UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA

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**THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITIES:
URBAN YOUTH AND RAP**

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To Malu and
Theo with all of my
love.

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ABSTRACT

THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITIES:
URBAN YOUTH AND RAP

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2007

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The production and consumption of cultural products such as soap operas, films and music have been gaining more prominence recently as sites of construction of identities than traditional institutions such as the school and work. In this dissertation, I investigate the linguistic character of identity building in one contemporary cultural product, namely, Brazilian rap music. This study explores, from a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997), which discursive strategies and linguistic features are used in rap songs to promote identity building. For the analysis of discursive strategies I have drawn upon the discourse-historical approach devised by Wodak et al. (1999). As for linguistic features, I have drawn upon Halliday's (1978) concept of antilanguange and Halliday & Hasan (1989) concept of social dialect as well as features of non-standard Brazilian Portuguese (Bagno, 1997, 1999). The corpus used in the research is comprised of 33 (thirty three) songs by the Brazilian rap group Racionais MC's. The results of the analysis of the songs show that identities are built on the emphasis of a black/white dichotomy, on the reinforcement of the African Brazilian identity and the establishment of a common place of origin. In addition, the analysis of linguistic features revealed that the switch from the standard variety of Brazilian Portuguese, present in the songs in the initial phase of the recording career of the group, to a non-standard variety, in their recent works, is also one way of creating the identities of the members of the group and their target audience as well as supporting the discursive construction of those identities. This research has shown the linguistic nature of processes of identification, especially in the choices of linguistic code/variety and strategies for the construction of identities through discourse. This way, it has attempted to contribute to the vast area of the study of identities in the social sciences

Keywords: rap music, identity, discourse, critical discourse analysis

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RESUMO

A CONSTRUÇÃO DISCURSIVA DE IDENTIDADES:
JUVENTUDE URBANA E RAP

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A produção e consumo de produtos culturais tais como novelas, filmes e música têm conquistado mais destaque recentemente como espaços de construção de identidades do que instituições tradicionais como a escola e o trabalho. Nesta tese, investigo o aspecto lingüístico da construção de identidades em um produto cultural contemporâneo, a saber, música *rap* brasileira. Este estudo explora, a partir da perspectiva da Análise Crítica do Discurso (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997), quais estratégias discursivas e características lingüísticas são usadas nas músicas *rap* para a promoção e construção de identidades. A análise das estratégias discursivas está baseada na abordagem discurso-histórica desenvolvida por Wodak et al. (1999) e a análise das características lingüísticas, no conceito de antilinguagem de Halliday (1978), no conceito de dialeto social de Halliday & Hasan (1989) assim como nas principais características do português não-padrão (Bagno, 1997, 1999). O corpus usado na pesquisa é composto por 33 (trinta e três músicas) escritas pelo grupo de rap brasileiro Racionais MC's. Os resultados da análise das letras das músicas mostram que as identidades são construídas com ênfase na dicotomia negro/branco, na promoção da identidade Afro-brasileira e na criação de um lugar comum de origem. A análise das características lingüísticas revelou que a troca do português padrão, utilizado nas músicas da fase inicial da carreira do grupo, pelo português não-padrão, presente nos trabalhos mais recentes, é também uma maneira de criar as identidades dos componentes do grupo e de seu público alvo, assim como suporte para as estratégias discursivas de construção daquelas identidades. Esta pesquisa mostrou a natureza lingüística de processos de identificação, especialmente nas escolhas de variedades lingüísticas e estratégias para a construção de identidades através do discurso. Dessa maneira, este trabalho pretende contribuir para a ampliação dos estudos de identidades nas ciências humanas e sociais.

Palavras chaves: música rap, identidade, discurso, análise crítica do discurso.

Número de páginas: 171

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Chapter 1

Introduction

It has been noted recently that traditional institutions in society such as the school, work and the family[1] seem to be losing ground as the main sites where identities are formed to new sources of identification such as the media and the entertainment industry for a new generation coming of age in the 90s and the early years of the 21st century. According to Herschmann (1997, p. 54)

> [We] see the emergence of a type of social structure that connects citizenship, mass communication and consumption. [We] see the emergence of identities and identifications that are structured less by the logic of the State than by the logic of the market. Instead of being grounded on oral and written communication and/or being effected in close interactions, these identities and identifications operate today, fundamentally, through the industrial production of culture: of the new technologies of communication and of the segmented consumption of goods.[2]

In his discussion of the hip hop generation[3] in the United States, for instance, Kitwana (2002, p. 9) states that '[t]oday more and more Black youth are turning to rap music, music videos, designer clothing, popular Black films, and television programs for values and identities.' For the earlier generations of African Americans in the United States, Kitwana says, the church was one of the most relevant institutions they could identify with and derive their values and attitudes from. The hip hop generation, instead,

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[1] Dayrell (2005) points out that, especially for a parcel of young Brazilians in lower social positions, the unequal access to education and school dropout as well as unemployment have significantly reduced the relevance of the school and work as sites of socialization for that youth.

[2] All English versions of quotations which were originally published in Portuguese are my own. Thus, I am to be hold accountable for any misinterpretation that might have occurred.

[3] According to Kitwana (2002, p. 4), the hip hop generation is comprised of '… those young African Americans born between 1965 and 1984 who came of age in the eighties and nineties and who share a specific set of values and attitudes.'

'…have turned to [them]selves, [their] peers, global images and products, and the new realities [they] face for guidance.' (Kitwana, 2002, p. 7)

In Brazil, the emergence of the hip hop movement in the late 80s was also a very influential cultural practice for part of the African Brazilian youth, as we shall see in Chapter 3. Within the hip hop movement, rap steadily increased its visibility with its powerful discourse against racial and social prejudice giving voice to the problems of many young African Brazilians who up until then were seldom heard. This way, rap ended up becoming the soundtrack of times of conflict and of a plural and fragmented society (Bentes & Herschmann, 2002). According to Bentes & Herschmann,

> the music sang by these young people [has to be seen] in a new, wider, context where the "culture of the slums" emerge not only as by-products of the social violence in the country but as a production and a discourse capable not only of reflecting the "tough" reality of these places but also, somehow, of expressing the demand of the expansion of citizenship to the social segment that lives in these urban areas. (ibid., 2002, p. 11)

I would further add here that, perhaps, even before their rightful demand for the expansion of citizenship, many young African Brazilian rap artists and their audience/listeners become aware of and/or construct themselves as citizens in the processes of identification that rap and hip hop (among other sources) are able to provide. Especially important is the reinforcement of the African Brazilian identity, the black[4] identity, which is also one of the struggles of black activists and black associations such as the 'Movimento Negro Unificado' (Unified Black Movement) (Guimarães, 2002).

Therefore, assuming here the increasing importance of new sources of identification and, more specifically, the significance that rap, as a musical, cultural and

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[4] According to Guimarães (2003d, p. 255), '[t]here is a widely accepted convention now both among intellectuals and Black activists of classing *pretos* and *pardos* together, the sum of the two categories being referred to as the 'black' (*negro*) or Afro-Brazilian population.'

discursive practice, has in the processes of identification of (mostly African Brazilian) urban youth, the aim of this study is to explore how, and which, identities are discursively constructed and/or foregrounded in its lyrics.

1.1 Research background

In a previous research (Oliveira, 1999) carried out in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MA in English, I have investigated the discourse of the lyrics of soul, funk and rap musical genres produced by African American singers/musical groups in the United States in order to analyse whether or not that discourse could be considered oppositional, that is, a discourse that would counter or be opposed to the main representations of African Americans in mainstream discourses.

That particular focus of investigation was triggered after the observation that most critical discourse studies concentrated more on the discussion of how minorities were (mis)represented in media, educational, political and professional discourses (van Dijk, 1992, 1995, 1997, 2000; van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999; Wodak & Matouschek, 1993). These studies were able to demonstrate how those institutional discourses helped to reinforce and/or reproduce the discourse of dominant groups, '…groups in the socio-political power structure that develop fundamental policies, take the most influential decisions and control the overall modes of execution…' (van Dijk, 1995, p. 4), over the discourse of non-dominant or minority groups.

The representation of the latter groups in the discourse of mainstream media, for instance, is effected, mostly, through biased topics. According to van Dijk (1995, p. 8),

> If covered at all, minorities are portrayed in the news primarily in terms of topics that are interesting for white readers… Minorities are represented in terms of a very limited and stereotypical set of topics. Among the top five topics both as to frequency and size we usually find topics… such as (a) immigration; (b) violence, crime, riots, and other forms of deviance; (c) ethnic relations; (d) cultural differences; … Moreover, these topics are dealt with in such a way as to

> emphasize negative properties or actions of immigrants, refugees, or minorities. Immigration is seldom portrayed as a contribution to the economy or the culture. It is instead posed as a problem, a threat, or an invasion. Similarly, cultural differences such as those attributed to Muslims also tend to be characterized as problematic or threatening to us. On the contrary, problems for them, such as discrimination and racism, are typically mitigated or dealt with as regrettable incidents attributed to individuals or extremist groups outside of the consensus. Other topics relevant to the everyday lives of minorities (housing, education, health care) have low priority.

My work, on the other hand, aimed at exploring, from a critical discourse analysis (hereafter CDA) perspective (Fairclough, 1989, 1992; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; van Dijk, 1993; Wodak, 2000), how a particular minority group, African Americans in the US, represented themselves and the dominant groups in their own discourses, in that case, lyrics of songs written by African American musical groups.

With major topics in the lyrics selected ranging from the demand of equal rights, criticism of discrimination, poverty and police violence to the reinforcement of positive values and beliefs such as pride, unity, understanding and respect, the results of that investigation have shown that, on the one hand, African Americans represented themselves more positively, emphasizing the promotion of those values and beliefs, and, on the other, they represented the dominant groups more negatively, mainly as the promoters of discrimination against minorities, of violence, and of negative values such as selfishness and intolerance.

From the analysis of textual elements that helped determine those representations as instances of oppositional discourse of a minority group, it was also observed that the positive representation of African Americans seemed to foster a strong sense of community and identity among that group. On the whole, that study was relevant to the understanding of how social relations, identities and representations are (re)produced, challenged and/or transformed and how power relations can be contested.

As the research mentioned above investigated the discourse of lyrics of songs written by African American artists in the United States, it opened up the possibility for investigating the discourse of the lyrics of rap songs written by African Brazilians in Brazil. Nevertheless, the focus of this new work has shifted from the general aim to identify whether or not (African) Brazilian rap lyrics would follow similar patterns regarding the construction of an oppositional discourse to concentrate on one specific aspect observed in the previous research: the discursive construction of identities.

1.2 Research questions

From a CDA perspective, Fairclough (1992, p. 63) proposes that discourse is '...language use as a form of social practice... .' Such definition implies looking at discourse not only as a way of representing the world but also as a way of acting upon it. It also implies seeing discourse in a dialectical relationship with social structures, that is, as being shaped by social structures, on the one hand, but also shaping those structures, on the other.

Moreover, according to Fairclough (1992, p. 64), discourse '...is a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning.' Discourse, thus, helps to establish social identities and subject positions, social relationships, and systems of knowledge and belief.

Therefore, working with that concept of discourse, I will carry out, from a CDA perspective, an analysis of rap songs as a discursive practice of constructing, reinforcing and challenging identities.

Considering the focus of this research, the following main questions will guide my investigation:

1) What are the 'recontextualised social practices' (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999) being represented in the rap songs in which identities emerge?

2) What sort of discursive strategies (Wodak et al., 1999) are used in the construction of identities?

3) How are the young, urban, and African Brazilian identities discursively constructed, reinforced, challenged and/or transformed? What other identities emerge?

4) How does language as system, in its phonological, lexical, and grammatical aspects, underlie those identities?

With these questions working as guidelines for the study of the rap songs, I intend to analyse the lyrics using CDA as my general framework (Fairclough, 1989, 1992; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997) as well as Wodak's (2000) discourse-historical method of analysis and Halliday's (1978) concept of antilanguage. These theoretical apparatuses will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. In the next section I present the criteria for data collection and the methods employed.

1.3 Justification of the study

There are some points that should be considered in relation to the use of rap lyrics to study the construction of African Brazilian urban youth identities.

First, as an element of the hip hop movement (which also includes break dancing and graffiti writing) that started in the mid 70s in New York in the United States (see Chapter 3 for more details), rap music has become a worldwide cultural phenomenon on its own. In a report in the Time magazine, Farley (1999, p. 34) shows its huge increase in the US market

> In 1998, for the first time ever, rap outsold what previously had been America's top-selling format, country music. Rap sold more than 81 million CDs, tapes

and albums last year, compared with 72 million for country. Rap sales increased a stunning 31% from 1997 to 1998, in contrast to 2% gains for country, 6% for rock and 9% for the music industry overall.

The influence of that movement and its music outside the United States has been unquestionable. And because of its history of dissent towards the establishment and struggle against racism and discrimination in the United States, rap has been appropriated[5] as a cultural form by, for instance, Moroccan and Algerian young immigrants/descendants in France (Androutsopoulos & Scholz, 2003), Turkish young immigrants/descendants in Germany (Weller, 2000, 2004) and a considerable number of the African Brazilian youth in Brazil (Silva, 1998; Herschmann, 1997, 2000; Dayrell, 2005; Felix, 2006) to name a few.

Consequently, hip hop caught the attention of music critics and also social sciences scholars interested in understanding this cultural and social phenomenon. Thus, hip hop and rap are being studied from sociological, anthropological as well as musicological perspectives (Williams, 1992; Herschmann, 1997, 2000; Kitwana, 2002; Weller, 2000, 2004; Dayrell, 2005; Felix, 2006). My own contribution to that understanding is to bring a more comprehensive analysis of the role that discourse plays in rap music as a form of social practice.

Second, hip hop, rap music and lyrics as sites of cultural production and consumption of African Brazilians are one of the sources for the construction of their personal and social identities. According to Meurer (2000b, p. 152, my emphasis), 'the knowledge human beings possess, their *identities*, social relationships and their own lives are in great part determined by the genres they are *exposed to*, they *produce* and

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[5] Lull (1995, *apud* Androutsopoulos & Scholz, 2003) presents three phases for the formation of new cultural territories: *de*territorialization, cultural melding and mediation and *re*terrritorialization. The middle phase is further divided into transculturation, where cultural forms are hosted in new cultures; hybridization, the mixing of local and new cultural forms; and indigenization, when alien cultural forms are fully absorbed by the host society and regarded as a native form of expression.

consume.'[6] Thus, another contribution of this study is to understand how the discourse

of rap lyrics, among other semiotic signs such as fashion, helps to construct identities.

Finally, another significant reason for investigating rap lyrics might also be

related to language teaching, both of Portuguese and English. For instance, Jovino

(1999, p. 161) believes that

> ... rap as a musical universe can be thought of as a political-pedagogical
> instrument. It enables the increase of the tools available to work with some of
> the disciplinary objectives in Portuguese established by the Standards of the
> National Curriculum (PCNs) such as:
> - Use language for the production of spoken texts and the improvement of
>   listening skills;
> - Use language to structure experience and explain reality, acting upon the
>   construction of representations;
> - Analyse critically different discourses, including the students' discourse,
>   developing the capacity of evaluating texts;
> - Recognize and value the language of the students' social group as an
>   adequate and efficient instrument in daily communication and artistic
>   creation; and
> - Know and value different varieties of the Portuguese language, in order to
>   try to avoid linguistic prejudice.

Such restructured guidelines for the teaching of Portuguese in Brazil reflect

somehow the preoccupation of those responsible for the education in this country to try

to reverse the traditional views and methods of teaching the mother tongue. Abroad,

researchers and educators are also concerned with having a more updated view of

teaching and of the teacher/students relationship. For instance, Ibrahim (1999, p. 366)

states that he

> ..identif[ies] and propose[s] rap and hip-hop as curriculum sites where learning
> takes place and where identities are invested. In the language of antiracism
> education, this proposition is, on the one hand, a call to centralize and engage
> marginalized subjects, their voices, and their ways of being and learning and, on
> the other, a revisit to this question: In the case of African youths, whose
> language and identity are we as TESOL professionals teaching and assuming in

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[6] Research on genres has increased significantly in recent years (*cf.* Meurer & Motta-Roth, 2002 and
Meurer, Bonini & Motta-Roth, 2005). In this study, however, I do not venture into genre research. I
consider, though, rap music as a musical genre and its lyrics as one element of that genre.

the classroom if we do not engage in rap and hip-hop? That is, whose knowledge is being valorized and legitimated and thus assumed to be worthy of study, and whose knowledge and identity are left in the corridors of our schools? To identify rap and hip-hop as curriculum sites in this context is to legitimize otherwise illegitimate forms of knowledge.

Such concern with linguistic and knowledge diversity, both in Brazil and abroad, helps to stress the importance of carrying out research which contemplates the need for studies that focus on language as a social phenomenon.

1.4 Data collection and methods

The selection of a Brazilian rap group and songs was based on record sales. This specific criterion was chosen in order to avoid subjective and debatable evaluations (such as the best or the most original/authentic group of all) that seem common when one deals with musical groups and musical genres in general.

Record sales in Brazil are regulated by the 'Associação Brasileira de Produtores de Disco' – ABPD (Brazilian Association of Record Producers). ABPD is the official agency that represents the major record companies in the country and issues the sales certificates based on the units of records sold. The table below shows the certification award levels for Brazil according to ABPD:

	Local market CDs (Released until 12/2003)	Local market CDs* Global market CDs**	DVDs (From 01/2002)
	Gold - 100 thousand copies	Gold - 50 thousand copies	Gold - 25 thousand copies
	Platinum - 250 thousand copies	Platinum - 125 thousand copies	Platinum - 50 thousand copies
	Double platinum - 500 thousand copies	Double Platinum – 250 thousand copies	-
	Treble Platinum - 750 thousand copies	Treble Platinum - 375 thousand copies	-
	Diamond - 1 million copies	Diamond - 500 thousand copies	Diamond - 100 thousand

*Released from january 2004
**Released from january 2001

(Table 1. ABPD Certification award levels *in* www.abpd.org)

However, since its emergence in the late 80s in Brazil, rap has been recorded mainly by independent record labels which are not associated to ABPD and, therefore, are not included in the certificate list. Thus, without an official register for rap record sales I have used instead the estimates made by music reviews published in the press.

Following the record sales criterion, the Brazilian rap group that has had the highest number of records sold is Racionais MC's. '*Holocausto Urbano*' (1990), their first CD, sold around 50.000 copies (Rodrigues, 1998); their third CD, '*Raio-X do Brasil*' (1993), has sold 300.000 copies (Vale, 1997); their fourth one, '*Sobrevivendo no Inferno*', released in 1997, is estimated to have sold over 1 million copies (Rodrigues, 1998) and the latest, '*Nada Como um Dia Após o Outro Dia*', released in 2002, has sold 100.000 copies in the first three days after its release (Martins, 2002).

Besides the record sales criteria, we can add that Racionais MC's won, in 1994, the prize for best music of the year for the song '*Homem na estrada*', awarded by the 'Associação Paulista dos Críticos de Arte –APCA'; in 1998, the prize awarded by MTV Brasil for best video clip of the year for the song '*Diário de um detento*'; and in 2002, they were awarded the prizes for best record, '*Nada Como um Dia Após o Outro Dia*', best song, '*Negro Drama*', and also the prize for best group of that year in the 'Prêmio Hutuz' (since 2000 the Hutuz Award, established by CUFA – 'Central Única das Favelas' in Rio de Janeiro, is the only national event that awards exclusively the best in rap music and hip hop in the country).

Thus, since no other Brazilian rap group or artist has had such an amazing sales performance[7], the Brazilian rap songs and lyrics selected for this study are all by

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[7] Marcelo D2, for instance, who signed with Sony Music, a major record company, has received a gold certificate for each of his records 'À procura da batida perfeita' and 'Acústico MTV', which means sales of 50 to 100 thousand copies.

Racionais MC'S (the group, formed by three MC's – Mano Brown, Ice Blue and Edi Rock – and a DJ – KLJay, and their career will be further discussed in Chapter 3).

Moreover, I have decided to include in the analysis all the records released so far by the group, except a compilation record and a live one. That implies not only a quantitative analysis of the songs but also a qualitative one since we can have a diachronic perspective of the construction of identities in the discourse of the songs by Racionais MC's, from its emergence up to recent days, which means a period of over 15 years, and whether and how it has changed both discursively and culturally during this time offering a much more comprehensive account of this musical genre. The records and their tracklists (with the songs analysed in this study marked with a check) are presented below:

CD 1

Holocausto urbano (1990)

1. Pânico na Zona Sul ☑
2. Beco sem saída ☑
3. Hey boy ☑
4. Mulheres vulgares
5. Racistas otários ☑
6. Tempos difíceis ☑

CD 2

Escolha seu caminho (1992)

1. Voz Ativa (versão rádio) ☑
2. Voz Ativa (versão a capella)
3. Voz Ativa (versão baile)
4. Negro limitado ☑

CD 3

Raio-X do Brasil (1993)

1. Fim de semana no parque ☑
2. Parte II
3. Mano na porta do bar ☑
4. Homem na Estrada ☑
5. Júri Racional ☑
6. Fio da Navalha
7. Salve

CD 4

Sobrevivendo no Inferno (1998)

1. Jorge da Capadócia
2. Gênesis (intro) ☑
3. Capítulo 4, versículo 3 ☑
4. Tô ouvindo alguém me chamar ☑
5. Rapaz Comum ☑
6. --- (instrumental)
7. Diário de um detento
8. Periferia é periferia (em qualquer em lugar) ☑
9. Qual mentira vou acreditar
10. Mágico de Oz ☑
11. Fórmula Mágica da Paz ☑
12. Salve

CD 5

Nada como um dia após o outro dia (2002)

Disc 1 – Chora Agora

1. Sou + você ☑
2. Vivão e vivendo ☑
3. V.L. (intro) ☑
4. V.L. parte I ☑
5. Negro Drama ☑

6. A vítima
7. Na fé firmão ☑
8. 12 de outubro
9. Eu sou 157 ☑
10. A vida é desafio ☑
11. 1 por amor 2 por dinheiro

Disc 2 – Ri depois

1. De volta a cena ☑
2. Otus 500 ☑
3. Crime vai e vem ☑
4. Jesus Chorou ☑
5. Fone
6. Estilo cachorro
7. V.L. parte II ☑
8. Expresso da meia-noite ☑
9. Trutas e quebradas
10. Da ponte pra cá ☑

The songs not marked with a check were later excluded according to the following criteria: a. lyrics not written by the group or co-authorship; b. cover songs; c. instrumental songs; d. songs with gender-related topics[8]; e. acknowledgment tracks; and f. other topics (see below).

