitude and warrior spirit. The ability of the women to perform the acrobatic movements on the same level of men, which was point of disagreement in individual interviews, presented greater clearness in focal group. The women improve more the technique to overcome the lower force they have. Therefore, they present greater difficulty in learning:

**Until you get the technique, you must be using force. And that is when the girls have difficulties; sometimes the body is too soft.**

The challenge related to risk has implications for the self-identity of the individual. In the globalized world, we face a diversity of risks and take them in search of a life style, a characteristic of reflexive modernity. Women dancers seek to balance opportunity and risk. The opportunity came through the possibility of participation in the group because of the battles of couples. Establishing a feminine predominance was the risk assumed, as well as overcoming the men in the execution of acrobatic movements. The characteristics that identify the dancers are present in a conscientious environment of risk and used to provoke uncertainty to the routine, which is a natural process of the reflexivity.

According to Giddens (2002:124), decisive moments do not always happen to the individuals - sometimes they are cultivated or deliberately looked for. Such situations make possible the exhibition of the audacity, ability, capacity and perseverance, where people are clearly conscientious of the risks involved in what they are making, but use them to create an uncertainty that lacks to the routine circumstances.

The non-verbal actions, gestures and expressions, identified in the individual interviews, are changed into verbal agreements during the focal group. The intimidation that the women dancers cause in the inexperienced boys, and which remained hidden in the individual discourse of the leaders, is assented by them:

**There are some who are shy. They do not leave, they stay, but they are shy, they practice in a corner. They are not shy enough to leave.**

According to Giddens (2002), shame affects the self-identity, since it is closely linked to confidence, a shame experience can threaten or destroy the confidence. Its overcoming promotes the motivation for the practice of dance, which is important in the construction of their confidence and others'.

The promotion which is also guaranteed to the leaders for being part of a peculiar group, with many women, becomes explicit in the discourse of the collective subject:

**Here comes Mark and speaks, you see man, I taught that. Bruno says: I taught that, you see the movement, man! It is all mines. Some people come and say, wow man, your girls are ridiculing!**

The pure relation between very close friends, important for the confidence built in reflexivity, can be observed with all its characteristics in the studied group. The pure relation is searched for what it can bring for the involved people, and the presence of women in the group brings visibility to both girls who dance, and for boys who teach. It is organized in reflexivity, and the commitment to the hip hop movement is the central nucleus. It depends on the mutual confidence of those involved in the

relation and focuses the intimacy of the group, which provides for close ties with reflexive project of self:

According to Giddens (2002: 94), the individual not only recognizes the other" and sees affirmed their self-identity in the answers of that other. Such processes help to create "shared histories" of a kind that has a greater potential to link the ones that characterize individuals who share experiences as a result of a common social position.

The choice of hip hop as a life style, according to Stoer (2004: 138), takes to the claim to the right to be different and turns to be what is born as logical of the construction of the identity.

**Once b-boy, always b-boy. I begin to feel the beat; I think that each part of my body is a musical note, whatever. I think so, man; it is already a life style. My style of life is already the hip hop, in everything we see hip hop. It is incredible!**

The construction of the identity as a reflective project of self becomes, in terms of Stoer (2004), a place of social inclusion. Increasingly, the individual and collective subjects perceive the capacity to intervene on the formation of their identities and the possibility to interrelate with social institutions. The identity constructed by reflexivity is determined less and less for spaces that contextualize and more and more by their agencies. According to Stoer (2004: 85), *on behalf of the place and of it belongs ethnic or from given to choices of life style or others, the individuals demand renewed forms of citizenship, which, then becomes thought from the differences, this is, from what it distinguishes and not through common characteristics.*"

Hip hop of Pedra de Guaratiba, as it configures a cultural movement of resistance, is an example of claimed citizenship, where the assumed differences as an agency do not to passively accept anymore the discourses about them and start to demand their singularity. This citizenship promotes the social inclusion of the young women dancers.

**Nobody has the same attitude that we have, you know? You see nowadays, here in Rio, we see one boy dancing, we recognize him from being of a group of a determinate place, because the styles are similar, you know? And we have this thing of attitude, to dance willingly; our group is very marked by it.**

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The interview confirmed the reasons for the predominance of women who dance for pleasure and overcoming force by the technique. The motivation for break occurs for the shelter and incentive of the leaders of the movement, who have visibility in the hip hop scene in Rio de Janeiro. It promotes the female self in the execution of break, shows the pride that the perfect movement of the dancers causes in the leaders and illustrates a sort of dispute that does not stimulate the exclusion, but if it configures as motivation point.

### CONCLUSIONS

Some important aspects in the construction of the reflexive project of self and the social inclusion are proved: the presence of ties of confidence, expressed in the actions of incentive to the female participation in the dance, stimulates the development of the security in the young women. The risk of discrimination by the group, or other groups of masculine hegemony, and the difficulty in the execution of the vigorous and acrobatic movements align to courage and engagement, promoting a balance between opportunity and risk. The choice of hip hop as life style demonstrates that the women use their bodies as an agency of themselves, act socially from the challenge of the difference and fall into a social network, what evidences their inclusion in the group. These factors, according to Giddens, allow the young women to construct a form to be in the world and contribute for the valuation of the collective. By means of choices, they establish relationships that illustrate a peculiar case of gender pedagogy, where men and women promote themselves in an interdependent way.