The list of the songs not included in the data for analysis, according to the criteria mentioned above, is as follows:

a) lyrics not written by the group or co-authorship: '**Diário de Um Detento**' by Brown/Jocenir from CD 4;

b) cover songs: '**Jorge da Capadócia**' by Jorge BemJor from CD 4;

c) instrumental songs: '**Fio da Navalha**' from CD 3, and track **06** (no title) from CD 4;

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[8] Gender issues are frequent in rap songs and also appear in the data here. However, an investigation of such issues would require a research of its own. In the United States, the Gangsta rap subgenre has frequently been accused of sexism and misogyny and scholars such as Tricia Rose and bell hooks have pointed out that any analysis of those issues must take into account broader sociohistorical contexts or one might run the risk of essentialising the problem. (cf. Rose, 1992; Williams, 1992; hooks, 1994).

d) songs with gender-related issues: '**Mulheres Vulgares**' from CD 1; '**Parte II**' from the CD 3; '**Qual mentira vou acreditar**' from CD 4; and '**Fone**' and '**Estilo Cachorro**' from CD 5 – disc 2;

e) acknowledgment tracks: '**Salve**' from CD 3 and CD 4; and '**Trutas e Quebradas**' from CD 5 – disc 2;

f) other topics: '**A Vítima**' from CD 5 – disc 1, a song recounting a car accident with one of the members of the group; '**12 de outubro**' from CD 5 – disc 1, not a song but a recount of an encounter with a little boy and a talk about children's day; '**1 por amor 2 por dinheiro**' also from CD 5 – disc 1, where parts of the lyrics were not understood and thus could not be transcribed;

Thus, the total number of songs collected from the five CDs listed above is 33. The lyrics for the songs were transcribed from the recordings since they are not printed in the liner notes. All the selected lyrics are found in appendixes A, B, C, D and E, following the order of the CDs and the tracklists above (the excluded songs are not in the appendixes).

After the songs were selected, I transcribed them from the recordings since they are not printed in the inner sleeves of the CDs (some of the lyrics by Racionais MC's were found on websites dedicated to rap music such as www.realhiphop.com.br and www.bocadaforte.com.br and then compared with the transcribed ones for accuracy). Then, during the transcription process, I grouped the songs according to the most relevant themes found throughout the five CDs (the discussion of the main themes is presented in Chapter 4). After that, I separated the most relevant linguistic features according to their lexical, grammatical and/or phonological realizations (the presentation of those features and their further analysis and interpretation are found in

Chapter 6). Finally, with the aid of Wodak's (2000) discourse-historical framework, the lyrics were analysed in relation to the linguistic elements, strategies and topics that were used to build identities (this is presented in Chapter 5).

1.5 Outline of the dissertation

This dissertation is comprised of seven chapters, including this introductory one. Below, I give a brief overview of what the remaining chapters deal with.

Chapter 2 presents the main theoretical background that underlies this work, namely, CDA. I also discuss in this chapter the concept of identity, which is a central concept in this work, drawing upon Fairclough (1992, 2003), Moita Lopes (2002), van Dijk (1998), and Wodak et al. (1999). After that, I discuss the concept of race, which is important due to the nature of the data in this study (rap lyrics written by African Brazilian songwriters), drawing mainly from Guimarães (2002, 2003, 2005). Finally, I address Wodak's (2000) discourse-historical method, used here as a tool for my analysis, and Halliday's (1978) concept of antilanguage.

Chapter 3 situates the reader in relation to the hip hop movement and presents a short introduction to the history of hip hop and rap as well as a review of relevant studies carried out both in the United States and in Brazil.

Chapter 4 brings the first part of the analysis of the songs, which focuses on the discussion of the 'recontextualised social practices' (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999) or narratives and their relation to broader historical and social contexts.

In Chapter 5, I present the analysis of the songs according to the discourse-historical approach (Wodak, 2000) focusing on its three main dimensions: contents/topics, strategies, and linguistic means and forms of realization.

In Chapter 6, I present the analysis of the lexicogrammatical and phonological features of the language used in the Brazilian rap songs which was based on Halliday's (1978) concept of antilanguage and the concept of Hip Hop Nation Language (Alim, 2004a).

Finally, Chapter 7 concludes this doctoral dissertation discussing all the results and interpretations inferred from them and presenting the final considerations drawn from the study.

Chapter 2

General theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

In the present chapter I introduce the theoretical framework I have used to develop the study proposed in this dissertation.

In the first section, I have drawn on Fairclough (1992), and Fairclough and Wodak (1997) in order to present CDA and the main principles on which it is grounded and which underlie the work I develop in the following chapters.

The second section of the chapter focuses on the concept of identity. As the investigation of the discursive construction of identities is the main focus of my analysis in this study, I discuss how CDA and CDA researchers deal with and incorporate that concept into its/their framework. This account draws on Fairclough (1989, 1992, 2003), van Dijk (1998), Wodak et al. (1999), and Moita Lopes (2002).

Following the discussion of the concept of identity, I will present a brief overview of the concept of race and racial identity. That concept is addressed here due to its central importance in the construction of the African Brazilian identity observed in my data. That overview will be mainly based on Guimarães (2002).

Finally, I introduce the discourse-historical approach developed by Wodak (2000) which has been used as a tool of analysis in Chapter 5. I also present the concept of antilanguage developed by Halliday (1978) which underlies my analysis of the lexicogrammatical features carried out in Chapter 6.

2.2 CDA as main theoretical framework

In his discussion of different approaches to discourse analysis, Fairclough (1992) divides them into non-critical and critical[1] ones. He argues that 'critical approaches differ from non-critical approaches in not just describing discursive practices, but also showing how discourse is shaped by relations of power and ideologies, and the constructive effects discourse has upon social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief, neither of which is normally apparent to discourse participants' (1992, p. 12).

Such perspective on the analysis of discourse began to be elaborated by a group of linguists in the late 70s that aimed at developing a method of linguistic analysis which was concerned with the social functions of language, thus rejecting the idea of language as an autonomous system and the stressed focus on form to the detriment of content (Fairclough, 1992).

According to Fowler (1996, p. 3), ''Critical linguistics' emerged from our writing of *Language and Control* (Fowler et al., 1979) as an instrumental linguistics very much of that description. We formulated an analysis of public discourse, an analysis designed to get at the ideology coded implicitly behind the overt propositions, to examine it particularly in the context of social formations.' Thus, the emphasis of the approach was centred on uncovering hidden ideologies and was mainly based on systemic-functional linguistics developed by Halliday (1973, 1978, 1994), specially his ideational and interpersonal metafunctions.

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[1] Sinclair & Coulthard's classroom discourse framework; Conversation analysis; Labov & Fanshel's therapeutic discourse and Potter & Wetherell's discourse analysis are classified as non-critical approaches and Fowler et al.'s critical linguistics and Pêcheux's French approach to discourse analysis are considered critical ones according to Fairclough (1992, p. 12)

From that initial work, critical linguistics developed further in the 80s with the works of van Dijk (1984), Fairclough (1989) and Wodak (1989) and has become an established field of linguistics now more commonly addressed as CDA.

Two crucial concepts are important in CDA: critical and discourse. Discourse, Fairclough (1992, p. 63) proposes, is '… language use as a form of social practice, rather than a purely individual activity or a reflex of situational variables.' This entails that through discourse language users not only represent the world around them but also act upon it. It also implies '… a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) which frame it' (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258). That is, discourse shapes situations and social structures and is also shaped by them.

The other concept, critical, in CDA, is '… to be understood as having distance to the data, embedding the data in the social, taking a political stance explicitly, and a focus on self-reflection as scholars doing research.' (Wodak 2001, p. 9). Or, in van Dijk's (2001) terms, it is '… discourse analysis 'with an attitude'…'

Thus, one of the main principles in CDA is that it is concerned with social issues and the role that discourse plays in those issues, that is, whether it helps to (re)produce them, challenge and/or transform them. According to Fairclough & Wodak (1997, p. 258), 'CDA sees itself not as dispassionate and objective social science, but as engaged and committed.'

Therefore, such social political stance of doing CDA involves looking at discourse from a broader perspective. This means that in doing CDA not only discourse structures are described and analysed but also the relationship of those structures with processes of production and interpretation and with social, institutional and historical structures at a higher level. And '[s]ince discourse is so socially influential, it gives rise

to important issues of power.' (Fairclough & Wodak, p. 258), that is, power and power relations can be manifested via discourse.

Another important principle in CDA is that discourse is historical. That means that any discursive event is produced and has to be understood within a context. In reference to Wittgenstein, Fairclough & Wodak (1997, p. 276), state that 'utterances are only meaningful if we consider their use in a specific situation, if we understand the underlying convention and rules, if we recognize the embedding in a certain culture and ideology, and most importantly, if we know what the discourse relates to in the past.' Context, thus, entails the situation, the discursive rules and conventions, its sociocultural aspect and its relation to previous discourses and/or events/facts, providing the history or historical basis of a particular discursive practice.

In addition to the principles mentioned above, Fairclough & Wodak (1997) also point out that CDA views discourse as doing ideological work, as reproducing or transforming society and culture and as a form of social action. Those principles underlie CDA-based research and are also taken into account in this work.

In this dissertation, thus, I view discourse as a form of social practice, as a way of actively engaging in cultural and social processes where language plays a significant role and might help reinforce, modify and/or contest pre-established norms, values, beliefs and positions in society. Moreover, I also take into account the constitutive nature of discourse, especially in its significance in the construction of relations and identities. However, although I acknowledge the ideological potential of discourse and its importance in the expression of power relations, which are part of the construction of relations and identities, I do not directly address these issues.

In the next section, I turn to the concept of identity and how CDA has incorporated it in its framework, that is, how identity/ies is/are constructed in discourse.

2.3 Identity and its construction in discourse

Wodak et al. (1999, p. 10) acknowledge that identity '… has been a topic of a wide variety of logical, philosophical, psychological, sociological, political and other discussions for quite some time.' Such interest has produced a vast amount of studies and theories on identity. Here, I will discuss only those studies that have worked with identity and its (dialectical) relation with discourse.

In his discussion of the dialectal relationship between discourse and social structures, Fairclough (1992, p. 64) argues that '[d]iscourse contributes first of all to the construction of what are variously referred to as 'social identities' and 'subject positions' for social 'subjects' and types of 'self'.' Even though Fairclough (1992) includes social identities in his social theory of discourse, he does not address the concept of identity itself.

From a socio-cognitive approach, van Dijk (1998, p. 118) defines identity as '… both a personal and a social construct, that is, a mental representation.' Such mental representation involves constructing oneself as a member of different groups and/or categories that can be defined by gender (e.g. man/woman), race (e.g. black/white), profession (e.g. teacher/doctor), and so on, an (abstract) construction from what van Dijk (1998) calls models (personal experiences) of events. Moreover, van Dijk states that

> Since such models [personal experiences of events] usually feature representations of social interaction, as well as interpretations of discourse, both experiences and their inferred self-representations are at the same time socially (and jointly) constructed. Part of our self-representation is inferred from the ways others (other group members, members of other groups) see, define and treat us. (van Dijk, p. 118)

Thus, our own self-representations also depend on the social interactions we have with other people. And many of those interactions are (partially) mediated through

discourse. That way, according to Moita Lopes (2002, p. 32), '[w]hat we are, our social identities, therefore, are constructed through our discursive practices with the other.'

In addition to alterity (the other), Moita Lopes (2002) argues that another central issue is context: '[w]ith the aim of constructing meanings with the other, discourse participants build mental contexts or interactional frames during interaction and project them into that interaction to indicate how they intend meaning to be constructed.'

Those two issues, alterity and context, thus, reinforce the social constitution of discourse. Moreover, Moita Lopes (2002) notes that constraining those issues are the specific social and historical conditions within which discourse participants are embedded. Such conditions determine, for instance, how participants are positioned in discourse interaction and how that position influences the outcome of their discourses.

According to Moita Lopes (2002, p. 34)

> In this view of discourse as a social construction where participants build social reality and themselves through discourse, the construction of social identity is seen as always in process, because it is dependent of the discursive realization in specific circumstances: the meanings that the participants give to themselves and to the others engaged in discourse.

In sum, we can view identity as (personal) mental representations of (personal and social) experiences that are projected in discourse interaction by discourse participants in specific discourse events. Thus, the analysis of identities in discourse has to take into consideration what (mental) representations are being projected into a given discursive practice, that is, what personal or social identities are being constructed, reinforced, challenged or transformed through those projections.

In his analysis of the construction of social relations and the self, Fairclough (1992) focuses on a sample of a doctor/patient interaction to discuss how properties such as turn-taking, topic control, exchange structure, formulation, modality, politeness

and ethos, the latter being related to the construction of the self, are used to build social and identity relations.

More recently, Fairclough (2003, p. 159) refers to styles to discuss identities: 'who you are is partly a matter of how you speak, how you write, as well as a matter of embodiment – how you look, how you hold yourself, how you move and so forth.' In this perspective, Fairclough (2003) includes not only linguistic features (phonological features such as pronunciation and intonation as well as vocabulary and metaphor) but also body language (facial expressions, gestures, stance as well as clothing, for instance) as one way of manifesting identity[2]. In this work, the analysis of the linguistic features of the rap lyrics will be developed in Chapter 6.

Wodak et al. (1999) have developed an approach (see section 2.5 below) which draws upon Ricoeur's distinction between identity as sameness and identity as selfhood in his philosophical theory of identity. Such distinction has been the basis for the elaboration of the discursive strategies Wodak et al. (1999) have used to analyse the construction of the Austrian national identity. Those strategies and their linguistic realizations have been used in this study to analyse the construction of identities in the lyrics by Racionais MC's. That analysis is carried out in Chapter 5.

In the next section, I move to the discussion of another concept which is, nevertheless, related to the discussion of the concept of identity above: race and racial identity.

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[2] Rap music is a multimodal type of discourse, or multisemioticized, that includes rhythm and poetry (*rap*), performance, and dressing style, among other variables; my analysis, however, focuses on the lyrics only even though I understand that such choice may cause limitations.

2.4 Race and racial identity

According to Guimarães (2002), Paul Gilroy, one of the most influential Black scholars from England, has recently positioned himself against the use of the term race. The reasons for Gilroy's (1993, 1998) position are, according to Guimarães (2002, p. 48-49), that: '… 1) regarding the human species, there are no biological "races", that is, there is nothing in the physical and material world that can be correctly classified as "race"; 2) the concept of "race" is part of a mistaken scientific discourse and of a racist, authoritarian, anti-egalitarian and antidemocratic political discourse; 3) the use of the term "race" only reifies an abusive political category.'

Although Gilroy acknowledges that the term race has been so far the only possible self-identification category for people 'whose oppositional, legal and even democratic claims have come to rest on identities and solidarities forged at a great cost from the categories given to them by their oppressors' (Gilroy, 1998 *apud* Guimarães, 2002, p. 49), he asserts that that argument would be no longer valid. For Gilroy,

> Blackness can now signify vital prestige rather than abjection in a global info-tainment telesector, where the residues of slave societies and the parochial traces of American racial conflict must yield to different imperatives deriving from the planetarization of profit and the cultivation of new markets far from the memory of bondage. (*apud* Guimarães, 2002, p. 49)

What Guimarães (2002, p. 49) observes is that, then, 'according to him [Gilroy], we no longer need, historically, the racial identity to advance our points of view; … and as a consequence, we no longer need the idea of race, be it biological, be it social.'

Although agreeing with Gilroy in some of his points, Guimarães (2002) questions whether Black anti-racists and activists would be able to renounce the idea of race that unifies them. For Guimarães (2002), Gilroy's positioning might work well for Western Europe, but argues that it might not be the case for the United States or Brazil. In relation to the Brazilian racial politics, then, Guimarães (2002, p. 50) states that

'…"race" is not only a necessary political category to organize the resistance to racism in Brazil, but it is also an indispensable analytical category: the only one that reveals that discrimination and inequalities that the Brazilian notion of "colour" encompasses are effectively racial and not only of "class".'

Guimarães (2002) comments that, in Brazil, the term race from the 30s to the 70s was discarded in popular and academic discourse in favour of the term colour to refer to complaints of inequalities and discrimination. According to Guimarães (2002, p. 51),

> These [blacks' complaints] were stifled voices. To obtain recognition, they felt the need to intensify their identity discourse, which focused on the ethnic and cultural reconstruction. Such identities are only today well grounded on the political terrain. Even more: to assume the Black identity meant, for Blacks, to attribute to the idea of race present in the population that identifies itself as white the responsibility for the discrimination and inequalities that they [Blacks] effectively suffer. That is, it corresponded to an accusation of racism. And precisely because such discrimination and inequalities were never recognized as having racial motivation, either by the political elites and middle classes, that define themselves whites, or by the working class. Then, the retaking of the category of race by Blacks corresponded, in reality, to the retaking of an anti-racist struggle in practical and objective terms.

The anti-racist struggle grew stronger from 1978 onwards with the emergence of the 'Movimento Negro Unificado' (Unified Black Movement), which refuted the racial democracy myth, '[t]he idea that Brazil was a society without a 'color line', without legal barriers to people of color rising to official posts or positions of wealth and prestige…' (Guimarães, 2003c, p. 133) and claimed the African origin to identify Blacks. The concept of race, meaning '… discourses about the origins of a group…' (Guimarães, 2003a, p. 96), then, was taken by anti-racist movements to advance their struggle against discrimination and to reinforce their processes of identification.

More recently, there has been an intense debate in Brazil concerning the possible approval in Congress of a law that establishes quotas for African Brazilians and indigenous people at public universities in the country and the Racial Equality Statute,

whose major aim is to advance public policies that fight racial discrimination and eliminate or reduce racial inequalities affecting African Brazilians (*cf.* Guimarães, 2003b; Maggie & Fry, 2004; Maio & Santos, 2005)

The issue has recently produced two manifestos, 'Todos tem direitos iguais na República Democrática' (Equal rights for all in the Democratic Republic), which is against the law and the Statute and was signed by 114 scholars and prominent figures in Brazil and the 'Manifesto em favor da lei de cotas e do estatuto da igualdade racial' (Manifesto in favour of the quotas law and the racial equality statute), in opposition to the former and signed by 330 scholars, political and cultural figures as well as representatives of different organizations for the advancement of African Brazilians (see, for instance, 'A guerra das cotas' in the Folha de São Paulo Sunday supplement *Mais!* of 09/07/2006).

At the heart of the discussion, which is complex and will probably demand more discussion and reflection by Congressmen and society as well, lies the issue of racial classification and identity. Those against the quotas argue that the law and the Statute will promote racism subscribed by the state when dividing vacancies at universities according to colour and/or race. Those in favour argue that society has always been divided according to colour and/or race and the law and the Statute are important affirmative action policies aimed at reducing discrimination and inequality.

One implication of the quotas law is that a prospective university student to be included in the quotas allowance will have to declare/identify herself/himself as an African Brazilian or an indigenous person (some public universities have already implemented varying systems that include colour/race, amongst other criteria such as level of income, to reserve vacancies for African descendants and indigenous people). Some scholars, for instance Maio & Santos (2005), have suggested that the criterion of

self-identification is too subjective and it might open the possibility of fraud. Guimarães (2005), on the other hand, argues that it reinforces what anti-racist movements in Brazil have always fought for: 'that the 'coloured ones' assume their blackness.' (p. 217).

In a country where the 'whitening myth' (Maggie, 1996), the myth whereby miscegenation would gradually whiten African Brazilians, lost its strength in the 50s but '… kept wide popular acceptance [and] also continued to condition the behaviour of non-whites, through the efforts of social and biological whitening' (Hasenbalg, 2005, p. 248), assuming ones' blackness might not be an easy task.

Such issue in Brazil has long been a political, social as well as a cultural struggle, a struggle that is mediated and constituted through discourse and discursive practices. Organizations like the 'Teatro Experimental Negro' (Black Experimental Theatre) in the 40s and 50s and the 'Movimento Negro Unificado' (Unified Black Movement), set up in 1978, have been at the forefront of that struggle. More recently, popular cultural practices such as the 'bailes blacks' in the late 70s and early 80s (Felix, 2006) and the hip hop movement of the late 80s and 90s have also had an important role in that struggle.

This dissertation also aims at exploring the role of discourse in the promotion and assertion of the African Brazilian identity. And it does so through the examination of the importance of the hip hop movement to a young generation of African Brazilians.

2.5 Wodak's discourse-historical approach

Like Fairclough, Wodak also advocates that language use is a form of social practice (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Both perceive that there is a dialectical relationship between discourse and social structures and that, on the one hand, these social structures shape and affect discourse and, on the other, they are affected by discourse, as we have seen above.

Moreover, Wodak et al. (1999) argue that discourse affects or constitutes social reality in a number of ways: first, they have an important role in the production and construction of certain social representations. For instance, discourse may help in the construction of national identities and other groups of people (as in her study on the discourse of national identities in Austria); second, they can sustain and/or justify a certain social status quo; third, they might help maintain and reproduce the status quo; and fourth, they may also play a role on the transformation or even destruction of the status quo. These form what Wodak et al. (1999) call sociological macro-functions and further distinguish them into discursive strategies: constructive, perpetuating, transformation, and destructive strategies of discourse.

The discourse-historical approach that has been developed by the Vienna School of Discourse Analysis, led by Wodak, in the study of political discourse and national identities uses an interdisciplinary approach which encompasses historical, socio-political and linguistic dimensions. The socio-political and historical dimensions are accounted for in two ways: first, information on the original historical sources and historical background of the discursive practices under investigation are gathered together; and second, diachronic changes that a specific discourse undergoes during a certain period of time are investigated.

The linguistic dimension is accounted for in three distinct categories of analysis: contents/topics; strategies; and linguistic forms and means of realisation. At the contents/topics category, for instance, Wodak et al. (1999) identified five semantic areas in their investigation of the discursive construction of the Austrian national identity: the idea of a 'homo austriacus' and a 'homo externus'; the narrative of a collective political history; the discursive construction of a common culture; the discursive construction of a collective present and future; and the discursive construction of a 'national body'. Of the three categories of analysis, content is the only one that is specific and cannot be transferred to other objects of study. Strategies and linguistic forms of realisation, on the other hand, might in principle be investigated in different types of data.

Strategies are the interface between the goals or intentions of the text producers and their actual realization. As we have seen above, strategies are divided into four types: constructive strategies; strategies of perpetuation and/or justification; strategies of transformation; and destructive strategies.

In relation to Wodak et al.'s (1999) study of the discursive construction of national identities, constructive strategies involve linguistic aspects that help to establish particular groups in a specific discourse. They encompass those linguistic features that help to constitute a 'we' group and a 'they' group. Similar to the strategy of positive self-presentation and negative other presentation in van Dijk's (2001) approach, constructive strategies promote, on the one hand, identification and solidarity with the we-group, and, on the other, distancing from and marginalization of the they-group.

Strategies of perpetuation are concerned with the preservation and support of identities as when, for instance in the case of Austrian national identity, the we-group identity is being threatened by the they-group, foreign migrants. The justification strategy is used to legitimise a past action that has been put into question, as when, for

instance, family reunion applications of immigrants in Austria are denied (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999).

Strategies of transformation are used to transform a situation or identity that is fairly well-established into another. They are used, for instance, 'to reformulate and redefine family reunion applications in terms of bureaucratic language, or to reformulate their rejection in legal and moral terms.' (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999, p. 93)

Finally, destructive strategies are used to eradicate or demolish a situation or an identity as, for instance, the battering of Austria's neutrality ideal (Wodak et al. 1999).

The last category of analysis in this approach is the linguistic means and forms of realisation. At this level, the analysis 'focuses primarily on the lexical units, argumentation schemes and syntactical means which express unity, sameness, difference, singularity, continuity, change, autonomy, heteronomy, etc.' (De Cillia et al. 1999, p. 163). Two other linguistic features receive significant importance in the discourse-historical method, especially in the study of identities: the use of the personal pronoun *we* and the figures of speech, personification, synecdoche, and metonymy, which help in the construction of sameness between people.

Those three categories of analysis, content/topics, strategies and linguistic means of realization, are used here in the study of the discursive construction of identities in the rap songs. The analysis proper, using those categories above, will be presented in Chapter 5. Also particularly important here is the historical dimension of Wodak's (2000) approach in its two aspects: the broader historical background when that discourse was produced, the historical facts and events related to the representations in that discourse and the historical emergence of the hip hop and rap as cultural movement/phenomenon as well as the change of its discourse over time. These aspects are discussed in relation to the data in chapters 3 and 4.

2.6 The concept of antilanguage

In order to understand the concept of antilanguage, Halliday (1978) states that it is necessary to first understand the concept of antisociety which for him is '... a society that is set up within another society as a conscious alternative to it.' (ibid., p. 164). Thus, if an antisociety is an alternative society consciously opposing the dominance of a standard one, an antilanguage is the language generated by that alternative society. According to Podgórecki (1973), in his account of the subculture of Polish prisons and reform schools,

> In a world in which there are no real things, a man is reduced to the status of a thing .... The establishment of a reverse world .... can also be seen as a desperate attempt to rescue and reintegrate the self in the face of the cumulative oppression which threatens to disintegrate it. (cited *in* Halliday, 1978, p. 168)

Again, the creation of a distinct social structure, a reverse world, forms the basis of the emergence of an antilanguage and this new social structure with its own set of values is then an alternative reality. For Halliday (1978, p. 171, his italics) '[t]he antilanguage arises when the alternative reality is a *counter*-reality, set up *in opposition to* some established norm.'

In reference to previous accounts of the counterculture of vagabonds in Elizabethan England, the antisociety of modern Calcutta, and the antilanguage called 'grypserka' from Polish prisons, Halliday explains that these antisocieties developed their own language and social structure from the very basic need for secrecy, as well as a communicative force and/or verbal art.

One of the most striking features of an antilanguage is that it is relexicalised, or even better, overlexicalised. That is, a word used in the standard language is exchanged for a new one or a group of new words in the antilanguage. For instance, in the Calcutta underworld language there are 22 words for bomb and 41 for police. Halliday (1978, p. 165) states, however, that '… relexicalization is partial, not total: not all words in the

language have their equivalents in the antilanguage.' He further argues that this is due to the fact that only the vocabulary more closely related to the activities of the antisociety is overlexicalized. This overlexicalisation of words is, thus, '…the result of a never-ending search for originality, either for the sake of liveliness and humour or, in some cases, for the sake of secrecy.' (ibid., p.165)

Another feature of an antilanguage is its functional orientation towards the interpersonal and textual modes of discourse and its foregrounding of social values. The interpersonal mode is highlighted because '… sets of words which are denotatively synonymous are clearly distinguished by their attitudinal components.' (Halliday, 1978, p.166); the textual mode, on the other hand, is highlighted because of the emphasis on verbal competition. And social values are more foregrounded in an antilanguage because of '… what Bernstein refers to as the 'sociolinguistic coding orientation', the tendency to associate certain ways of meaning with certain social contexts.' (ibid, p. 166) As Halliday argues, these orientations are more prominent in an antilanguage because of a counter-attitude towards the dominant social structure.

More important, however, according to Halliday (1978), in the discussion of antilanguages is the fact that a totally homogeneous language in one end of the scale of the sociolinguistic order, with no variations whatsoever, and two distinct languages, a language and an antilanguage, on the other end of that scale are idealised constructs (see figure below). In reality, what we find in the sociolinguistic order are standard and non-standard dialects which are closely related to the distinction between a language and its antilanguage.
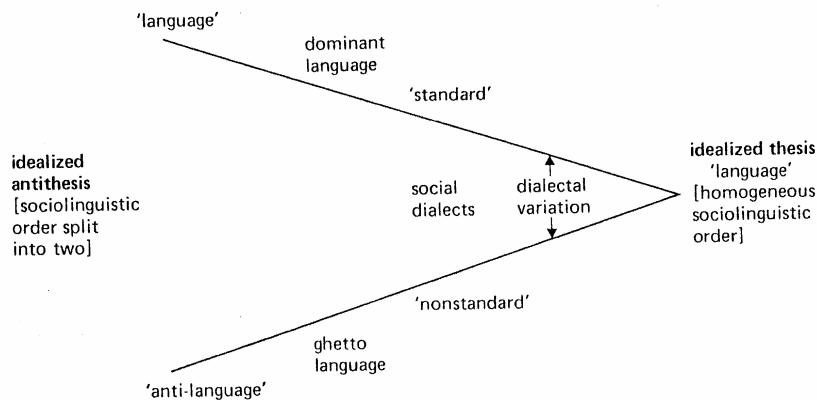
Fig. 1 Types of sociolinguistic order (Halliday, 1978, p. 179)

Thus, what Halliday (1978) emphasises when incorporating the concept of antilanguages to the study of language as a social semiotic is that it helps to explain the concept of social dialect. As we have seen before, an antilanguage is the language of an alternative society as opposed to the dominant one. A social dialect, according to Halliday (1978, p. 179),

> … is the embodiment of a mildly but distinctly different world view – one which is therefore potentially threatening, if it does not coincide with one's own. This is undoubtedly the explanation of the violent attitudes to nonstandard speech commonly held by speakers of a standard dialect: the conscious motif of 'I don't like their vowels' symbolizes an underlying motif of 'I don't like their values.' The significance for the social semiotic, of the kind of variation *in the linguistic system* that we call social dialect, becomes very much clear when we take into account the nature and functions of antilanguages.

This sort of variation in the linguistic system that Halliday calls social dialect refers to a '… cluster of associated variants – that is, a systematic pattern of tendencies in the selection of values of phonological and lexicogrammatical variables under specified conditions.' (1978, p. 181)

Thus, the concept of social dialect as encompassing phonological and lexicogrammatical variations and the expression of a different perspective of the world

serves here as the underpinning concept to explain the richness of the language of rap, as we shall see in Chapter 6.

2.7 Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have presented CDA as my main theoretical framework. I have decided to work with this framework due to its approach to discourse as instances of language in use, that is, language not seen as a static entity but as a dynamic one, embedded in social practices at different levels of pervasiveness.

I have also discussed the concept of identity and how it is incorporated in CDA approaches, specially the one devised by Wodak et al. (1999), the discourse-historical approach.

Another important concept that has been discussed was the concept of race and racial identity. That discussion is especially relevant here due to the purpose of this study, that is, the investigation of the discursive construction of identities, and racial identity being one of them.

After that I presented Wodak's et al. (1999) approach, which I have used as the tool for the analysis of data and I ended the chapter presenting the concept of antilanguage proposed by Halliday (1978), which underlies the study of the lexico grammatical features of the data.

Chapter 3

A short history of Hip Hop and Rap

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will present the social-historical context in which hip hop and rap have emerged in the United States, starting, in the next section, with a general overview of the influence of the social movements of the 60s in African American music and art in general. After that, I move into the 70s to describe the beginning of a cultural movement that has become known as hip hop, which rap is part of, and the rise of rap, in the 80s and 90s, as the biggest selling musical genre in the United States.

In section 3.4, I provide a general overview of some studies that have been carried out in the United States on hip hop and rap. After that, I present the context where Brazilian hip hop and rap have emerged and its general development in the country. Then, I present a brief account of the group Racionais MC's, how it was formed and its recording career. Finally, section 3.7 discusses some research conducted on Brazilian hip hop and rap and is followed by the concluding remarks section, which closes the chapter.

The aim of that general overview of hip hop and rap, both in Brazil and in the United States is to provide a social and historical understanding of that cultural phenomenon. Such understanding serves as background for the development of this particular study and is intended to make the reader more acquainted with that cultural movement and its cultural practices.

3.2 Setting the stage

The 60s was a decade of highly significant social, cultural, and political movements all around the world. In 1968, for instance, protests initiated by students against the university educational system in Paris, France, and later joined by other sectors of the French society dissatisfied with De Gaulle's politics, led to the famous 'Night of the Barricades' on May 10th, when real confrontation between protesters and the police force took over the city. In Germany, clashes between students and police also followed after protests against the attempt on the life of a student leader. In the former Czechoslovakia, a political reform aimed at the democratization of the country called the Prague Spring, was repressed by the Warsaw Pact troops who took over the city in August 20th (Garcia & Vieira, 1999; Cardoso, 2001).

In Brazil, in April that year a student was murdered during police repression after students protested against the military regime. On June 26th, the 'One hundred thousand March' through the streets of Rio de Janeiro demanded the end of censorship, repression, and the return of democracy. Later that year, more precisely on December 13th, the military regime decreed the AI-5 (Institutional Act nº5) closing down the Congress, arresting oppositionists and suppressing civil rights (Garcia & Vieira, 1999; Cardoso, 2001).

In the United States, the televised images of the battlefield during the Vietnam war showing peasants being killed, their villages being destroyed, and also a high number of US soldiers' casualties made opposition against the war reach an all time high with protests all over the country and also abroad. And riots became common in many American cities after the assassination of black leader Martin Luther King in April, 1968. However, in the United States in particular, protests and social movements actually started much earlier in the 60s.

For instance, protests against racial segregation grew stronger after the famous Sit-in Movement in February, 1960. Four African American college students, after being denied service at a 'whites only' lunch counter in a grocery store in Greensboro, South Carolina, refused to leave and remained peacefully seated until the store closed. Their initiative helped to start what later became known as the Black Revolution (Franklin, 1980).

According to Vincent (1995, p. 47), '[l]ed by churchgoing blacks, challenges to southern segregation spread like wildfire in the form of boycotts, sit-ins, legal challenges, marches and speeches'. Such intense social struggle among African Americans eventually led to the emergence of the Black Power movement, whose political ideals, among others, were to unite the African Americans in the United States and build a sense of community, and the Black Arts movement, whose artists gave expression to those ideals.

African American musicians as well as dramatists, poets, choreographers, novel writers and other artists produced art that helped strengthen the protests happening on the streets with the marches and speeches. According to Watkins (2001, p. 376), '[t]he nationalist minded Black Arts Movement, for example, used poetry, literature, and theatre to cultivate a sense of peoplehood and community activism in their struggle for social justice.' Soul music artists like Curtis Mayfield and Marvin Gaye and Funk music master James Brown were some of the artists who produced sharp criticisms to segregation and helped build African Americans self-esteem (Watkins, 2001).

3.3 From the 60s onwards and the emergence of hip hop

The Civil Rights movement, the Black Power movement, the opposition against the Vietnam War, the hippie movement and the counterculture were some of the movements of the 60s in the United States that challenged long-established values and beliefs of the American society. And after a decade of intense social manifestations, the 70s '… began to acquire the reputation of a decade devoid of social upheavals…' (Vincent, 1995, p. 205). Also according to Vincent (ibid., his italics), 'without war footage, riots, or tribal rock gatherings like Woodstock, the counterculture seemed to disappear, and the culture of *television* took center stage.' In a similar way, protest music was backgrounded and the soundtrack of the 70s, reflecting the escapism of the time, became known as disco music.

With a N° 1 hit called 'The Hustle' in 1975 by Van McCoy, disco music was popularized. Disco clubs flourished in most American cities and the dancing experience was taken to its height, both in the United States and worldwide, with the 1978 film 'Saturday Night Fever'. With catchy dance songs from the Bee Gees, Yvonne Elliman, Tavares and others in the soundtrack, the glamour of the disco clubs, and the dance steps performed by actor John Travolta, the disco experience became fashionable all around the world (Vincent, 1995).

In New York, the home of the famous 'Studio 54' disco club, however, not everyone enjoyed the discomania. South and West Bronx young African Americans, for instance, regarded disco as a very simplistic and dull kind of music. According to Williams (1992, p. 164) '… disco, by the very nature of its production – composed in the studio by engineers and producers combining various prerecorded tracks to make a record – was incongruent with spontaneity, improvisation, and participatory re-creation, the values that have traditionally defined black expressive culture.' To counter the

dominance of disco music, which used '… black R&B stations … as testing grounds for singles headed for largely white audiences' (Baker, 1991, p. 198), some of those young African Americans started making their own music.

DJ Kool Herc, a Jamaican from Kingston who moved to the USA in the 60s, was one of the first to get his huge sound system, plug it into the base of street lamp posts of parks and corners of residential blocks in South Bronx and, with an also huge record collection, cut the break '… - the instrumental interlude, often dominated by drums or a funky bass, between the lyric's end and its reprise – which could be isolated and replayed' (Williams, 1992, p. 164-165) using two copies of the same record on twin turntables. Still, according to Williams (ibid.), 'soon – in a virtuoso show of manual dexterity, a mocking parody of the advanced multitrack technology that had first created these records – they [the street DJs – Disc Jockeys] were scratching, repeating beats, breaks, words, and phrases on the same record, and mixing beats and breaks from different records.'

Another important figure was Afrika Bambaataa, a DJ who, along with Herc, helped to spread that new way of making music also throwing parties in small venues and residential blocks in the Bronx. Bambaataa and MC (Master of Ceremonies) Lovebug Starski soon created the term 'Hip Hop' when inviting the audience to dance: 'Welcome to the Hip Hop Beeny Bop! That's right ya'll, Hip Hop till you don't stop!' (the term means, literally, to move one's hips – Hip hop history *in* www.zulunation.com). Soon after, hip hop became known as an African American cultural movement that encompassed DJing and break dancing (the initial elements) and graffiti writing and MCing. According to Bambaataa (Hip hop history *in* www.zulunation.com),

> When we made Hip Hop, we made it hoping it would be about peace, love,
> unity, and having fun so that people could get away from the negativity that

was plaguing our streets (gang violence, drug abuse, self-hate, violence among those of African and Latino descent). Even though this negativity still happens here and there, as the culture progresses, we play a big role in conflict resolution and enforcing positivity.

In fact, break dancing was one way Bambaataa saw to reduce gang violence and gang membership via the organization of break dance contests. With the set up of the Zulu Nation in November 1973, a street affiliation who gathered together break dancers, graffiti artists, DJs and MCs, Bambaataa sought to channel the energy of young African Americans in the inner-cities of New York from violence to art and entertainment.

Hip hop, thus, was born as a cultural movement of African American youth who, 'at the other end of the economic scale' (Williams, 1992, p. 164), rejected disco music and disco dancing and created a new hybridized type of music, a new way of dancing, of painting and of singing: rapping.

Rap, an acronym for 'rhythm and poetry', is actually the partnership between DJs and MCs. In the beginning, the MCs would only boast about the skills of the DJs and invite people to dance to their music. It was only in the late 70s that the MCs started rhyming on top of the beats created by the DJs.

With the rising popularity of hip hop and its famous block parties across the Bronx, Queens and Brooklyn, in New York, the movement eventually called the attention of producer and label owner Sylvia Robinson who, foreseeing the strength of rap music, released 'Rapper's Delight' by the group Sugarhill Gang in 1979. According to John Bush (*in* www.allmusic.com), '[i]nfectious and catchy, "Rapper's Delight" borrowed the break from Chic's "Good Times" and became a worldwide hit, eventually selling more than eight million copies'. That single, then, became the first rap to be recorded (before that, DJs and MCs recorded their music on cassettes and sold them to dancers and listeners in their neighbourhoods), opening up a whole new direction for rap music.

A very skilled DJ and contemporary of Kool Herc and Bambaataa, Grandmaster Flash and his group, the Furious Five, recorded in 1982 'The Message', a groundbreaking work in the early history of rap. With that album, '… hip hop became a vehicle not merely for bragging and boasting but for trenchant social commentary, with Melle Mel [the lead singer] delivering a blistering rap detailing the grim realities of life in the ghetto.' (Jason Ankeny in www.allmusic.com). Flash was responsible for introducing new DJing techniques such as 'cutting' – changing from one track to another exactly on the beat; 'back-spinning' – repeating excerpts of sounds by manually spinning the record back; and 'phasing' – controlling the speed of the turntables, and the Furious Five for delivering conscious rhymes such as 'White Lines', an anti-cocaine rap and 'The Message', the title track of the album, which became the first social awareness rap ever, influencing late 80s political rap groups such as Public Enemy and Boogie Down Productions.

From that point onwards, the music industry became more interested in rap (unlike break dancing and graffiti, rap has gained more visibility as a cultural form and as a cultural commodity) and more rap groups began to be recorded. The group Run-D.M.C. mixed rap beats with rock'n'roll guitar riffs and crossed over from the R&B charts to the Pop charts gaining stardom status in the mid 80s and becoming the first rap group to place rap music into the mainstream media. After Run D.M.C., a rap group called Public Enemy took rap music to another level with their highly politicised lyrics, labelling rap the 'Black CNN'. Political rap, then, became the norm in the late 80s and early 90s and was followed by a new direction within the musical genre, called Gangsta rap, initiated by the group N.W.A. (an acronym for Niggaz With Attitude) and a solo rapper, Ice-T, and developed by two famous rappers, the late Tupac Shakur and Notorious B.I.G.. More recent famous rappers such as Snoop Dog, 50 Cent and many

others keep rap music and hip hop in general as one of the major cultural achievements of African Americans.

After this summarized version of the emergence of hip hop and rap in the United States, in the following section I review some studies that have investigated the role of language in that cultural movement.

3.4 Some studies on hip hop and rap in the United States

Since the emergence of hip hop dates back over 30 years, as it was seen above, it is no surprise to learn that written material about it is vast and diversified. From established magazines specialized on hip hop and rap such as 'The Source' and 'Vibe' and guidebooks such as *Hip Hop: The Illustrated History of Break Dancing, Rap Music, and Graffiti* (1984) to MA theses such as *HIP-HOP: women in New York´s street culture* (1985) by Nancy R. Guevara and doctoral dissertations such as *Keepin' it real: towards an Afrocentric aesthetic analysis of rap music and hip-hop subculture* (1996) by Ronald J. Stephens, to name a few, literally dozens of issues that are present in hip hop and, more specifically, in rap music are analysed and discussed, ranging from its history, gender relations, race relations and identities to sexism, misogyny and violence, amongst others. However, as it is not the objective of this work to provide an exhaustive review of what has been written on hip hop and rap in the United States, I will discuss only those studies that have focused on the linguistic practices of hip hop and rap.

In the United States, the language of rap and hip hop is closely linked to the African American language (hereafter AAL), also known as 'Black Language', 'Ebonics', 'African American English', or 'African American Vernacular English' (Smitherman, 1997; Morgan, 2001; Alim, 2002, 2004a, 2004b). According to Alim (2004a, p. 389), early research on AAL

… started with investigations "deep down in the jungle" in the streets of South Philly … that recorded "black talkin in the streets" of America (Abrahams 1964, 1970, 1976) and the analysis of "language behavior" of Blacks in Oakland (Mitchell-Kernan 1971) to the analysis of narrative syntax and ritual insults of Harlem teenagers "in the inner city" (Labov 1972) to the critical examination of "the power of the rap" in the "Black idiom" of the Black Arts Movement rappers and poets (Smitherman 1973, 1977) and an elucidation of the "language and culture of black teenagers" who skilfully "ran down some lines" in South Central Los Angeles (Folb 1980).

Although those studies focused on the linguistic practices of the African American communities, '… it was a Belgian student of African history and linguistics at the University of Ghent who first collected data about hip hop culture in the Lower East side of New York City in 1986-87.' (Alim, 2004, p. 388)

According to Alim (2004), it was only in 1997 that an African American sociolinguist, Geneva Smitherman, published a paper discussing the inextricable relation between AAL communicative practices and linguistic patterns, and rap and hip hop. Smitherman (1997) not only described grammatical and phonological features, rhetorical and semantic strategies, but also addressed linguistic prejudice:

> Notwithstanding the grammatical integrity of AAL, by now well established in the scholarly literature, the syntax of rap music is often attacked for its departures from "standard English". Because many rap artists are college educated, and most are adept at code switching, they obviously could employ "standard English" in their rap lyrics. However, in their quest to "disturb the peace," they deliberately and consciously employ the "antilanguage" of the Black speech community, thus sociolinguistically constructing themselves as members of the dispossessed. Even when the message in the music does not overtly speak to racial resistance, the use of the Black speech community's syntax covertly reinforces Black America's 400-year rejection of Euro-American cultural, racial – and linguistic – domination. (p. 274-275)

It is interesting to note that the quote above reinforces and supports the concept of antilanguage developed by Halliday (1978), seen in the previous chapter, in the sense that the language of rap is consciously employed as a mode of resistance and, perhaps even more important, as a mode of identification, that is, using language to belong to a

group or become a group member. As we will see in Chapter 6, this tendency has also occurred with Racionais MC's and the language used in their rap songs.