Key words: women, hip hop, social inclusion.

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### THE FEMALE PRESENCE IN THE HIP HOP MOVEMENT: SOCIAL INCLUSION FROM THE BREAKDANCE

The study interprets the reasons which lead young women from *Pedra de Guaratiba*, west outskirts of *Rio de Janeiro*, to get involved and stay with the dance movements of hip hop, and examines the process of social inclusion of young people sponsored by participation in youth movement. The group is unique because 70% are women who dance the genuine break. The research proposal follows the Analysis of Speech of Collective Subject, which operates a "dialogue" between the discourses of the individual subject, collective subject and ethnography. The results confirm the reasons for the predominance of women, who dance for pleasure and for the overrun of force by the technique. The motive for the break, welcomed and encouraged by the leaders, shows a gender dispute, in which the dancers are involved in the construction of a reflexive project of self and belonging to a group. The proposal favors the female self in the implementation of the break, shows the pride the dancer's movement causes in the leaders and contributes to the recovery collectivization.

Key words: women, hip hop, social inclusion.

### **LA PRÉSENCE DES FEMMES DANS LE MOUVEMENT HIP HOP: L'INCLUSION SOCIALE PAR LA BREAKDANCE**

L'étude interprète les raisons qui conduisent les jeunes femmes de *Pedra de Guaratiba*, à l'ouest de la périphérie de *Rio de Janeiro*, à participer et à rester avec les mouvements de danse *hip-hop*. Il s'agit d'examiner le processus d'inclusion sociale des jeunes parrainé par la participation au mouvement de jeunesse. Le groupe est unique parce que 70% sont des femmes qui dansent le *breakdance*. La proposition de recherche suit l'Analyse de la Parole par Sujet Collectif, qui exploite un "trilogue" entre le discours du sujet individuel, sujet collectif et l'ethnographie. Les résultats ont confirmé les raisons de la prédominance des femmes, qui dansent pour le plaisir et pour le dépassement de la force par la technique. La motivation pour le *breakdance*, salué et encouragé par les dirigeants, montre une différence entre les sexes, dans laquelle les danseurs participent dans la construction d'un projet réflexif de soi et l'appartenance à un groupe. La proposition favorise l'autocritique féminine dans l'exécution de *break*, montre l'orgueil que le mouvement des danseurs provoque dans les chefs et contribue à l'évaluation de la collectivité.

Mots-clés: les femmes, *hip hop*, l'inclusion sociale.

### **LA PRESENCIA DE MUJERES EM EL MOVIMIENTO HIP HOP: LA INCLUSIÓN SOCIAL PARA EL BREAKDANCE**

El estudio interpreta las razones que llevan las mujeres jóvenes de *Pedra de Guaratiba*, al oeste de las afueras de *Río de Janeiro*, para participar y quedarse con los movimientos de la danza de *hip hop*. En el se examina el proceso de inclusión social de las jóvenes patrocinado por la participación en el movimiento juvenil. El grupo es único porque el 70% son mujeres que danzan el *break* original. La trayectoria de investigación sigue el Análisis del Discurso del Sujeto Colectivo, que opera un "triálogo" entre el discurso del sujeto individual, sujeto colectivo y la etnografía. Los resultados confirmaron las razones para el predominio de las mujeres, que danzan por placer y superan la fuerza por la técnica. La motivación para la presencia femenina en el *break*, bienvenida y alentada por los dirigentes, muestra una diferencia de género, en la que los bailarines participan de la construcción de un proyecto reflexivo de sí mismo y que pertenecen a un grupo. La oferta favorece la autocritica femenina en la ejecución de la rotura, demuestra el orgullo que el movimiento de los bailarines provoca en los líderes y contribuye para la valuación del colectivo.

Palabras llave: mujeres, *hip hop*, inclusión social.

### **A PRESENÇA FEMININA NO MOVIMENTO HIP HOP: A INCLUSÃO SOCIAL A PARTIR DO BREAKDANCE**

O estudo interpreta as razões que levam jovens mulheres de *Pedra de Guaratiba*, periferia oeste do *Rio de Janeiro*, a se envolver e permanecer com a dança do movimento *hip hop*. E analisa o processo de inclusão social das jovens promovido pela participação nesse movimento juvenil. O grupo é singular, pois 70% são mulheres que dançam o *break* genuíno. A pesquisa segue proposta de Análise do Discurso do Sujeito Coletivo, que opera um "triálogo" entre o discurso dos sujeitos individuais, sujeito coletivo e etnografia. Os resultados confirmaram os motivos da predominância das mulheres, que dançam pelo prazer e pela superação da força através da técnica. A motivação para o *break*, acolhida e estimulada pelos líderes, mostra uma disputa de gênero, em que as dançarinas se incluem a partir da construção de um projeto reflexivo do eu e do pertencimento a um grupo. A proposta favorece a autocritica feminina na execução do *break*, mostra o orgulho que o movimento das dançarinas provoca nos líderes e contribui para a valorização da coletividade.

Palavras-chave: mulheres, *hip hop*, inclusão social.