In her research of the relation between AAL communicative practices and the language of rap and hip hop Smitherman (1997) has observed that variations in linguistic patterns range from grammatical and phonological features to rhetorical and semantic strategies or discourse modes. The most widely used grammatical feature she mentions is the 'habitual be' such as in the example 'The Brotha be looking good', referring to '… actions or attributes that are continuous, intermittent, or ongoing,…' (ibid., p. 272) Another example of grammatical feature is the past participle 'been' to refer to a remote past as in 'We been worked that out' meaning 'we worked that out a long time ago'.

Some of the phonological features mentioned by Smitherman (1997) are, for instance,

a. the use of '… /Ang/ and /ank/ … in words such as *think*, *sing* and *drink*. This is how we get the popular expression, "It's a Black Thang" [not "thing"].' (ibid., p. 274);

b. the non-existence of the post-vocalic –r sound, found in EAL [European American English], in AAL such as in the lines of the song 'Do it like a G.O.' by the Geto Boys '… I'm tied [tired] of muthafuckas disrespecting us…' (ibid., p.274);

c. the future tense with go as in 'what you gon do now?', '… a nasalized vowel sound close to, but not identical with, EAL's "gone", and not the same as colloquial EAL's "gonna."' (ibid., p. 273).

Smitherman (1997) has also observed that most rhetorical and semantic strategies common to AAL are found as well in rap and hip hop. For instance, she mentions two types of verbal insult, the dozens/playing the dozens and

signification/signifyin. In the former the target are one's opponent's ancestors, usually her/his mother. From the film 'White man can't jump (1992)', Smitherman (1997, p. 276) gives this example:

> Yo momma so fat, she fell over, her leg broke off,
> and some gravy pored out.
> I saw yo momma kickin a can down the street
> I asked her what she was doin, and she said movin.

What Smitherman (1997, p. 276) emphasises is that '… the insult must be funny and original (or a new twist on an old line). And, most important, it must not be literally true because, then, it is no longer a game.'

Signification/signifyin, on the other hand is directed at the target person rather than his/her relatives. And it often is indirect and subtle and '… used to make a point, to issue a corrective, or to critique through indirection and humor.' Other AAL and hip hop rhetorical strategies are:

a. narrativizing, that is, when everyday talk is performed as a story, usually used to persuade the other to share your views or to make a point;

b. braggadocio, as when one brags about her/his skills and abilities or being powerful;

c. sampling, when rap artists not only sample the earlier soul and funk music but also famous speech and lines from earlier important figures such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Finally, Smitherman (1997, p. 279-280) explains what she argues as one of the most important but '… least understood communicative practices in AAL…', semantic inversion or flippin the script: .

> It is a process whereby AAL speakers take words and concepts from the EAL lexicon and either reverse their meanings or impose entirely different meanings.

> In the Hip Hop world, New York and Los Angeles, gigantic sites of Black oppression, become "Zoo York" and "Los Scandalous." Semantic inversion/flippin the script was an act of linguistic empowerment as Africans in America took an alien tongue and made it theirs; simultaneously, they created a communication system that became linguistically unintelligible to the oppressor, even though it was his language.

Some of the examples Smitherman (1997) provides are the expression 'to be down', which actually means 'to be up for something' or to be supportive and enthusiastic, and the well-known term 'nigger'. Different from the negative connotation the word has in EAL, in hip hop (and with a different spelling) a 'nigga' or 'niggaz' are one's best friends or, for the girls, their boyfriends or lovers. However, in AAL, 'nigger', with a negative meaning, is used to refer to anyone who behaves wrongly or negatively and, thus, it can also be applied to European Americans. Smitherman (1997, p. 281) further adds that '[e]ncoded within the rhetoric of racial resistance, *nigga* is used to demarcate (Black) culturally rooted from (White) culturally assimilated African Americans.'

Once again, the patterns and practices of AAL and rap and hip hop present similar features and attitude towards the (dominant) society as to the discussion of Halliday's concept of antilanguage we have seen in the previous chapter. In Smitherman's words '… rap music of the Hip-Hop Nation simultaneously reflects the cultural evolution of the Black Oral Tradition and the construction of contemporary resistance rhetoric.' (1997, p. 283)

Morgan (2001) has also explored the linguistic practices of hip hop. In her study, besides the practices and patterns studied by Smitherman, Morgan also focused on the study of words used in hip hop to explore '… the type of innovation in terms of source of word and grammatical category.' (2001, p. 199) For a word to be considered a hip hop word, at least two, out of three, criteria had to be met: it has to be used by other artists in their songs and interviews; second, it has to be used by young urban African

Americans; and/or third, it should be included as a new invented word not necessarily derived from previous words. Morgan (2001) further classified innovations into:

a. 'reclaimed words', words previously used in AAL but that underwent semantic inversion;

b. 'change of word class', where the grammatical class of a word is different from its use in standard English;

c. 'reduced word', when a word loses a consonant, syllable or vowel; and

d. 'reduced words', when more than one word is placed together and loses a consonant, syllable or vowel.

An example of a 'reclaimed word' would be *gaffle*, which previously meant an ordeal and now refers to harassment by the police, as in the example by rapper Ice Cube 'I was hassled and gaffled in the backseat'. The word *madd*, for instance, becomes a quantifier as well as an adjective, an example of 'change of word class' as in 'I drop madd rhymes', meaning crazy and lots. In the following stanza by rapper Jay-Z, the word 'instead' has been reduced to *steada*:

> Steada treated, we get tricked/Steada kisses, we get kicked/It's the hard knock
> life!!!.

Finally, an example of reduced words is found both in the lines by rapper Jay-Z and rapper Aceyalone, respectively, where '*I'ma*' shows the reduction of *gonna*/*going to* into 'a'. (all examples appear in Morgan, 2001, p. 203-204).

> I don't know, but I'ma be on, for eons and eons (Jay-Z)
> I'ma try my best, and if you real like I real (Aceyalone)

For Morgan (2001, p. 204-205, her italics), '[i]n Hip Hop, the *Word* is both the bible and the law; a source of worship and competition. … Unlike the music, rhythm, and sounds of Hip Hop, the particular linguistic ideology of the cultural and speech community – the ideology of the *Word* – is the one aspect which, by definition, remains particularly urban African American.'

The investigation of the words in Brazilian rap is one feature that will be also explored in this work. It is my belief that the linguistic choices, especially vocabulary choices, employed by Racionais MC's in their songs are choices that represent/reflect the linguistic patterns and practices of the Brazilian hip hop community and Brazilian urban youth.

3.5 Hip hop and rap in Brazil

With the commodification of rap by the music industry in the late 70s and early 80s in the United States, what once was an African American inner city kind of music soon spread around the world conquering followers in many different countries. Needless to say, due to the identification of hip hop with African American and Latin youth and also with their social problems in the inner cities of New York, most of their foreign followers were also of African descent and/or immigrants from underdeveloped countries (especially in Europe), that is, minorities that identified themselves with that African American movement (Weller, 2000; Androutsopoulus & Scholz, 2003).

In a similar fashion to that in the United States, hip hop and rap in Brazil also started in the streets and parties ('Bailes Black') in the city of São Paulo. In the mid to late 70s, young African Brazilians were listening and dancing to the soul and funk rhythms of international and national artists such as James Brown, Marvin Gaye, Aretha Franklin, Tim Maia, Jorge Ben Jor, Tony Tornado, Cassiano, Carlos Dafé, Gerson King

Combo, Banda Black Rio, and others in the parties – 'Bailes Black' – promoted by party organizers ('equipes de baile') such as Chic Show, Zimbabwe, Black Mad and Kaskatas (Andrade, 1999; Silva, 1998, 1999).

Already acquainted with the American and Brazilian soul and funk music and the Black Power aesthetics, the public of those parties began to listen to the first rap records in the mid 80s. For instance, in 1984 the single 'Rapper's Delight' by the Sugarhill Gang (1979) was released in Brazil and played at those parties and on radio programs such as 'Sambarilove' run by Chic Show's DJs on Bandeirantes radio station, Circuit Power' DJs on Brasil 2000 radio station, and on Pool FM (Silva, 1998). Because the DJs were constantly looking for the latest records in order to make their parties successful, those radio shows and parties helped to introduce and popularize rap to the African Brazilian youth.

Alongside the parties and radio shows, in the central area of São Paulo, more precisely on the corner of streets 24 de Maio and Dom José de Barros, in the 24 de Maio shopping mall, and in front of the São Paulo Municipal theatre, a group of dancers led by Nelson Triunfo started to dance the break to the sound of break beats recorded on cassettes and played on the 'box' – a portable sound system, called 'boom box' in the US – during lunch time (some of the b-boys – break boys – worked in offices in the central area of São Paulo), calling the attention of passers-by and the African Brazilian youth who gathered round the mall. Soon, besides 'Funk Cia.' (the break dance group led by Nelson), other break dance groups (in São Paulo, they were called 'gangues de break'; in the US, the term was 'crew') started to emerge such as the Back Spin, Crazy Crew, Nação Zulu, Street Warriors, Black Juniors and Villa Box.

As the number of groups increased, the use of public space in the central area of São Paulo began to be questioned by shop owners in the area who saw the performances

as something negative for their businesses and confrontation with police officers soon occurred. That led the groups to move to São Bento underground station, after an arrangement with the public administration of the city and of the station allowed its use for the performances of the groups (Silva, 1998). The station became the home of break dance in São Paulo and a huge number of young teenagers, mainly African Brazilians from the suburbs, would meet and perform for their peers and passers-by. Some of these b-boys, after having contact with the 'tagarela' – a nickname given to rap in those days due to its fast rhyming over the beats – decided to write their own rhymes and sing them, and others decided to DJ, accompanying the former ones. An example of that was the duo Thaíde & DJ Hum, who met each other at São Bento station while break dancing and later decided to form one of the first rap duos of Brazil.

In the late 80s, the party promoters ('equipes de baile') Chic Show innovated and opened up 'Clube do Rap' (the Rap club) within their parties, a space where rap contests revealed new rap groups. The result of those contests, which Kaskatas (another 'equipe de baile') also began to promote, was the release of the first two rap compilations in the country, 'Ousadia do Rap' (Kaskatas) in 1987 and 'O Som das Ruas' (Chic Show) in 1988. Although the importance of those black parties to the emergence of African Brazilian rap cannot be questioned, Silva (1998) argues that the music produced in the parties (and the two compilations aforementioned) focused more on the rhythm rather than the lyrics as opposed to what was being done at São Bento where hip hop elements (break, graffiti, and rap) were more integrated and a higher concern with the message started to take form.

From the hip hop movement at São Bento station came the compilation 'Hip Hop Cultura de Rua', released in 1988. With groups like O Credo, Código 13, MC Jack and the first two recordings by the rap duo Thaíde & DJ Hum, the album sold around

60.000 copies (Silva, 1998). 'Homens da Lei', one of the two rap songs from the duo, was already at that time criticising the police violence in the suburbs of São Paulo. Another compilation, 'Consciência Black', released in 1989, brought the BB Boys – Mano Brown and Ice Blue – with the song 'Pânico na Zona Sul' and KL Jay and Edy Rock with 'Tempos Difíceis'. Both duos would later join and form one of the most famous rap acts in Brazil, Racionais MC's (Silva, 1998). With those two songs, which contained open criticisms to the situation of young African Brazilians in the main cities of the country, a general standard was set within African Brazilian rap music and what came next in its history in Brazil followed the path opened by Thaíde & DJ Hum and Racionais MC's.

From that moment on, the hip hop and rap movement expanded considerably in the 90s: dissidents from the hip hop movement at São Bento underground station, who focused more on the rap music scene, started to gather around Praça Roosevelt and a new hip hop site in the city was established. From there, hip hop spread to other places in the country and new groups emerged such as MV Bill from Rio de Janeiro, GOG and Câmbio Negro from Brasília, Da Guedes from Porto Alegre, Faces do Subúrbio and Sistema X from Recife, Black Soul from Belo Horizonte, Negrociação from Florianópolis among many others. It also expanded away from the confines of the music, dance and graffiti and embraced affirmative action projects such as the work with non-governmental agency Geledés, 'Projeto Rappers', and the project of the Secretary of education during Luiza Erundina's term as mayor of São Paulo, called 'Rap nas escolas – Rap…Pensando a educação'.

Although conquering its status as a cultural and social movement throughout the country, hip hop and rap in Brazil have been largely overlooked and many times criticised by the mainstream media. In spite of that, young African Brazilians (and

African Americans in the US), in search of ways to, in the very fist place, entertain themselves, found in hip hop and rap an original and creative forum for the discussion of their social conditions and the construction of their own identities. In sum, as a genuine response to their social exclusion, hip hop and rap might be considered one of the most important cultural phenomena to emerge in the last century, both in the United States and in Brazil.

In the next section I will present a brief biographical account of the rap group Racionais MC's, whose songs comprise the data which is analysed in the following chapters. After the overview of the emergence of hip hop and rap in Brazil we have seen above, it is also relevant here to know how the group, which is considered one of the best rap groups in Brazil, was formed, how it developed its career, who the members are, among other things. Again, this is intended to make the reader aware of and informed about the group that wrote the lyrics I analyse in this study.

3.6 The rap group Racionais MC's

(Pic. 1 – The members of Racionais MC's)

In the picture above, which is printed on the back of the booklet of their latest CD – '*Nada Como Um Dia Após O Outro Dia*' (2002), we see all four members of the rap group Racionais MC's: from left to right, Ice Blue, MC (singer/rapper); KL Jay, the Disc Jockey (DJ); Mano Brown, lead MC (singer and songwriter); and Edi Rock, MC (singer and songwriter).

The recording career of Racionais MC's started with the help of Milton Salles, a music producer and manager who is one of the main figures in Brazilian hip hop today. According to Mano Brown (Faro, 2003, Ensaio TV show, TV Cultura), back in 1988, Salles was in contact with DJs and MCs from the hip hop crowd (break dancers, graffiti

artists, MCs, DJs) who gathered round São Bento underground station in São Paulo to record a demo tape. On one of the days set for the recording of that tape, Salles passed by the station to pick up some of the rap singers/MCs but one of them did not show up. He then asked the hip hop crowd who were around whether they knew anyone else who could sing. Pedro Paulo Soares Pereira (Mano Brown)[1] and Paulo Eduardo Salvador (Ice Blue), who had started writing lyrics and had been singing using the trash bin from the station to make the beats, were indicated by the crowd who had already noticed the artistic potential of the duo.

Once at the studio, Mano Brown and Ice Blue met Edivaldo Pereira Alves (Edi Rock) and Kleber Geraldo Simões (KL Jay), a duo Brown and Blue had already seen performing in the parties, 'bailes black', and which inspired them to start rapping/singing. They were introduced, recorded together for the demo tape and later joined to form the group Racionais MC's (the name Racionais is inspired on the title of the album 'Racional'(1975) by Tim Maia).

The songs recorded already showed that the group had the potential to write compelling songs criticizing the living conditions of the majority of poor and black people from the suburbs of São Paulo. According to Silva (1998), William Santiago, one of the owners of the independent record label, Zimbabwe, thought the songs 'Pânico na Zona Sul' and 'Tempos Difíceis' were too strong lyrically when compared to the other songs selected to be in the compilation which was aimed at the 'bailes black'. DJ Cri, producer of the tracks of the compilation album recalls that

> [t]he day that Milton brought the demo tape, we also brought to William's office, in Santana, the tape deck and the cables to listen to it. He thought the songs were too heavy. He said that it would be difficult to work on that. But William recorded them. He put the songs as the last tracks of both sides of the

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[1] According to Pedro Paulo, colleagues started to call him Paulinho Brown because of the James Brown's funk beats he used to tap on the bus on the way back home. Later, someone else called him Mano Brown, which he enjoyed it and kept it. Paulo Eduardo took his artistic name, Ice Blue, from the song 'Nego Blue' by Jorge BemJor.

LP, but recorded them. He decided to take the risk 'I felt obliged because they were saying things in the lyrics that I had gone through in my childhood'. (Kalili, 1998)

A year later after the compilation 'Consciência Black' was released, the group recorded their first album, 'Holocausto Urbano', in 1990. That album confirmed their artistic talent and sold 50.000 copies (Rodrigues, 1998). In 1992 they released a two-song single called 'Escolha seu Caminho', which was followed by their third work 'Raio-X do Brasil', released in 1993 consolidating the group's career. According to Rappin' Hood, another well-known rapper from São Paulo,

> [t]hat record represented a lot to rap. It was the first album in this musical genre to sell more than 200 thousand copies in the country. 'Raio-X do Brasil' surprised me for the freedom of speech of those guys. They really said a lot of real things, things that I thought very few people in rap would have the courage to say. My impression when I listened to it was: 'That guy is going to be arrested'. I have a very high appreciation for this record, you cannot deny that it represented attitude. We already had Thaíde & DJ Hum at that time, but before Racionais rap was a bit naïve, it had no discourse. They brought that to rap.
> (in http://www2.uol.com.br/shoppingmusic/marco2002/volumemaximo.htm)

Nevertheless, it was in 1998 with the album 'Sobrevivendo no Inferno' that the group gained national recognition. That album was acclaimed, even by the mainstream media, as 'one of the best records of the history of Brazilian music' (Pereira Jr, 2002). Released independently and without any marketing campaign, the album sold over one million copies, a performance no other rap group in the country has ever achieved.

Their latest album 'Nada Como Um Dia Após O Outro Dia', a double album, was considered one of the top 10 records of 2002 by the readers of the Folhateen supplement (Folha de São Paulo, 13/01/2003) and the editors of the same publication (Folha de São Paulo, 16/12/2002). With that album, Racionais MC's also won the best group, best album, and best song ('Negro Drama') awards at the 'Prêmio Hutuz', an event promoted by CUFA (Central Única das Favelas) in Rio de Janeiro that since 2000

has been recognizing the work of the best artists in rap and hip hop in Brazil, and it is the only one of its kind.

In almost 20 years of musical career, Racionais MC's has produced some of the best rap music in the country, has influenced many other rap groups and artists and has consolidated its name in the history of this musical genre and in the history of the hip hop cultural movement in Brazil.

3.7 Some studies on hip hop and rap in Brazil

Recent work in Brazil in different areas of the social sciences (Silva, 1998, 1999; Herschmann, 1997, 2000; Weller, 2000, 2004; Dayrell, 2005; Felix, 2006) has explored both hip hop in São Paulo and funk in Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte. However, unlike the studies carried out in the United States and presented in section 3.4 above, in Brazil, to my knowledge, there have not been studies on rap and hip hop carried in linguistics and CDA. This study is an attempt to fulfil that gap.

Dayrell (2005) has focused his investigation on the socialisation processes of young people living in the slums of Belo Horizonte. His main objective was to know how those young people constructed themselves and were constructed as subjects within a historical context where, as he argues, they tend to be de-humanised. According to Dayrell, in such a context, cultural consumption and production becomes an important site for the construction of their identities and practices of being young.

Working with three rap groups and three funk groups from Belo Horizonte, Dayrell (2005) sets out to understand how the members of these groups construct their reality around such musical styles: what meanings are given to them, what ways of socialisation are created through them and what social practices are developed in dealing with them. In addition, he also tries to establish the relationship between this

particular social and cultural experience of the groups' members and their participation in more traditional social domains such as the school, family and work.

Also studying the funk and hip hop movement, Herschmann (1997, 2000) looks at how these cultural practices uncover the tension and conflict potential present in different levels of the Brazilian society. He discusses the fact that the representation of violence in Brazil produced by the mainstream media in the early 90s[2] had a substantial effect on the long-standing general perception of the country as a 'peaceful' place. Such perception, he argues, was mainly constructed through the symbolic resources present in literature and music, which hindered the conflicts and tensions of everyday life.

Analysing the representation of the funk and hip-hop movements produced by the mainstream media as well as the discourses (interviews and lyrics), rituals (concerts and 'bailes') and the social practices in which the young members of these movements were involved, Herschmann (2000) argues that the style, cultural practices and, specially, the music produced by the funk and hip hop movement have contributed to the discussion of the emergence of a plural and fragmented society where conflicts and tensions are a fundamental part of its structure.

Another study (Silva, 1998) has focused exclusively on the hip hop movement originated in São Paulo. Silva (1998) describes how the movement has emerged in the city, how it has developed as a cultural phenomenon and how its musical production has helped to promote new social and discursive practices. Concentrating his research on rap, he traces its origins in the break dance performances at São Bento underground station and 'Praça Roosevelt' (São Paulo), and in the 'bailes black' in the early 80s. He also discusses the relationship between the musical production of the early 90s and the

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[2] the famous 'arrastões' in the beaches of Rio de Janeiro in the early 90s were often related to youth movements which have led the young people involved in the hip-hop and funk movements to be portrayed as the subjects or active participants of those incidents in the mainstream media.

construction of the African Brazilian identity (as we will see below), and analyses how rap relates to the urban changes, their consequences, and the responses produced by the minority youth group to such changes.

As we have seen in section 3.5, Brazilian rap has emerged in the parties, 'bailes black', and the streets of São Paulo through the consumption and consequent appropriation of that musical genre already established in the United States. According to Silva (1998), through specialised magazines and, mainly, the imported LPs that the DJs of the 'bailes black' had access to and played in the parties, the identification with rap and hip hop was initiated.

As some of the African American rap groups of the 80s and 90s emphasised and/or reinforced their African ancestry and revered important black role-models, that tendency was also confirmed in Brazil, where the African American black pride was appropriated by Brazilian rap groups to promote black youth self-esteem. For Silva (1998, p. 123),

> [t]he use of international afro symbols has been observed contemporarily in segregated spaces as a way of reconstructing youth identity. … The production of symbols of afro origin, especially taken from the North American and Caribbean experience has made possible for black youth to re-signify their most immediate reality. In the case of the rappers from São Paulo, that process has produced the displacement of racial patterns defined by the so-called Brazilian racial democracy. This way, music can be taken as a privileged forum to understand the current processes of the construction of identity mediated by the internationalization of culture.

Different from the black movements and associations such as the Movimento Negro Unificado (Unified Black Movement), where the political dimension of the black identity is made explicit, directly requesting public policies that target the problems of blacks and black communities, specially the ones in shanty towns, the promotion of the black identity in the hip hop movement makes use of aesthetic values to convey that identity. As Silva states (1998, p. 128),

> [r]ap's poetic-musical discourse lies on the subjective dimension apprehended from the common experience lived by the black youth in the suburbs and shanty towns of the country. The political discourse of blackness is verbalised, but not in the forms of the black movement. The perception of discrimination and the construction of blackness happen within a symbolic language, but politically it promotes ruptures in relation to the conceptions established by the racial democracy myth.

Although Silva's (1998) objectives were not particularly focused on the construction of identities in rap and hip hop, he was able to address how symbolic resources, international as well as local ones, promoted by rap music and lyrics helped to foster the African Brazilian identity among the black youth involved with that cultural movement, either as producers or as consumers.

In a comparative research carried out with two rap groups from São Paulo and one from Berlin, Germany, Weller (2000) investigated the relationship between music, identity and discriminatory practices and experiences in both cities. According to Weller (2000), regardless of the fact that there are social, political and historical differences between the two countries, it was possible to observe similarities between black youth in São Paulo and Turkish descendant youth in Berlin concerning the appropriation of hip hop. For instance, the groups in Berlin and in São Paulo, having African American rap groups as models '… listen in part to the same music, wear the same type of clothes, use similar codes and names' (Weller, 2000, p. 214).

However, while in Brazil identification with rap and hip hop happens '…due to segregation for being black and living in shanty towns…' (ibid., p.214), for the Turkish descendant youth in Berlin it is '… due to discrimination as an ethnic minority' (ibid., p. 214)

In Brazil, members of 'Atitude', one of the groups Weller (2000) has interviewed, stated that hip hop '… developed a fundamental role in the process of ethnic identification or "racial identification" … providing positive elements for the

construction of their social and black identity.' (Weller, 2000, p. 215) Hip hop was also fundamental in the process of apprehension of the history and culture of African descendants: '… [t]hrough the rap produced by groups such as Public Enemy, NWA, De La Soul black youth from São Paulo started to know the history of the struggle against racism towards African Americans and from there on they started to research and find similar references in the history of resistance of the black population in Brazil' (Weller, 2000, p. 218)

In Germany, Weller argues that after a specific historical event, the reunification of Germany in 1990, racism and violence against foreigners broke out, carried out particularly by neonazi youth groups known as Skinheads. Such racism and violence made one of the rap groups she interviewed focus their music on making the Turkish and other foreign communities aware of the problem and react against it. According to Weller (2000, p. 228-229),

> rap has become a means of communication or dialogue between the periphery and the centre in São Paulo or between migrants and Germans in Berlin. … At the same time that the accusation of inequalities and discrimination have local references, the themes discussed in the lyrics is automatically connected globally making the internationalization and incorporation of that musical genre possible in different contexts and by young people in distinct nation states.

Like Silva (1998), Weller also points out that identification with hip hop cultural practices, both in São Paulo and in Berlin, has had a strong influence of the African American hip hop movement, which has even shaped black youth's awareness of racial identity in São Paulo and ethnicity in Berlin. Once triggered, those young subjects were able to appropriate foreign values and apply to their local reality.

Although those studies have significantly contributed to increase our understanding of the diverse structures and processes involved in the cultural practices of the hip hop movement, they have not focused their investigation on the role language plays in one specific discursive practice: the lyrics of rap songs. This research aims at

contributing to the existing literature by analysing the importance of language in rap music and, more specifically, to investigate how African Brazilian urban youth identities are discursively constructed.

3.8 Concluding Remarks

The aim of this chapter was first to present a general overview of the social, political and economic tensions and conflicts both in the United States and around the world in the late 60s and early 70s preceding the emergence of hip hop and rap. Then, from there I have provided a brief history of how hip hop and rap have emerged together with the main historical and social background related to it.

After that I have presented research carried out on the language of hip hop and rap in the United States, which will serve as reference for the analysis of the data in Chapter 6.

The next step was the presentation of how hip hop and rap emerged in Brazil and how it became a successful cultural movement also in this country. That was followed by a brief account of how Racionais MC's was formed and the development of its career.

The last section presented scholarly studies in Brazil that have focused on hip hop and rap from different fields of investigation such as education and sociology, among others.

This was intended to provide the reader with a clear and concise history of this cultural phenomenon in order to serve as a support for the analysis of the data that is presented in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

Chapter 4

Recontextualised social practices:

An analysis of the main themes in the songs by Racionais MC's

4.1 Introduction

Song texts or lyrics are like stories. They recount or (re)present different social and discursive practices. According to van Leeuwen & Wodak (1999, p. 96) '…we represent (report, explain, analyze, teach, interpret, dramatize, critique, etc.) some other social practice(s), whether discursive or not, and this therefore always takes place outside the context of the represented practice.' When represented, thus, any given social and/or discursive practice is recontextualised (a term van Leeuwen & Wodak borrow from Bernstein), that is, placed into another context, into another discursive practice such as, for instance, a song.

The social and discursive practices that are recontextualised in songs may be (re)presented using different textual or rhetorical structures. Some may be (re)presented as narratives, others as expository texts and some may even become hybrid texts combining two or more rhetorical structures. In that respect, Meurer (1998, p. 19) calls attention to the difference between notional structures and surface structures in Longacre's discourse typology: '[n]otional structures are related to text function or overall text purpose, while surface structures have to do with the actual textualisation of the functions or purposes writers intend their texts to fulfil.'

What Meurer (1998) further stresses is that those two structures, notional and surface, are not necessarily the same in a given text, that is, songs, for instance, might

have different surface structures but they might refer to the same overall notional structure. According to Meurer (1998, p. 14), '[n]arrative [as a notional structure] is a highly productive text type in the sense that it can be used not only to narrate but also to describe, expose and argue.' Thus, following Meurer (1998), in my analysis I consider that the songs in my corpus have a narrative notional structure because they recount, represent and recontextualise other social and discursive practices: they narrate other practices.

Moreover, another aspect of narratives that Meurer (1998) highlights is their community-building and unifying function, that is, narratives encompass (problematic) characters, situations and events that can relate to similar situations and events of readers and listeners:

> Readers are exposed to events where human beings they can identify with – and who in turn relate to other human beings within similar social communities as the reader's – are seen in action. … Narratives are excellent rhetorical means to bring agents into action. And in narrative structures readers can mirror themselves in the action of 'visible' agents…' (Meurer, 1998, p. 40)

That community-building function and the identification processes narratives can trigger are also relevant for the purposes of this investigation. The stories that rappers narrate in their songs help their listeners/audience to build a sense of community as well as their identities through a mirror-like identification process with the characters (the agents) and the situations and events (the action) of those stories.

That is also what Moita Lopes (2002, p. 64) stresses when he says that narratives '… as ways of organising discourse through which we act in the social world, have been understood as having a central role in the way we learn to construct our identities in social life. That is, narratives are tools that we use to make sense of the world around us and, thus, of whom we are in this world.'

Rappers, therefore, might be seen as storytellers that, in the process of recontextualising and (re)presenting other social and discursive practices (and the participants involved in them) in rap songs, are also constructing identities and relations: '… when narrating the social life to the other, we are constructing our social identities with our positions towards our addressees and towards the characters that permeate our narratives.' (Moita Lopes, 2002, p. 64)

In the next sections of this chapter I present my observations and interpretation of social practices that are recontextualised/represented in the songs.

As explained in Chapter 1, the lyrics analysed in this dissertation come from five different albums released by the rap group Racionais MC's. My intention in choosing all the records by the group (except a compilation and a live record) was to have a diachronic and broader perspective of their work developed throughout a period of 12 years, from 1990 to 2002. Such perspective enabled me to perceive whether and/or how the themes of the lyrics varied and whether and/or how the discursive construction of identities shifted during the course of those years.

4.2 A general overview of the major themes of the songs

According to van Dijk (2001, p. 101), '[f]or discursive, cognitive and social reasons, the topics of discourse play a fundamental role in communication and interaction.' First, in relation to their discursive aspect, themes[1] encompass the most important information of a discourse or, more generally, what a particular discourse is about. Second, their cognitive aspect is related to processes of text production and text comprehension: language users mentally organize their text and talk through global meanings or themes. And last, themes determine the orientation text producers

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[1] I use the term 'theme' instead of van Dijk's 'topic' in order no to cause confusion with Wodak's 'content/topics' term (seen in Chapter 2) as a category of analysis of the discursive construction of identities, which will be used in Chapter 5.

(speakers, writers, groups and/or institutions) give in their discourses and the impact that may have on action and/or on other discourses.

Given the significance of themes in discourse, the next section aims at providing the reader with a more comprehensive account of what the discourse of rap songs is about. In addition, that discourse is discussed against social and historical facts (Wodak, 2000) in order to understand its relation to the broader social context.

Themes are '… often expressed in discourse, for instance in titles, headlines, summaries, abstracts, thematic sentences or conclusions.' (van Dijk, 2001, p. 102) Therefore, the procedure basically focused on album titles, song titles and thematic sentences and verses/stanzas of the lyrics.

My observations regarding the themes of the songs will serve as an introductory step into the 'world' that is recontextualised/represented in the songs (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999) and, hopefully, will make the reader more acquainted with its specificities. The main themes observed in the songs are presented in the next sub-sections and follow loosely their first appearance in the songs (songs from different albums but with the same themes are placed under the same sub-section).

4.2.1 General social and economic problems

Staging the long transition from a military-ruled government to a civilian one, the 80s in Brazil was a decade of constant economic problems: the crisis of the external debt, due to high international interest rates, IMF (International Monetary Fund) loans, and budget cuts in the public sector, among other things, caused the internal economy to suffer drastic changes. Unemployment increased, income reduced and inflation skyrocketed. During president Sarney's term in office a number of economic programs ('plano Cruzado', 'plano Bresser', 'plano Verão') were put into effect rather

unsuccessfully and by 1989, inflation reached a 2,0% daily rate which meant that prices doubled every 35 days (Lamounier, 1990).

It was in 1990 that the first record, '*Holocausto Urbano*', by Racionais MC's was released and two songs from that record, '*Tempos Difíceis*' and '*Beco sem Saída*', address some of the problems (and their consequences) mentioned above.

The song '*Tempos Difíceis*', as the title suggests, presents a discussion of the social, economic and political situation that was affecting many people, or perhaps better, many underprivileged people in the country in the late 80s: poverty, hunger, corruption, violence and crime.

Thus, from a very broad and general problem, *Eu vou dizer porque o mundo é assim/poderia ser melhor mas ele é tão ruim/tempos difíceis, está difícil viver* (I'm going to say why the world is like this/it could be better but it is really bad/hard times, it is difficult to live) the text unfolds into a sequence of cause and consequence of related problems. These problems are further divided into who or what causes them and who or what is affected by them and such division polarizes discourse into '… the representation of us (ingroups) and them (outgroups)' (van Dijk, 2001, p. 103). Thus, we may infer that the in-group, represented by the working-class people, is the one suffering the difficulties of the times and the out-group, represented by those in power, is the one supposedly responsible for promoting those difficulties

The latter group, we may further infer, is represented by the government and politicians who, being responsible for the well-being of the population in general, do not perform accordingly. The lines *Ao invés de fazerem algo necessário/Ao contrário, iludem, enganam otários/Prometem sempre, sempre prometem mentindo, fingindo, traindo/E na verdade, de nós estão rindo* (Instead of doing something necessary/On the contrary, they deceive and fool suckers/[they] Promise always, always promise lying,

faking and betraying/And actually, they laugh at us) seem emblematic of the profile of some politicians.

This polarization between *we*, the in-group represented by ordinary people, and *them*, the out-group represented by the government and politicians, is recurrent throughout the song. Moreover, such polarization is expressed through the strategy of positive self-presentation and negative-other presentation (van Dijk, 2001). The table below gives a few examples of that strategy:

In-group positive self-presentation	Out-group negative-other presentation
• Milhões de *pessoas* **boas** morrem de fome • *Pessoas* [**boas**] trabalham o mês inteiro/Se cansam, se esgotam por pouco dinheiro	• O domínio está na mão de **poderosos**, **mentirosos**/Que não querem saber/**Porcos**, nos querem todos mortos • Enquanto tantos **outros** nada trabalham/Só atrapalham e ainda falam/Que as coisas melhoraram

Table 2. In-group positive self-presentation and out-group negative-other presentation

In these examples we may observe that there are explicit judgements of character (Martin, J. R. & Rose, D, 2003): on the one hand, negative moral judgements such as '*mentirosos*' (liars) condemn the behaviour of the out-group and, on the other, positive personal judgments such as '*pessoas boas*' (good people) provide support and admiration for the in-group. These judgments of character emphasize the positive representation of the in-group and the negative representation of the out-group. We will see further in the analysis of the lyrics that this strategy is recurrent throughout the corpus.

We would normally expect some sort of solution closing this type of expository discourse that presents a general situation and a sequence of problems and evaluations. A solution, however, is not really effected or presented except in the line '*E com isso vem a arte pra com todos liquidar*' (And with that art comes to finish with all of it) suggesting that art, in this case, music, may somehow help diminish those problems. Another line demands some sort of action: '*Se algo não fizermos, estaremos acabados*' (If we don't do anything, we'll be over). What we may infer from the general theme and structure of the text is that the problematic situations discussed are 'given', that is, they are structural and institutional problems. Thus, knowledge and information, criticism and art may come together to confront those problems.

The next song that addresses social and economic problems is '*Beco sem Saída*', also from the first record, '*Holocausto Urbano*'. The song starts with one of the MC's of the group, Edi Rock, wondering what he would be doing if he were not an MC/rapper. As it happens to many people in major cities where finding a job is quite difficult, especially for young people without skills or job experience, he argues he would become a loser, '*rejeitado, perdido no mundo…*' (rejected, lost in the world). Talking about people who are homeless, people who lost their hope, the rapper argues that part of the blame for that lies on the people themselves. Arguing that most of those people are African Brazilians, the lack of self-esteem is one of the problems that affect them:

> *Mas muitos não progridem porque na verdade assim querem/Ficam inertes, não se movem, não se mexem/Sabe por que se sujeitaram a essa situação?/Não pergunte pra mim, tire você a conclusão/Talvez a base disso tudo esteja em vocês mesmos/E a conseqüência é o descrédito de nós negros/Por culpa de você, que não se valoriza/Eu digo a verdade, você me ironiza* (But many don't go further because in reality they want it like that/they are passive, don't move/you know why they are in this situation?/don't ask me, think of the conclusion yourself/perhaps the basis of all that is really within yourselves/and the consequence is the discredit of us blacks/because of you that don't value yourself/I speak the truth and you mock me...)

In order to overcome the situation the rapper suggests that they should get informed and/or listen to the group's message: '*Leia, ouça, escute, ache certo ou errado/Mas meu amigo, não fique parado*' (read, listen, question if it is right or wrong/but my friend don't be passive).

We will see that such strategy of pointing out the problems and making those affected by them better aware, and thus capable of thinking of what can be done to go over those obstacles, is also recurrent in most of the songs.

4.2.2 Vigilantism and police violence

Two songs in particular, still from the first record '*Holocausto Urbano*', address vigilantism and police violence: '*Pânico na Zona Sul*' and '*Racistas Otários*'. The first is a fierce criticism to what was common practice in the 80s and 90s in the outskirts of big cities like São Paulo. According to Manso, Faria & Gall (2005, p. 6, their *italics*)

> The authority of the *justiceiros* lasted nearly two decades. *Justiceiros* were tolerated because local people saw them as allies. … Neighbors saw *justiceiros* as complementing the work of the police, who openly used murders as their own method of keeping order. Some *justiceiros* were policemen or licensed informally to kill by the police. Instead of public authorities helping to put out the fire and guaranteeing the rule of law for all, they threw gasoline into the fire and promoted a cycle of violence, nourishing people's belief that private solutions were the only way. The abundance of guns, the demographic density and the youthful profile of the population made it all worse. … But a time came when these crimes became intolerable. The population and public institutions changed their attitude toward the killings and began to challenge the regime of violence. New policies slowly produced results, thanks to political will and to the development of public institutions and civil society that matured over the years. But progress was gradual and irregular.

Even though there were people who supported the 'work' of the vigilantes, as we have seen in the quote above, in the song it is strongly criticised. Like the previous song, '*Pânico na Zona Sul*' is constructed around the polarization between the in-group and the out-group. The first one comprises the population that live in the slums and shanty towns of the '*Zona Sul*' of São Paulo and the latter are the vigilantes who 'solve' problems with their own hands, as we can see from the lines in the excerpt below:

Justiceiros são chamados por eles mesmos/matam, humilham e dão tiros a esmo/e a polícia não demosntra sequer vontade/de resolver e apurar a verdade/pois simplesmente é conveniente/e por que ajudariam se eles nos julgam delinquentes/e as ocorrências proseguem sem problema nenhum/continua-se o pânico na zona sul (vigilantes they call themselves/they kill, humiliate and shoot at random/and the police does not show any sign/of solving and investigating the truth/because it is convenient/and why would they help if they see us as delinquents/and the occurrences continue without any problem/panic in the Zona Sul)

An aside here is perhaps important and/or relevant: the southern part of the city of São Paulo is the place where Mano Brown, the lead rapper, comes from and, thus, his songs and narratives are, mostly, situated there. In the map below we can visualize better where '*Zona Sul*' is located:
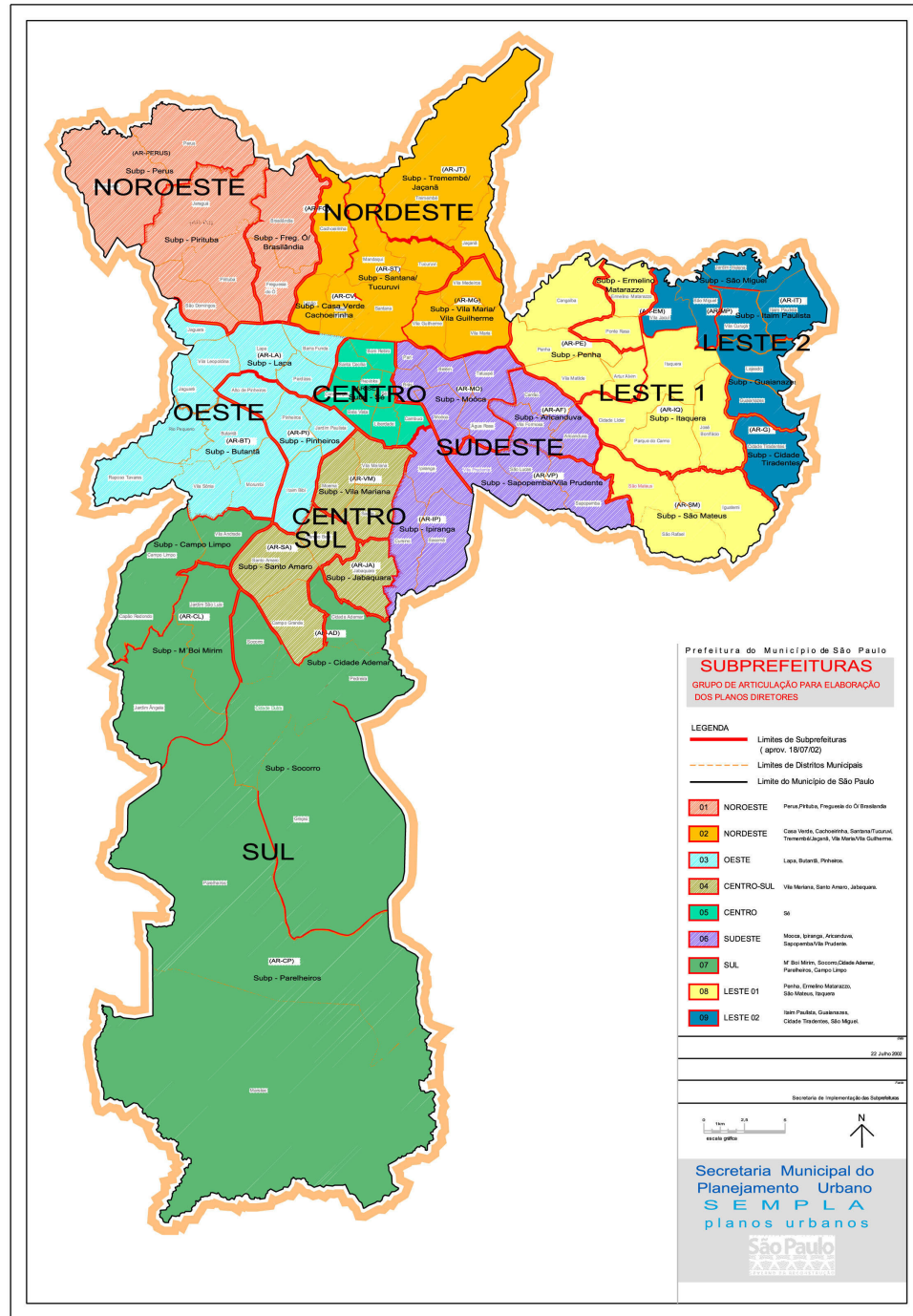
Map 1. (source: www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br)

In the next map, we can see how '*Zona Sul*' is further divided into five local councils: '*Campo Limpo*', '*Cidade Ademar*', '*M'Boi Mirim*', '*Capela do Socorro*', and '*Parelheiros*':
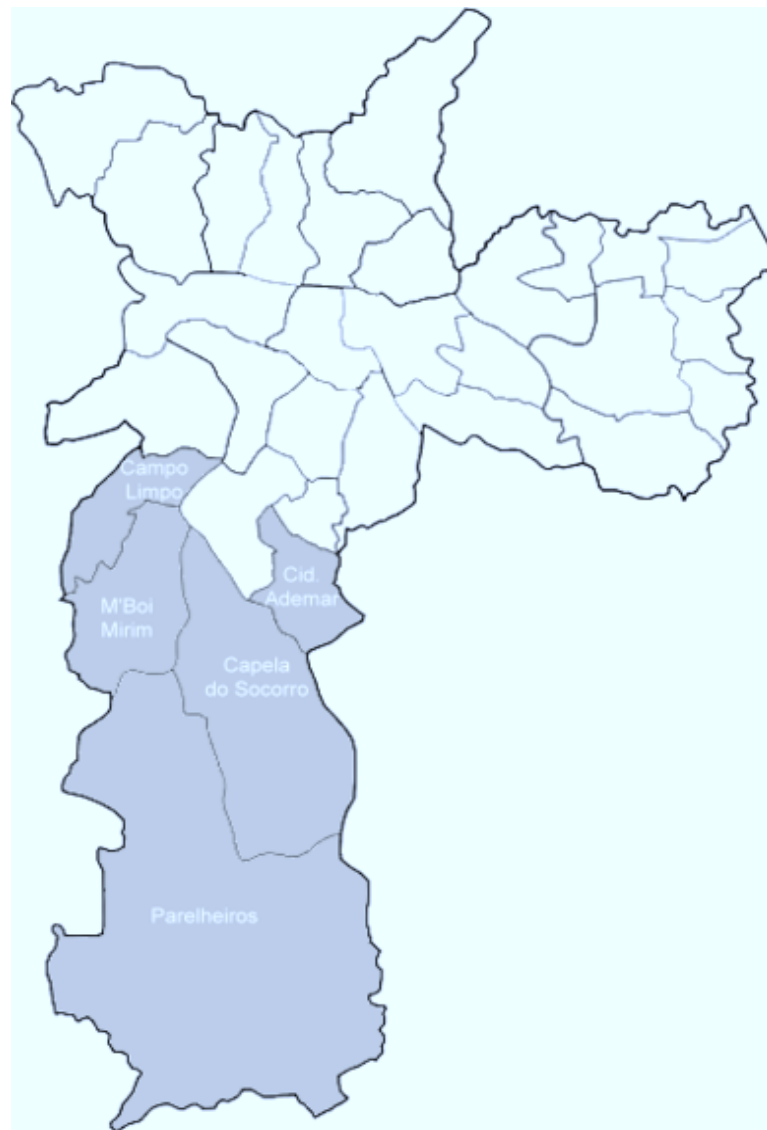
Map 2. the '*Zona Sul*' of the city of São Paulo (in htpp://pt.wikipedia.org)

Those local councils, established for administrative purposes, are further sub-divided into districts. For instance, '*Campo Limpo*', encompasses the districts '*Campo

Limpo', '*Capão Redondo*' and '*Vila Andrade*'; the council '*M'Boi Mirim*' encompasses the districts '*Jardim Ângela*' and '*Jardim São Luís*'.

'*Capão Redondo*' and '*Jardim Ângela*' were considered two of the most violent districts in the city of São Paulo: in 1996, the latter was considered the most violent place in the world by the United Nations Organization; in 2001, it reached the record number of 277 homicides per 100 thousand inhabitants; in 2004, however, that number dropped to 151, a 54% reduction and it has been decreasing since then thanks to public policies that involve the community, local leaders, and the local government (Dimenstein, 2005).

It is no wonder, then, that the themes of some of the songs by Racionais MC's deal with police violence and vigilantes in the first CD and crime and criminality in the following records that happen in their neighbourhood, as we shall see in the next sections.

In a dialogue between the members of the band in the beginning of '*Pânico na Zona Sul*', they argue that innocent people are being killed and that society cannot be more careless, '… *a sociedade sempre fecha as portas mesmo*' (society always closes the door [for us]), indicating that the situation has become uncontrollable and that the people in '*Zona Sul*' are afraid and have no one to ask for help, that is, the social institutions responsible for their safety, the police and the justice system, turn their back on them. It is the 'duty' of the rap group then, as members of that community, to try to make people aware and change their attitudes in relation to the problem, as they say in the following lines:

> *[Nós, os Racionais MC's] Viemos falar/Que pra mudar/Temos que parar de se acomodar/E acatar o que nos prejudica ....*
> *.... Porém se nós queremos que as coisas mudem/Ei, Brown qual será a nossa atitude?/A mudança estará em nossa consciência/Praticando nossos atos com coerência/E a conseqüência será o fim do próprio medo*
> (we're here to say that/to change/we cannot yield/and accept what harms us… but if we want things to change/Hey, Brown, what will be our attitude?/Change will be in our

conscience/acting with coherence/and the consequence will be the end of our own fears…)

Thus, for a community without a voice the rap group takes responsibility to make their voices heard by denouncing what goes on in their neighbourhood: '*a nossa filosofia é sempre transmitir/a realidade em si/Racionais MC's*… (our philosophy is always to transmit the reality itself, Racionais MC's).

Another strong criticism is made in the song '*Racistas Otários*'. If the target in the previous one was the vigilantes, this time the 'enemy' is the police. In a DVD compilation, Rap and Hip-Hop vol. 2 (2004), another rap group, DMN, recorded a cover version of that song and on the video clip, Mano Brown, the lead rapper from Racionais MC's, comments on the song:

> *Aí, é um barato que eu sempre quis falar, esse negócio de preto e polícia... ei, polícia, nóis tamo aqui, não tamo moscando na sua. ...Eu vou fazer uma música pra vê o que dá. Eu vou começar a bater de frente também. Falar assim: chega mano. Agora é o seguinte: cês vão me ouvir. Essa música eu falo 'racistas otários nos deixem em paz.' Mas também se não quiser paz, o que cês quiser eu quero. Se você for ouvir é o que a música tá falando. Firmeza total.*
> (…this is something I've really wanted to talk about, this thing about Blacks and the police... Hei, police, we're here, but we're not fools. … I'm going to write a song just to see what happens. I'm going to confront them. And say: that's it. Now it is like this: you're going to listen to me. In this song I say 'racists suckers, leave us alone.' But if you don't want peace, what you want I'll want too. If you listen to it that's what the song is about. …)

The relationship between the police and the poor communities in the shanty towns of São Paulo, and also in other big cities in the country, has been, at the very least, dubious. For the people who live in slums, the police force is not seen as an institution that is concerned with the safety of the community. Instead, they are the ones that promote violence, seeing people as potential criminals and using their authority to intimidate them. Mano Brown's comments on the topic during a rare performance on television for the TV show *Ensaio* (Faro, TV Cultura, 2003) give a clear and disturbing picture of that relationship:

... a gente cresce numa periferia, né, dentro de uma favela, entendeu? Você sabe o quê? Que você não vê a polícia entrá na favela pra fazê nada de bem pra ninguém. Você vê o quê? Eles invadindo barraco, levando as pessoas presa. Até você sabê o que o cara fez de errado é outra fita. Mas pruma criança a imagem que fica é o quê? A polícia batendo, a polícia espancando, entendeu, xingando. Eles invadiam a favela e xingavam nóis também. 'Vai neguinho, qué vê eu te levá pra favela (sic), fica aí, qué vê eu te levá pra Febem. Ó neguinho, vou te levá você pra Febem.' Os cara já tinham uma visão de nóis deles e nóis também temos as nossa sobre eles. Nóis temos a visão nossa também, entendeu? (We grow up in the suburbs, right, in the slum, right? What do you know? You know that you don't see the police come into the slum to do any good for the people. What do you see? You see them invading the houses, arresting people. Knowing whether or not the guy did something wrong is another story. But for a kid what is the image that is kept? The police beating up, spanking, know what I mean, insulting. They invaded the slums and insulted us too. 'Go away, kid, you want me to take you to the slum, stay there [and you'll see], you want me to take you to Febem. I'm going to take you to Febem.' The police already had their views of ourselves and we also had ours of them. We also have our views too, know what I mean?)

What seems striking in the quote above is the perception kids have, at an early age, of the authoritarian and abusive behaviour the police force has with those living in shanty towns. According to Alvito (2004), such behaviour is historical, not only because of the repression conducted during the military dictatorship regime (1964-1985) in Brazil but also due to the police force objectives when it was formed back in 1809:

It is clear that the military police was trained and used in the repression of dissidents, guerrilla fighters, the contesters, that is, all those who were seen as subversive by the regime [the dictatorship]. But when you study the creation of the military police, that was not created as military police but as the royal guard of police, in 1809, the symbol, the coat of arms of the military police… What do you have in the coat of arms of the military police? You have, above all, the crown, symbolizing the king. In that case, the emperor, D. João VI, who created the royal guard of police. After that, you have, below, on the left side, a coffee branch, and on the right, a sugarcane branch. In the middle you have two crossed guns, and underneath all that it is written 'royal guard of police, 1809'. So, what does this coat of arms refers to? In the name of the king, through the use of force, represented by the guns, what will we defend? Coffee and sugarcane were the main products of that time, we'll defend property. Brazil was a country with slavery. … So, the police was created to be the absent keeper. In the farm, there was a keeper, but not in the city, and the city, suddenly, in 1808, becomes the Court. Suddenly, you have the noble people, the prince, the king, everyone walking there in the middle of who? In the middle of the slaves, of the free ones, in the middle of that crowd which was seen as threatening. They had to put the police to control that crowd. The royal guard of police was doing the outsourcing of punishment. … Thus, that is how the police was created. The police, in England, was created with the parliament, election, democracy; then, the policeman protects the citizen, so much so that it has the figure of the "bobby", that unarmed police officer. And he has the respect of the population which sees him as a representative of the collective interests. Our police do not emerge like this; it emerges to defend society, to beat up black people, to keep the slave and the blacks in their place (Alvito, 2004, p. 16-17)

We can see from the quotes above that blacks and poor people have long been stigmatized by the police and the criminal justice. In the song, the rappers confront the police by calling them '*racistas otários*' (racist suckers). Both words are highly evaluative and reveal the contempt they have for them. Such contempt stem from the values and beliefs they attach to the police and criminal justice: '*o preconceito eterno*' (eternal prejudice); '*a lei é implacável com os oprimidos, tornam bandidos os que eram pessoas de bem*' (the law is merciless with the oppressed, it turns into criminals those who were honest); '*o abuso é demais*' (abuse is too much); '*os poderosos são covardes desleais/espancam negros nas ruas por motives banais*' (the powerful are disloyal cowards/[they] beat up blacks on the streets for stupid reasons); '*no meu país o preconceito é eficaz/te cumprimentam na frente/e te dão um tiro por trás*' (in my country, prejudice is efficient/they shake hands with you/but shoot you on the back).

Thus, words like prejudice, merciless law, abuse, and powerful cowards synthesise what the police and the criminal justice represent for them. And once again, the rappers invite listeners to take action: '*porém direi para vocês irmãos/nossos motivos para lutar ainda são os mesmos/o preconceito e o desprezo ainda são iguais/nós somos negros também temos nossos ideais*' (but I'll tell you brothers/our reasons to fight are still the same/prejudice and disdain are equal/we are blacks, we have our ideals). Fighting racism and prejudice is still imperative: '*50 anos agora se completam/da lei anti-racismo na constituição/infalível na teoria/inútil no dia-a-dia*' (50 years now/of the anti-racist law in the constitution/infallible in theory/but useless in our daily routine).

Mockingly, the song ends with a speech-like voice criticizing (with a long ironical laugh) the still current racial democracy myth in Brazil: '*o Brasil é um país de clima tropical/onde as raças se misturam naturalmente/e não há preconceito racial. Ah,*

Ah, Ah...' (Brazil is a country with a tropical climate/where races mix naturally/and where there's no racial prejudice. Ah, Ah, Ah,…).

Although the difficult relation between the African Brazilian youth and the police is present in other songs such as '*Capítulo 4, Versículo 3*' from the group's fourth CD, that theme is not discussed in a whole song as it is here and will not be further developed.

4.2.3 Class struggle

The song, '*Hey Boy*', also from the first record, is the one that establishes two very important antagonistic characters (and identities): the '*mano*' (brother) and the '*playboy*'. These two terms symbolize, represent and identify, in the modern urban world of African Brazilian rap and hip hop, the black and the white, the poor and the rich, the working-class and the elite, or the people and the State and can be seen throughout the whole work of the group. Moreover, these are terms that can also be heard in the songs of other rap groups and within other discursive practices in hip hop, such as interviews and concerts.

The song narrates a situation where a '*playboy*' is stopped while driving in the neighbourhood where the rappers live. With the lines '*hey boy, o que você está fazendo aqui/meu bairro não é seu lugar...*' (hey boy, what are you doing here/my neighbourhood is not your place) territory is demarcated. This territory is further described as a battlefield, a metaphor that will be constantly referred to in other songs of the group, where life is tough and one has to be always alert because of the dangers it hides. None the less, the rapper emphasizes that even if his neighbourhood is looked down upon, '*…o lado esquecido da cidade/e bode expiatório de toda e qualquer mediocridade*…' (the forgotten side of the town/and the scapegoat of all mediocrity) it

is the place he wants to live in, it is his place. As we will see further in the next chapter, location/geographical origin is one of the most important references for creating identities, that is, one's place promotes the sense of belonging and, emphasizing it, reinforces one's identity.

Apart from that, the song also criticizes the '*playboy*' and consequently the elite, the rich, and the establishment/governments for not doing anything to help solve the problems that are apparent in the outskirts of the town: '*sempre teve tudo e não fez nada por ninguém/se as coisas andam mal é sua culpa também*' (you always had everything e didn't do anything for anyone/if things are bad it is your fault too). Thus, the song also discusses the relation between the 'center' and the 'margins/periphery' of the city through the relation of their inhabitants.

Sampling the 'hey boy' line from the song 'Mind terrorist' by the African American rap group Public Enemy, Racionais MC's highlighted a new sort of referent through which to look at class differences in the country: from their point of view '*playboys*' encompass the 'other' that they are in opposition to. It is through the recognition of, and opposition to, the 'other' that they build their own identities.

The themes of the five songs seen so far, which were taken from the first album – '*Holocausto Urbano*', discuss similar questions while presenting different subject positions (Fairclough, 1989) or social identities. On the one hand, we have the working-class in '*Tempos Difíceis*', the poor and/or blacks in '*Becos Sem Saída*', the people in the community/neighbourhood in '*Pânico na Zona Sul*' and '*Racistas Otário*s' and the '*manos*' in '*Hey Boy*'; on the other hand, there are institutions such as the government, powerful groups such as the politicians and the '*playboys*', and, last but not least, those with whom relations are very close and most of the times hostile, threatening and sometimes even deadly, the police and the vigilantes.

Major problems such as misery, poverty, violence, prejudice, discrimination, among others, it is suggested in the songs, are the consequence of the acts, attitudes and beliefs of the latter social actors. Moreover, if we think of the actual killings carried out by vigilantes and also sometimes by the police in the slums and shanty towns of São Paulo and the country, the title of the album, '*Holocausto urbano*', connects to real situations: many lives are being lost, a real urban holocaust.

The stories that are narrated/recounted or recontextualised in the songs of the first record by Racionais MC's present quite a number of characters/social actors (van Leeuwen, 1992) and social practices thus (re)creating, reinforcing and/or challenging positions and attitudes. In most of them, the stories and the characters/social actors serve as arguments for the rappers to motivate their audience to struggle for change and to be more aware and active. Therefore, those songs and their stories confirm the community-building function of narratives (Meurer, 1998) in the sense that the rap group and (most part of) the audience share the same problems and difficulties recontextualised in them.

In this and the two previous sub-sections, I have discussed in more detail the themes of the songs in the first record because I believe those songs have set a sort of standard or pattern for the songs that would come later (as well as for other rap groups and artists such as Facção Central and MV Bill). Influenced by the African American rap group, Public Enemy, Racionais MC's started their career writing protest songs (*cf.* Pimentel, 2001). And since then, social criticism is a constant issue in their songs.

4.2.4 The African Brazilian identity

The second CD by Racionais MC's, '*Escolha seu caminho*' (Choose your own path), is actually a single record with two songs only: '*Voz Ativa*', with three different versions (a radio version, *a capella* version, and a dance version), and '*Negro Limitado*'. None the less, it is with these two songs that the group, for the first time, directly address the racial identity issue. In the previous record, the song '*Beco sem Saída*' touched on the (lack of) self-esteem of African Brazilians while discussing problems such as unemployment and lack of a decent life and a decent place to live in. This time round, self-esteem and self-assurance are objectively addressed and discussed in order to foster a stronger bond with the African Brazilian identity.

Race and racial identity are two of the most important topics in the rap songs, and are, obviously, directly related to the investigation of the construction of identities that this study focuses on. And although the use of the term race and the black/white racial identity categories are being debated in the academy (as we have seen in Chapter 2), in the practices of the hip hop movement, specially the rap songs, a racialist discourse establishing clear-cut boundaries between blacks and whites is emphasised. Such political positioning is similar to that of black associations such as the 'Movimento Negro Unificado' (Unified Black Movement) but, as Silva (1998) argues, it uses symbolic resources to put forward that position.

Taking the concept of race seen in Chapter 2 also here, let us see how discourses of origin and the issue of an African Brazilian identity is triggered by those two songs as well as others that appear in later records. Thus, in this section I include three other songs from other records that address the same theme: '*Júri Racional*' from the third CD; '*Capítulo 4, Versículo 3*' from the fourth one; and '*Negro Drama*' from their last record.

One of the most significant aspects that these songs share is the positioning of the rap group and its members in relation to the construction of an African Brazilian identity. They assume the position of speakers for the black youth who live in the shanty towns of the country: '*a juventude negra agora tem voz ativa*' (black youth now has an active voice). That active voice is the voice of the rappers who now can express their opinions and beliefs and make their fellow African Brazilian listeners aware of the importance of assuming their blackness. (Note also that, for the first time, 'youth', more specifically, black youth, appears as one of the identities that are constructed in the songs.)

The songs '*Voz Ativa*', '*Negro Limitado*', and '*Júri Racional*' directly address those African Brazilian listeners who seem not to care about being black or black issues. In '*Voz Ativa*', the first stanza starts with '*Eu tenho algo a dizer/e explicar pra você/mas não garanto porém/que engraçado eu serie dessa vez/para os manos daqui/para os manos de lá/se você se considera negro/pra negro será, mano*!' (I have something to say/and explain to you/but I do not guarantee/that I'll be funny this time/for the brothers form here/for the brothers from there/if you consider yourself black/black you will be, brother).

After directly addressing the African Brazilian listener, the rapper/narrator points out that he knows prejudice, '*dizem que os negros são todos iguais*' (they say that all blacks are the same), is what affects his brother ('*mano*'). And the brother is questioned for not getting involved, for being passive, thus, the challenge for the rapper is to promote pride and self-esteem. For that, he argues they need leadership: '*precisamos de um líder de crédito popular/como Malcolm X em outros tempos foi na América/que seja negro até os ossos/um dos nossos*' (we need a popular leader/as Malcolm X has been in América/who is black to the bones/one of us). With other problems such as the lack of

access to resources, lack of representation in the media, and also exploitation, a proposed solution comes at the end, again promoting pride and self-esteem: '*gostarmos de nós, brigarmos por nós, acreditarmos mais em nós*' (like ourselves better, fight for ourselves, believe in ourselves).

In '*Negro Limitado*', before the song actually starts, there is a dialogue between a listener and one of the rappers of the group, who tries to convince the former of the importance of black consciousness (the dialogue continues throughout the song, in-between some of the stanzas). It is then followed by the lines '*Você não me escuta/ou não entende o que eu falo/procuro te dar um toque/e sou chamado de preto otário/atrasado, revoltado*' (You don't listen to me/or doesn't understand what I say/I try to give some tips/and I am called a black sucker/stupid and rebelled).

This song revolves around that fictitious conversation where the rapper/narrator argues with his interlocutor pointing out his weaknesses. He is called a narrow-minded black ('*negro limitado*') for not making up to his mistakes, for bragging about his prowess, and for lacking attitude and awareness of his origins, '*diga qual a sua origem, quem é você?/você não sabe responder*' (tell me your origins, who are you?/you don't know the answer).

As mentioned earlier, '*Voz Ativa*' and '*Negro limitado*' are the only two songs of the single CD '*Escolha seu caminho*'. Upon a close reading of the lyrics, it is possible to observe that the title of that work is clear: young blacks have to make a choice, that is, either they become aware of their origins as African descendants and are proud of that and fight for themselves or they give in to the whitening ideology, becoming self-centred regardless of the problems and difficulties, such as prejudice, that they already have/suffer.

In the song '*Júri Racional*' from the third CD, the theme of the song is no longer the choices a young black can make but it goes further and heavily criticizes the one who has given in. In the first lines the rapper says '*Você não tem amor próprio fulano/nos envergonha, pensa que é o maior/não passa de um sem-vergonha*' (You don't have self-respect/you embarrass us, you think you're the best/but you're no more than a scumbag) to which he later adds '*ovelha branca da raça traidor/vendeu a alma ao inimigo, renegou sua cor*' (our race white sheep, you traitor/sold your soul to the enemy, renounced your colour). The song is thus the condemnation of those who have betrayed the African Brazilian identity and surrendered to the values and beliefs of the white ideology. To make that more effective, at the end of the song a 'judge' rules that the defendant is guilty '*por ignorar a luta dos antepassados negros/por menosprezar a cultura negra milenar/por humilhar e ridicularizar os demais irmãos/sendo instrumento voluntário do inimigo racista/caso encerrado*' (guilty of ignoring the struggle of his black ancestors/of showing contempt for the millennial black culture/of humiliating and ridiculing his fellow brothers/being a volunteer instrument of the racist enemy/case closed).

That song in particular establishes the point of view of the group regarding racial identity. If one is black he/she should stand by the values and beliefs of the group and respect the history of his/her ancestors. It seems clear for them that either one is black and assume his/her blackness and its history, or one becomes 'white', that is, he/she accepts the values of the dominant culture. Such position in relation to race and racial identity has already been noted in Brazilian rap and hip hop by Gordon (1999, p. 2). She states that

> [w]hile it is important to recognize that Brazilian rappers critically engage with their hip hop ancestors and do not import American rap in its entirety, Brazilian hip-hop has been fundamentally influenced by American racial ideologies. In actively embracing a discourse on racial equality and rights, and in drawing on American sources of racial tension and activism for their own public discourse, Brazilian rappers hit two national

nerves: First, they mark themselves as "un-Brazilian" in publicly (and aggressively) critiquing racial inequality. Second, they embrace American ideas of racial consciousness, race as biologically or blood based, and a black/white dichotomy.

As we have seen in Chapter 2, that black/white dichotomy is being contested by some intellectuals with the eminence of the approval of the quotas law and the Racial Statute. It is thus not only a matter treated through symbolic and aesthetic resources in rap and hip hop but also politically once it is discussed by the Brazilian Congress. It is, undoubtedly, an issue that is producing a heated debate since it undermines, once again, the racial democracy myth.

Two more songs, '*Capítulo 4, versículo 3*'[2] from the fourth CD and '*Negro Drama*' from the last one, also deal with the race issue. In the first, before the song starts a guest speaker, Primo Preto, presents statistics referring to the discriminatory practices most young black people go through:

> *60% dos jovens de periferia sem antecedentes criminais já sofreram violência policial*
> *A cada quatro pessoas mortas pela polícia, três são negras*
> *Nas universidades brasileiras, apenas 2% dos alunos são negros*
> *A cada quatro horas um jovem negro morre violentamente em São Paulo*
> *Aqui quem fala é Primo Preto, mais um sobrevivente.*
> (60% of young people in the suburbs without criminal records have already suffered police brutality/three in four people killed by the police are black/in Brazilian universities, only 2% of the students are black/every four hours a young black dies violently in São Paulo/Here is Primo Preto, one more survivor)

After such striking scenario, the first part of the song is about the relationship between the rapper, his discourse and his will to influence his listeners with lines such as '*minha palavra vale um tiro, eu tenho muita munição*' (my words are like a shot, I have a lot of ammunition) and '*vim pra sabotar seu raciocínio/vim pra abalar seu sistema nervoso e sanguíneo*' (I came to sabotage your thinking/I came to shock your nervous and blood systems).

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[2] The song makes reference to religious beliefs, as can be seen in the title, as faith in God is praised. However, I do not address the issue of religion in my analysis.

With a fast-paced rap, Mano Brown states that his intention is to make his listeners/audience change their attitudes. The song also talks about the influence of drugs and alcohol in the suburbs and how some fellow brothers ('*manos'*) become addicted, and that is criticized as a way of losing one's character. It is at this point that we find the opposition between '*preto tipo A'* and '*neguinho*'[3]. The first holds positive values such as being a humble person (*o jeito humilde de ser, no trampo e no role*), being a gentleman (*buscava a preta dele no portão da escola*) and being an example for the others (*um exemplo pra nós, mó moral, mó ibope*). The second, '*neguinho*', is the one who co-opts with the white elite (*começou colá com os branquinho do shopping*) and is engulfed by a life of pleasures (*Ih, mano outra vida, outro pique/só mina de elite, balada, vários drinks/puta de boutique, toda aquela porra/sexo sem limite, Sodoma e Gomorra*).

It seems that the opposition between '*preto tipo A'* and '*neguinho*' is based on a reversal of stereotypes: blacks have positive values and whites have negative ones. According to Hall (1997, p. 243),

> … racialized discourse is structured by a set of binary oppositions. There is the powerful opposition between 'civilization' (white) and 'savagery' (black). There is the opposition between the biological or bodily characteristics of the 'black' and 'white' 'races', polarized into their extreme opposites – each the signifiers of an absolute difference between the human 'types' or species. There are the rich distinctions which cluster around the supposed link, on the one hand, between the white 'races' and intellectual development – refinement, learning and knowledge, a belief in reason, the presence of developed institutions, formal government and law, and a 'civilized restraint' in their emotional, sexual and civil life, all of which are associated with 'Culture'; and on the other hand, the link between the black 'races' and whatever is instinctual – the open expression of emotion and feeling rather than intellect, a lack of 'civilized refinement' in sexual and social life, a reliance on custom and ritual, and the lack of developed civil institutions, all of which are linked to 'Nature'.

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[3] It seems to me that that opposition cannot be grasped by English terms. The term black is commonly translated into Portuguese as 'negro/a' as, for instance, in black youth (juventude negra), blackness (negritude), black music (música negra), etc.

As can be seen in the quote above, the 'norm' is to relate whites with refinement and civilization and blacks with savagery. In the song, the reversal of that 'norm' is shown through:

a. the foregrounding of 'civilized emotional, sexual and civil life' of the *'preto tipo A'*;

b. emptying/denying the white of any positive values, portrayed as showing an 'uncivilized emotional, sexual and civil life'.

Such reversal seems to have the objective intention to persuade the group's black youth audience to avoid white values and the whitening ideology. Moreover, lyrics, being a fictional recontextualisation of practices, allow for such overt 'extreme opposites' (although possible in 'real-life' encounters, they may be less common)

The last song in this section, '*Negro Drama*', from the group's last CD is possible to be interpreted as the group/rappers rise to success and all that that implies as well as a reflexive thinking on the drama of being a poor black from a shanty town in Brazil. The imagery the rappers provide make the lyric resemble a verbal (video)clip. It is a story of success but marked with a lot of obstacles that had to be transposed. This song in particular, unlike the previous ones, does not explicitly emphasize the need to assume one's blackness. On the contrary, it seems to show more a role-model that can be followed.

4.2.5 Criminality

Criminality as a theme in the songs by Racionais MC's appears only in the third album of the group '*Raio-X do Brasil*' with the song '*Mano na Porta do Bar*'.

In that song, the narrative tells the story of a man who gets involved with drug dealing. Divided into five parts/stanzas, the first one describes that man as a well-regarded person in the community with a good relationship with family and friends. In the next stanza, the character starts complaining about his life and expresses his need of more money and desire to stand out of the crowd: '*ultimamente andei ouvindo ele reclamar/que a sua falta de dinheiro era problema/que a sua vida pacata já não vale a pena/queria ter um carro confortável/queria ser um cara mais notado...*' (I've heard him complaining lately/that his lack of money was a problem/that his ordinary life was not worthy/he wanted to have a comfortable car/he wanted to be noticed). In the third stanza, he rejects his friends and girlfriend and starts drug-dealing. In the fourth, he kills a client who had not paid him for his debts and, finally, in the last one, the guy gets killed.

From a well-known person in the community to becoming a drug dealer and getting himself killed, the song foregrounds the wrong choices the guy ('*mano*') has made, choices that an essentialist interpretation would link to poverty (intrepetation that is commonly held by the mainstream media, for instance, usually associating poverty and race with crime and violence). However, the song seems to confirm what Zaluar (1997) calls the ethos of masculinity or virility. According to her,

> The dynamics of the criminal world and the attraction that it exerts, in terms of rational thinking, of the ambition of 'earning a lot' or 'earning without effort', of the values of an ethos of masculinity that would be reached through a criminal activity, comprise the array of alternative attractions, dispositions and earning put to poor young people. … These arrangements and other symbolic associations relating the use of guns, money, the conquest of women, defying death and the conception of an individual totally autonomous and free reveals that the practices of the criminal world are connected to an ethos of virility (Zaluar, 1997, p. 45)

The following lines taken from that song provide examples of that ethos of virility/masculinity:

> *Ele está diferente não é mais como antes/Agora anda armado a todo instante/Não precisa mais dos aliados/Negociantes influentes estão ao seu lado/Sua mina apaixonada, linda e solitária/Perdeu a posição agora ele tem várias...*
> (he's different now from what he used to be/he carries a gun all the time/he doesn't need his mates any longer/influential business people are by his side/his girl, beautiful, lonely and in love with him/lost her place, now she has many others…)

Other songs from the last two albums also deal with the same topic. '*Tô Ouvindo Alguém Me Chamar*', from the fourth album '*Sobrevivendo no Inferno*', is a compelling song with a non-linear narrative structure where a young adult becomes a thief and is killed by two boys who were sent by his former partner. The song starts with the boys saying '*Aí, o Guina mandou isso aqui pra você…*' (Hey, Guina has sent you this…), which is repeated at the end of the song added with the noise of shots being fired. The eleven-minute long song, we might infer, is a recollection of the life of that young adult during his last minutes alive. To add to the drama, throughout the song we hear the sound of heavy breathing, the heartbeats getting slow, and the beeping of a heart monitor machine which goes flat after the last word is sung.

'*Rapaz Comum*', another song from the same album deals with the same theme as the previous one: a young adult who gets involved with illegal activities and ends up being shot dead. In the last album, '*Nada Como um Dia Após o Outro Dia*', the songs '*Eu sou 157*', '*Otus 500*', and '*Crime Vai e Vem*' all deal with issues related to criminality and, thus, will not be further discussed here.

Nevertheless, with a considerable number of songs dealing with criminality, one might wonder why it is such a hot topic. Some music critics, for instance Martins (2002), even suggested that the group is promoting violence. My own interpretation is different, however. Rap in Brazil has been appropriated mainly by African Brazilians

who live in poor suburbs and shanty towns of São Paulo and other cities in the country where criminality, violence, and police brutality abound. It is no wonder then that such issues are present in their songs since rap is a vehicle they have used for speaking out against discrimination and prejudice. Furthermore, a closer inspection of the lyrics suggests that, either explicit or implicitly, the songs seem to portray the message that crime or being a criminal is not at all worthy (in the songs seen above the criminal gets killed, that is, one can get money fast and easy but then life is too short). Thus, perhaps, talking about those issues again and again might be one way rappers find to diminish their suffering or angst of living in such hectic conditions.

4.2.6 The neighbourhood or 'periferia'

In direct relation with the problems and difficulties of the African Brazilian rappers and their youth audience is the place where they live, the suburbs and shanty towns. As we have seen in all the previous sub-sections, those problems happen or are staged in their neighbourhoods, that is, the rappers of the group speak from a specific spatial reference. And although such reference has been observed earlier (see maps and comments in sub-section 4.2.2) there are other songs that tend to emphasise space in order to criticize its living conditions. Two of those songs are '*Fim de Semana no Parque*' and '*Homem na Estrada*' from the album '*Raio-X do Brasil*'; from the fourth album, we have '*Periferia é Periferia (em qualquer lugar)*' and '*Fórmula Mágica da Paz*'; and from the fifth CD, we have '*Expresso da Meia-Noite*' and '*Da Ponte pra Cá*'. Here I will discuss only one song, '*Homem na Estrada*', and the reasons for that are discussed below.

That song tells the story of a former inmate/prisoner who, after being released from jail, wants to start a new life. With a narrative that describes life in the shanty

towns so vividly, it called the attention of Senator Eduardo Suplicy. In a speech at the Congress, he read the whole song for his fellow senators, as a protest against the discrimination of marginalized people. After that, Eduardo Suplicy started to use that song in other events such as lectures at universities and also, together with Mano Brown, at FEBEM (a correction centre for minors) where both had been giving talks. He has used the song as an example of the huge disparities between the haves and have-nots in Brazil while trying to approve a law, designed by him, that aimed to provide family income benefits for those who are disenfranchised.

The lyrics for that song are shown below in order to give the whole picture of the story:

HOMEM NA ESTRADA

Um homem na estrada recomeça sua vida
Sua finalidade, a sua liberdade
Que foi perdida, subtraída
E quer provar a si mesmo que realmente mudou
Que se recuperou e quer viver em paz
Não olhar para trás, dizer ao crime, nunca mais
Pois sua infância não foi um mar de rosas, não
Na Febem, lembranças dolorosas, então
Sim, ganhar dinheiro, ficar rico, enfim
Muitos morreram sim, sonhando alto assim
Me digam quem é feliz, quem não se desespera
Vendo nascer seu filho no berço da miséria
Um lugar onde só tinham como atração
O bar e o candomblé pra se tomar a benção
Esse é o palco da história que por mim será contada
Um homem na estrada

Equilibrado num barranco incômodo, mal acabado e sujo
Porém, seu único lar, seu bem e seu refúgio
Um cheiro horrível de esgoto no quintal
Por cima ou por baixo, se chover será fatal
Um pedaço do inferno, aqui é onde eu estou
Até o IBGE passou aqui e nunca mais voltou
Numerou os barracos, fez uma pá de perguntas
Logo depois esqueceram, filha da puta!

Acharam uma mina morta e estuprada
Deviam estar com muita raiva
Mano, quanta paulada!
Estava irreconhecível, o rosto desfigurado
Deu meia noite e o corpo ainda estava lá

Coberto com lençol, ressecado pelo sol, jogado
O IML estava só dez horas atrasado

Sim, ganhar dinheiro, ficar rico, enfim
Quero que meu filho nem se lembre daqui
Tenha uma vida segura
Não quero que ele cresça
Com um oitão na cintura e uma PT na cabeça
E o resto da madrugada sem dormir, ele pensa
O que fazer para sair dessa situação
Desempregado então
Com má reputação
Viveu na detenção
Ninguém confia não
E a vida desse homem para sempre foi danificada
Um homem na estrada

Amanhece mais um dia e tudo é exatamente igual
Calor insuportável, 28 graus
Faltou água, já é rotina, monotonia
Não tem prazo pra voltar
Já fazem cinco dias
São dez horas, a rua está agitada
Uma ambulância foi chamada com extrema urgência
Loucura, violência exagerada
Estourou a própria mãe, estava embriagado
Mas bem antes da ressaca ele foi julgado
Arrastado pela rua o pobre do elemento
O inevitável linchamento, imaginem só
Ele ficou bem feio, não tiveram dó
Os ricos fazem campanha contra as drogas

E falam sobre o poder destrutivo delas
Por outro lado promovem e ganham muito dinheiro
Com o álcool que é vendido na favela

Empapuçado ele sai, vai dar um rolê
Não acredita no que vê, não daquela maneira
Crianças, gatos, cachorros disputam palmo a palmo
Seu café da manhã na lateral da feira
Molecada sem futuro, eu já consigo ver
Só vão na escola pra comer
Apenas nada mais
Como é que vão aprender sem incentivo de alguém
Sem orgulho e sem respeito
Sem saúde e sem paz
Um mano meu tava ganhando um dinheiro
Tinha comprado um carro, até rolex tinha
Foi fuzilado à queima roupa no colégio

Abastecendo a playboyzada de farinha
Ficou famoso, virou notícia
Rendeu dinheiro aos jornais, cartaz à policia
Vinte anos de idade, alcançou os primeiros lugares
Superstar do Notícias Populares

Uma semana depois chegou o crack
gente rica por trás, diretoria
Aqui, periferia, miséria de sobra
Um salário por dia garante a mão-de-obra
A clientela tem grana e compra bem
Tudo em casa, costa quente de sócio
A playboyzada muito louca até os ossos
Vender droga por aqui, grande negócio
Sim, ganhar dinheiro ficar rico, enfim
Quero um futuro melhor, não quero morrer assim
Num necrotério qualquer, como indigente
Sem nome e sem nada
Um homem na estrada.

Focusing only in the aspects that describe the neighbourhood, we can observe already in the first stanza that it is called the '*berço da miséria*' (birthplace of misery) where only bars and religious meetings were available for the population. However, it is the second and fifth stanzas that provide a crude description of the place: the character lives in a badly built and dirty hut without proper sewage system. The smell is terrible and the place is compared to hell. On top of the problems with basic infra-structure, violence is also present: a girl is found dead after being raped and a drunken guy who killed his mother is lynched. Also drugs and alcohol, sold freely, help to increase the violent behaviour of some people.

The dilemma of the character is that he sees all those problems around him and wonders what he can do to avoid his son to be brought there, away from violence and poverty. However, we learn that, because of his past as a former prisoner, he is not even given a chance to overcome his problems and try to fulfil his goals. In the last part of the song that we can read below, he is taken for another criminal and ends up being killed by the police.

Assaltos na redondeza levantaram suspeitas
Logo acusaram a favela para variar
E o boato que corre é que esse homem está
Com o seu nome lá na lista dos suspeitos
Pregada na parede do bar
A noite chega e o clima estranho no ar
E ele sem desconfiar de nada
Vai dormir tranqüilamente
Mas na calada cagüetaram seus antecedentes
Como se fosse uma doença incurável
No seu braço a tatuagem, DVC,uma passagem, 157 na lei
No seu lado não tem mais ninguém
A Justiça Criminal é implacável
Tiram sua liberdade, família e moral
Mesmo longe do sistema carcerário
Te chamarão para sempre de ex-presidiário
Não confio na polícia, raça do caralho
Se eles me acham baleado na calçada
Chutam minha cara e cospem em mim é
Eu sangraria até a morte, já era, um abraço
Por isso a minha segurança eu mesmo faço

É madrugada, parece estar tudo normal
Mas esse homem desperta, pressentindo o mal
Muito cachorro latindo, ele acorda ouvindo
Barulho de carro e passos no quintal
A vizinhança está calada e insegura
Premeditando o final que já conhecem bem
Na madrugada da favela não existem leis
Talvez a lei do silêncio, a lei do cão talvez
Vão invadir o seu barraco, é a polícia!
Vieram pra arregaçar, cheios de ódio e malícia
Filhos da puta, comedores de carniça
Já deram minha sentença e eu nem tava na treta
Não são poucos e já vieram muito loucos
Matar na crocodilagem, não vão perder viagem
Quinze caras lá fora, diversos calibres
E eu apenas com uma treze tiros automática
Só eu mesmo e eu, meu deus e o meu orixá
No primeiro barulho, eu vou atirar
Se eles me pegam, meu filho fica sem ninguém
O que eles querem, mais um pretinho na febem?

Sim, ganhar dinheiro ficar rico, enfim
A gente sonha a vida inteira e só acorda no fim
Minha verdade foi outra, não dá mais tempo pra nada

- Homem mulato aparentando entre vinte e cinco e trinta anos é encontrado morto na estrada do M'Boi
Mirim sem número. Tudo indica ter sido acerto de contas entre quadrilhas rivais. Segundo a polícia, a
vítima tinha vasta ficha criminal.

    The fate that the character finds in the end is not much different from what can

be seen on the daily news on television. The same goes for the description of the place

where the character lives, an image also frequently present on TV. However, it seems

that the song has the potential to emphasise the importance of looking at places like that

and at the people who live in those neighbourhoods as victims of a cruel system that puts them at the margins of real citizenship.

4.3 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have presented songs as narratives, as recontextualisations of different social practices. The stories or narratives in the songs were divided into major themes. These were further divided into: a. general social and economic problems; b. vigilantism and police violence; c. class struggle; d. the African Brazilian identity; e. criminality; and f. the neighbourhood or '*periferia*'.

Taking a certain distance to look at the themes of the songs, we can observe that in the first record the songs discuss about social inequalities and discriminatory practices involving those (African Brazilians) living in the '*periferias*' of the country. From there, we have a shift to the issue of racial identity in the second album which continues into the third album with the song '*Júri Racional*'. However, in that third album we have the first song dealing with criminality and the involvement of young people in drug-dealing, '*Mano na Porta do Bar*'. We could perhaps connect the theme of the song with the increasing presence and influence of the organized crime in the 90s in the poor communities of São Paulo and Rio (*cf.* Adorno, 2002; Zaluar, 1997, 2000).

The fourth album, '*Sobrevivendo no Inferno*', becomes their best-selling record with narratives related to that pervasive influence of crime and the consequent social disruption of the communities in the poor suburbs. It is in the fifth album, however, that a significant change occurs in the theme of some songs and which was not addressed in this chapter: intra-group relations. It seems to me that, with the success obtained by the group with the fourth album, feelings of resentment within the group's community started to be more frequent.

Thus, in their latest record, songs like '*Jesus Chorou*' talk about how one of the rappers feels about such resentment. I decided to address that issue in Chapter 6 because I believe that such personal narratives discussing intra-group relations have allowed rappers to express themselves more freely, which thus reflected in the use of their social dialect or non-standard variety of Brazilian Portuguese. That theme and the linguistic features of the rap songs will be seen then in Chapter 6.

Finally, to conclude, the aim of this chapter was to make the reader more acquainted with the major themes that are present in the song as well as to provide an analysis of the social and historical events that form the background of the stories in the songs.

Chapter 5

The discursive construction of identities: the case of the lyrics by Racionais MC's

Amo minha raça, luto pela cor
O que quer que eu faça, é por nós, por amor
(in Jesus Chorou, Racionais MC's)

5.1 Introduction

The discursive construction of identities in the rap lyrics written by Racionais MC's is based on or begins with a set of categories brought in by the artists/songwriters themselves (Mano Brown and Edi Rock) and their target audience. First, there is a specific age group: young people (although the members of the Racionais MC's are now in their 30s, they were in their late teens when they first started recording and conquered a legion of young listeners/fans to their music; also, the hip hop cultural movement is, in essence, a youth cultural movement).

Second, they are all urban subjects living in the shanty towns ('*periferias*') of São Paulo (the group/fans/listeners) and other major cities in the country (the audience/listeners/fans), that is, they (re)construct their identities also interacting with that urban environment they are immersed into.

In third place, and related to the previous one, we have social class as another defining category, that is, most of the audience/fans and the group are (or were) poor subjects who belong to the poor communities in those shanty towns. Finally, the

members of the group are all African Brazilians and their target audience is the African Brazilian youth[1].

The analysis that will be presented in this chapter takes those categories or fragmented identities (Moita Lopes, 2002), poor young urban African Brazilian rappers and audience, as a starting point to explore how these and other identities are (re)constructed in the discourse of the rap songs (or in the recontextualised social practices as we have seen in the previous chapter). That means that we will see how, for instance, Racionais MC's, as African Brazilians, (re)construct and/or (re)define the African Brazilian identity in their songs. Thus, the main focus of the analysis is to investigate how the rappers/MC's of that group discursively (re)construct and position themselves and their audience in relation to the stories (and characters) they narrate in the songs.

In the following section, I revisit the discourse-historical approach (Wodak et al., 1999; Wodak, 2000) presented in Chapter 2 in order to discuss the three categories of analysis that will be used in this study. After that, I present the topics, the discursive strategies and the linguistic elements that were observed in the songs related to identity building. In the last section I give an overall round-up of the results found and discuss their relevance.

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[1] Although they acknowledge that they have a non-African Brazilian or white audience that buys their records and go to their concerts, in their songs that audience is addressed as the out-group, that is, whites are set up in opposition to their African Brazilian group identity (this point will be further discussed below).

5.2 Wodak's discourse-historical approach

In Chapter 2, I presented the main aspects of the discourse-historical approach developed by Wodak and her colleagues. In this section, I will review some of those aspects which are relevant for the analysis that will be presented in the following sections.

At the textual level of analysis, the approach devised by Wodak et al. (1999) consists of three interrelated dimensions: a) contents; b) strategies; and c) means and forms of linguistic realizations.

The first dimension, contents, encompasses the semantic areas related, for instance, to the construction of identities. A semantic area refers to a topic that is a superordinate term to which the possible linguistic realizations concerning identities can be attached to. For instance, in this study, I have divided the discursive construction of identities in the rap lyrics into a) the construction of a common place of origin; b) the construction of the African Brazilian identity; c) the construction of the 'survivor/fighter'; and d) the dismantling of the 'Other'. Therefore, those four categories or semantic areas represent the most salient areas where identities are linguistically realized in the rap lyrics analysed.

In the studies on the Austrian national identity carried out by Wodak et al. (1999), they have defined four macro-strategies related to the construction of that identity: constructive, justification, transformation and dismantling or destructive strategies. According to Wodak et al. (1999, p. 33) '[c]onstructive strategies are the most comprehensive discursive strategies. They attempt to construct and to establish a certain national identity by promoting unification, identification and solidarity, as well as differentiation.'

In this work, I focused only on the constructive strategies that helped define or establish the identities of the poor young urban African Brazilians and the 'survivor/fighter', and on the strategy of dismantling the 'Other'.

In addition, those macro-strategies are further divided into assimilation and dissimilation strategies. Assimilation ones create similarity and homogeneity and dissimilation ones create difference and heterogeneity. These strategies helped to identify the linguistic elements that created either similarities or differences.

Finally, the last dimension, means and forms of linguistic realizations, encompasses the actual linguistic elements that are used to create sameness and/or difference. Wodak et al. (1999, p. 35) classify these elements into:

1. Personal reference (anthroponymic generic terms, personal pronouns, quantifiers);

2. Spatial reference (toponyms/geonyms, adverbs of place, spatial reference through persons, by means of prepositional phrases such as 'with us', 'with them');

3. Temporal reference (temporal prepositions, adverbs of time, temporal conjunctions, temporal references by means of nouns, semi-prefixes with temporal meaning).

In the analysis in the sections below, we will see that some of the elements found are, for instance, the inclusive *we* pronoun, possessive adjectives such as *mine* and *ours*, toponyms such as '*minha quebrada*' (my neighbourhood) and so on.

To sum up, the analysis of the discursive construction of identities in the rap songs by Racionais MC's will be based on those three dimensions presented above. Each semantic area or topic mentioned above will be discussed through examples taken from the data and according to the strategies and linguistic elements that were used to realize it.

5.3 Constructing identities in discourse

In the following sub-sections the main contents or semantic areas classified as topics of identity building in the rap lyrics by Racionais MC's will be presented and further developed. Therefore, each sub-section refers to one of the four topics that were determined during the analysis of the data: a) the construction of a common place of origin; b) the construction of the African Brazilian identity; the construction of the 'survivor/fighter'; and d) the dismantling of the 'Other'. And for each topic, the strategies and the means and forms of linguistic realization will be presented and discussed.

5.3.1 The construction of a common place of origin

I have decided to start the analysis with the content/topic that I have labelled 'common place of origin' because it is the first identification aspect that appears in the songs by Racionais MC's. The line '*só quem é de lá sabe o que acontece*' (only the ones who are from there know what happens), from the first song, '*Pânico na Zona Sul*', of their first CD, '*Holocausto Urbano*', synthesizes the whole idea of a common place of origin (to be understood here as where one lives, his/her neighbourhood and not necessarily where one was born) for the young urban African Brazilian rap listeners. That line sets the scene or stage where the stories/narratives in the songs will be developed throughout the whole work produced by Racionais MC's. And the identification of the group and the audience with that place of origin becomes essential to the establishment of their identities: spatial reference provides a sense of belonging, of being part of a community. According to Blommaert (2005, p. 222),

> Space can be filled with all kinds of social, cultural, epistemic, and affective attributes. It then becomes 'place', a particular space on which senses of belonging, property rights, and authority can be projected. Adopting the idea in its most general form, we can say that identities often contain important

> references to space or incorporate spatial locations or trajectories as crucial
> ingredients.

In the case of the lyrics by Racionais MC's, the process of presenting a common place of origin involves presenting its problems and difficulties. And sharing them emphasises sameness or similarity between its members. Again in the line '*só quem é de lá sabe o que acontece*' (only the ones who are from there know what happens), identification is enacted through the use of an inclusion/exclusion strategy that helps the audience/listeners to situate themselves: the adverbs '***só***' (only) and '***lá***' (there) include those people who live in the '*Zona Sul*' of São Paulo (and exclude all others) through a process of recognizing a common problem, '*sabe o que acontece*' (knows what happens), that is, the killings of innocent people by the vigilantes, and identifying themselves not only as potential victims but also as potential 'fighters' against passivity – '[*nós*] *temos que parar de se acomodar/e acatar o que nos prejudica*' ([we] got to stop being passive/and accept what harms us) – as we learn later in the song.

Linguistically, belonging to a particular place is accomplished through the use of place adverbs and nouns, place adjectives and possessive adjectives. For instance, in the example above, the adverb '***lá***' refers to '*Zona Sul*' from the title of the song. In '*Fim de Semana no Parque*' (CD3 – 1), we can find the adjective possessive '***minha***' and the noun '***quebrada***' to refer to their neighbourhood in the line '*estou a uma hora da **minha quebrada***' (I'm an hour away from my 'hood), or the adverb '***lá***' and the noun '***área***', in '*a molecada **lá** da **área** como é que tá*' (how the kids in the 'hood are).

Other important linguistic elements that help to create identification among those who share a common place of origin and its problems are the personal pronoun '***nós***' (we), the object pronoun '***nos***' (us) and the adjective possessives '***nosso***/***nossa***'

(our). The examples below, still from the song '*Pânico na Zona Sul*', show some of the instances where those elements can be found:

> *E **nós** estamos sós/Ninguém quer ouvir a **nossa** voz/ ... E porque ajudariam se eles [a polícia] **nos** julgam delinqüentes/ ... [**Nós**] temos que parar de se acomodar/E acatar o que **nos** prejudica/ ... Porém se **nós** queremos que as coisas mudem/Ei, Brown, qual será a **nossa** atitude?/A mudança estará em **nossa** consciência/ Praticando **nossos** atos com coerência/E a conseqüência será o fim do próprio medo/Pois quem gosta de **nós** somos **nós** mesmos...* (CD1 – 1)
> (And we're all alone/no one wants to hear our voice/ … And why would they help if they think we're delinquents/ … We got to stop being passive/and accept what harms us/ … If we want things to change/Ei, Brown, what should be our attitude?/The change will be in our conscience/Practicing our acts coherently/And the consequence will be the end of our own fears/Because only we like ourselves …

Moreover, the pronoun '***nós***' (we) in the instances above can be taken as an inclusive *we* pronoun, that is, it refers to the members of the rap group, their listeners, and the members of the community ('*Zona Sul*') where panic and fear is spread due to the presence of the vigilantes. That can be contrasted with the use of *we* to refer to the rap group only as, for instance, in the lines '*… e é por isso que nós estamos aqui/e aí mano Ice Blue*' (and that's why we're here for…). The latter example is related to the excerpt above: the problems of the community are not heard and the rap group presents itself as an alternative, using their songs as a vehicle for contestation and criticism.

Also, finding a way out for those problems requires a general change in attitude and an emphasis on self-esteem for the people living in the '*Zona Sul*' of São Paulo, which the use of the *we* pronoun and adjective possessives together with nouns such as '*mudança*' (change), '*consciência*' (conscience), '*coerência*' (being consistent) and the verb '*gostar*' (like) help to stress that collective change, '*a mudança estará em **nossa** consciência/praticando **nossos** atos com coerência/.../pois quem gosta de **nós** somos **nós** mesmos*' (The change will be in our conscience/Practicing our acts coherently/ … Because we're the only ones who like ourselves …). Note that in those lines there is an

overt social and political aim of mobilizing the members of that particular community into perceiving themselves as active social agents capable of overcoming their problems.

Below, we can see more examples where spatial reference and the problems and difficulties related to it is present (the excerpts are labelled with the number of the CD and the track number of the song in that CD where they were taken from. Thus, 'CD1 – 1' refers to the first CD and the first song of that CD; see also the track list in Chapter 1 and the appendixes).

In the three excerpts below taken from the first CD, place is once referred to as the '*lugar esquecido*' (forgotten place), which can be connected to the concept of exclusion '… when people [and the community they live in] are systematically precluded from services, benefits and guarantees generally thought of as a right of the citizen [and the community], offered or assured by the state.' (Zaluar, 2000, p.27) Thus, we can infer that many of the services provided by the state, such as public safety, do not reach (or are not properly provided to) the population living, for instance, in the '*Zona Sul*' of São Paulo. The presence of the vigilantes, the complicity of the police force, and police brutality seem to confirm that possibility.

> *O medo/Sentimento em comum num lugar/Que parece sempre estar esquecido*
> (Fear/Common feeling in a place that seems to be always forgotten) (CD1 – 1)
>
> *Hey boy, o que você está fazendo aqui/Meu bairro não é seu lugar/E você vai se ferir ...*
> *... A vida aqui é dura/Dura é a lei do mais forte/Onde a miséria não tem cura/E o remédio mais provável é a morte* (CD1 – 3)
> (Hey boy, what are you doing here/My 'hood is not your place/and you're goingo to get hurt/ ... /Life here is tough/it is where the strongest survive/Where misery cannot be healed/and the most probable remedy is death)
>
> *E eles* [racistas otários/polícia] *vem/Com toda autoridade, o preconceito eterno/E de repente o nosso espaço se transforma/Num verdadeiro inferno e reclamar direitos de que forma* (CD1 – 5)
> (And they come/With their authority, eternal prejudice/Na suddenly our space is tansformed/Into real hell and how to claim our rights)

And even though space is referred to as forgotten ('***esquecido***') and where life is tough, or even hell, and where misery, fear, and death are part of their daily routine, in track number 3 ('*Hey Boy*', CD1), the rapper states that he enjoys it the same way. Thus, besides the problems and difficulties of the place where one belongs to, it is where they have had most of their life experiences, as we can also see in the excerpt from the song '*Fórmula Mágica da Paz*'(CD4 – 11):

> *Isso tudo é verdade/Mas não tenha dó de mim/Por que esse é **meu lugar/**Mas eu o quero mesmo assim/Mesmo sendo o **lado esquecido** da cidade/E bode expiatório de toda e qualquer mediocridade*
> (CD1 – 3)
> (That's all true/but don't feel sorry for me/'cause this is my place/and I want it like that/even being the forgotten place in town/and a scapegoat for all mediocrity)
>
> *Essa **porra** é um campo minado/Quantas vezes eu pensei em me jogar daqui/Mas, aí, **minha área** é tudo o que eu tenho/A minha vida é **aqui** e eu não consigo sair /É muito fácil fugir mas eu não vou/Não vou trair quem eu fui, quem eu sou/Eu gosto de onde eu vou e de onde eu **vim**/Ensinamento da **favela** foi muito bom pra mim* (CD4 – 11)
> (This shit is a minefield/many times I thought of leaving here/but, hey, my área is all I got/my life is here and I can't leave/it's very easy to run away but I won't/I won't betray who I was, who I am/I like where I go and where I came from/the teachings of the slums were very good for me)

Reference to the place they come from is stressed by the rappers. It roots them in a specific social and spatial context where they become aware of themselves as subjects and active participants in that particular place. It helps to construct them as individuals. That is why the topic 'common place of origin' becomes important also for the listeners who are members of that community: they are exposed to events/stories they can identify with (Meurer, 1998).

Moreover, we can see that despite the problems in poor places in the '*Zona Sul*' of São Paulo, where the streets are unpaved, where children play football barefoot and houses pile up, dignity, affection and communion among the members of the

community are some of the positive aspects that bond them together, as the excerpt below shows:

> *A toda comunidade pobre da **zona sul**/...Estou a uma hora da **minha quebrada**/Logo mais, quero ver todos em paz/... A molecada lá da **área** como é que tá/Provavelmente, correndo pra lá e pra cá/Jogando bola descalços nas **ruas de terra**/É, brincam do jeito que dá/... Milhares de **casas amontoadas**/**Ruas de terra** esse é o **morro**/A minha **área** me espera/Gritaria na frente/Vamo chegando!/Pode crer, eu gosto disso mais calor humano/Na **periferia** a **alegria** é igual/É quase meio dia a **euforia** é geral/É lá que moram meus irmãos meus amigos/E a maioria por **aqui** se parece comigo/... A número, número 1 em baixa renda da cidade/Comunidade **zona Sul** é **dignidade*** (CD 3 – 1)*
>
> (To all the poor communities from Zona Sul/ … I'm an hour away from my 'hood/Soon, I want to see them all in peace/ … how the kids in the hood are/probably, running from here to there/playing football barefoot in unpaved streets/yeah, they play the way they can/ … thousands of pile up houses/unpaved streets, this the shanty town/my place waits for me/people yelling at the door/come in!/believe me, I like that, it's more affectionate/in the hood, joyfulness is the same for everyone/it's almost midday, excitement is generalized/it's there that my brothers and my friends live/and the majority here looks like me/ … the number one in lower income in the city/ Zona Sul is dignity …)

It is important to note here that place is filled with social, cultural and affective attributes (Blommaert, 2005). A football match in the street among the kids, the affection and excitement among friends, probably during Sunday lunch, become cultural resources for sharing social values. Even more important, however, is the overt identity reference in the line '*e a maioria por **aqui** se parece comigo*' (and the majority here looks like me): his brothers, friends, and his community share not only social and cultural values but also physical attributes (most are African Brazilians). The strength of the line is that it places together racial identity and social and cultural values that are significant for the members of that community. Despite the shortage of infra-structure and resources, the rapper feels comfortable in his community.

Nonetheless, bad aspects are given more emphasis than the good ones. It seems that this is due to the orientation rappers give in their songs to speak out and criticize those problems. In addition, in the song '*Periferia é periferia (em qualquer lugar)*'

(CD4 – 8) they remind listeners that problems are similar in many different '*periferias*' (suburbs) in the city of São Paulo and in other cities in the country. That is foregrounded with a whole stanza citing names of suburbs in the song '*Mágico de Oz*' (CD4 – 10) and also in '*Fórmula Mágica da Paz*' (CD4 – 11):

> ***Periferia é periferia****/Milhares de casas amontoadas/.../Em qualquer lugar, gente pobre/.../Vários botecos abertos, várias escolas vazias/.../E a maioria por aqui se parece comigo/.../Mãos chorando, irmãos se matando, até quando?/.../Aqui, meu irmão, é cada um por si/.../Molecada sem futuro eu já consigo ver/.../Aliados, drogados, então/.../Deixe o crack de lado, escute o meu recado* (CD4 – 8)
> (the suburbs/thousands of houses piled up/…/in any place, poor people/…/many open bars, many empty schools/…/and the majority here looks like me/…/mothers crying, brothers killing each other, until when?/…/here, brother, you mind your own business/…/I can see already many kids without a future/…/partners, drug addicts, then/…/leave crack aside, listen to my message)

> *Tudo dentro de casa, vira fumaça, é foda/Será que Deus deve tá provando minha raça?/Só desgraça, gira em torno **daqui**/**Falei do JB, ao Piquiri e Mazém**/**Jardim Filhos da Terra e tal**/**Jardim Ebrom, Jaçanã, e Jaba Rural**/**Piquiri e Mazém, Nova Galvão**/**Jardim Curusco, Fontaros e então**/**Campo Limpo, Guarulhos, Jardim Peri**/**JB, Edu Chaves e Tucuruvi**/**Alô Doze, Mimosa, São Rafael**/**Jaquinaxi têm um lugar no céu*** (CD4 – 10)
> (Everything in the house turns into smoke, that's bad/Is God testing my race?/Only disgrace happens around here/…)

> *Cada lugar um lugar, cada lugar uma lei/Cada lei uma razão e eu sempre respeitei/Em qualquer jurisdição, qualquer área/**Jardim Santo Eduardo, Grajaú, Missionária**/**Funchal, Pedreira** e tal, **Joaniza**/Eu tento adivinhar o que você mais precisa* (CD4 – 11)
> (Each place a different place/ each place with its own law/each law, one reason, and I have always respected that/In any jurisdiction, any área/Jardim Santo Eduardo, Grajaú, Missionária/Funchal, Pedreira and so on, Joaniza/I try to guess what you need the most)

In sum, the construction of a common place of origin that helps to build one of the identities of the young African Brazilian audience uses two main strategies: a. the recognition and awareness that they share problems and difficulties and that they have to try to overcome them together; and b. the inclusion/exclusion strategy, that is, only those who live in the '*periferias*' can fully understand those problems. In the table

below, we can see a summary of the terms used to refer to place of origin and the main problems that affect that place(s).

Terms used to refer to place of origin	Problems related to it
Meu bairro, lugar esquecido, lado esquecido da cidade, nosso espaço, inferno, comunidade pobre da zona sul, minha quebrada, morro, (minha) área, periferia, berço da miséria, favela, campo minado, submundo da metrópole, Capão Redondo and many other names of suburbs.	*Medo, vida dura, lei do mais forte, miséria, morte, ruas de terra, casas amontoadas, lei do silêncio, lei do cão, pesadelo periférico, botecos abertos, escolas vazias, irmãos se matando, molecada sem futuro, crack, drogados, arma de fogo, stress concentrado.*

Table 3. Summary of terms used to refer to place of origin and the problems related to it

5.3.2 The construction of the African Brazilian identity

While discussing the concept of race in Chapter 2, I have mentioned that there is an on-going debate in Brazil related to the possible approval of a quotas law aimed at improving the access of indigenous people and African Brazilians in Brazilian universities, and the approval of the Racial Equality Statute in Congress. At the heart of that debate lies the issue of ethnic and racial identity.

In the case of the quotas in Brazilian universities, for instance, prospective students need to declare themselves African Brazilians and/or indigenous people in order to be included in the quotas allowance. The Statute, on the other hand, creates measures and mechanisms that aim at the reduction of inequalities and that incentive a more incisive participation of African Brazilians in the job market. If approved, critics

of the quotas and the Statute argue that the state will institutionalise a racial divide (blacks and whites) in a country where (the myth of) racial democracy and miscegenation is a social and cultural symbol.

The lyrics of the rap group Racionais MC's, however, suggest that that racial divide is already a feature of the Brazilian society. In the lyrics, the rappers actually reject that symbol and strongly promote and affirm the idea of race and blackness, as we shall see below.

Related to that rejection is the influence that African American hip hop and rap had in the emergence of hip hop and rap in Brazil, an influence that could also be observed in the discourse related to race and identity, as we have seen in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. That is, Racionais MC's and other African Brazilian rappers/rap groups, such as DMN, have assumed African Americans' racialised discourse which is based on the black/white dichotomy (Gordon, 1999).

In this section, the analysis focuses on the discursive strategies and linguistic elements used to construct the African Brazilian identity, having in mind the points raised above: the black/white dichotomy and the assumption of blackness by the African Brazilian youth.

The first step I used here was to find instances of terms used to identify African Brazilians, such as '*negro(a)*', '*preto(a)*', and '*Afro-Brasileiro*' as well as terms referring to that identity or origin such as '*raça*', '*cor*', and '*África*', and the situation/context where they were used. For that I have run a simple search for those words, using the search tool available in the Microsoft Word software, starting with neg* and pret* to collect all possible instances of variations such as '*negro, negra, negritude, nêgo, neguinho, preto, preta, pretinho*' and so on.

Surprisingly, in a corpus containing 33 songs and a total of 24.795 words, the number of instances (already excluding repetitions in titles of songs and choruses) of the term '*negro*' and its variants added up to 51 (fifty-one)! Similarly, the word '*preto*' and variants reached only 31 (thirty-one) instances. There were no examples with '*Afro-Brasileiro*' and only one instance with the prefix '*Afro-*', in the line '*Afrodinâmicamente manter a nossa honra viva*' (Afrodinamically keeping our honour alive) from CD2 – 1. The noun '*África*' was also mentioned only once in the line '*herança da nossa mãe África*' (heritage from our mother Africa) from the song 'Júri Racional'. The same way, there were only 04 (four) instances of the noun '*raça*' related to African Brazilians such as in the song '*Júri Racional*', when the rapper criticizes other African Brazilians for not assuming their blackness ('*ovelha branca da raça, traidor*'), or praising race in the line '*amo miha raça, luto pela cor*', from the song '*Jesus Chorou*'.

One reason for the small number of instances of terms related to the African Brazilian identity has to do with the diversity of themes seen in Chapter 4. We saw in that chapter that only three songs ('*Voz Ativa*', '*Negro Limitado*', and '*Júri Racional*') dealt exclusively with racial identity (in '*Voz Ativa*', we find 14 (fourteen) instances of the term '*negro(s)/a(s)*'; 7 (seven) instances in '*Júri Racional*'; and 3 (three) instances in '*Negro Limitado*'). In the other songs, those terms are present within the discussion of other themes such as police violence in '*Racistas Otários*' and social inequalities in '*Beco sem Saída*', for instance.

Nevertheless, even with fewer songs discussing racial identity, Racionais MC's are able to make their point and deliver their position concerning that issue. That is presented in the analysis in the two sub-sections below.

5.3.2.1 The Black/white dichotomy

The binary opposition between blacks and whites in the lyrics by Racionais MC's is effected/represented through the social inequalities and discriminatory practices suffered by blacks, thus through the use of dissimilation strategies that emphasise difference. And since inequalities imply differences where one group (usually the white one) has better, or more privileged, access to a range of social, cultural and economic resources than the other group, it is no surprise that the racial dichotomy is accompanied by another binary opposition, poor/rich, as we can see in the instances below:

> *O viaduto é o reduto nas noites de frio/Onde muitos dormem, e outros morrem, ouviu?/São chamados de **indigentes** pela sociedade/A maioria **negros**, já não é segredo, nem novidade/Vivem como ratos jogados/Homens, mulheres, crianças/ ... /A burguesia, conhecida como classe nobre/Tem nojo e odeia a todos nós, **negros pobres**/Por outro lado, adoram nossa pobreza/Pois é dela que é feita sua maldita riqueza ... (CD1 – 3)*
> (The flyover is the shelter in cold nights/where many sleep, and others die, do you hear me?/they are called beggars by the society/mostly blacks, it's not a secret nor new/they live like thrown out rats/men, women, children/…
> … the bourgeoisie, known as the noble class/feels disgust and hates all of us, poor blacks/on the other hand, they love our poverty/'cause it's from it that make their damned wealth)
>
> *Os sociólogos preferem ser imparciais/E dizem ser financeiro o nosso dilema/Mas se analisarmos bem mais você descobre/Que **negro** e branco **pobre** se parecem/Mas não são iguais ... (CD1 – 5)*
> (The sociologists prefer to be neutral/and say our problem is financial/but if we analyse it better you discover/that black and white poor look alike but are not the same)
>
> *Sei que problemas você tem demais/E nem na rua não te deixam na sua/Entre madames fodidas e os racistas fardados/De cérebro atrofiado não te deixam em paz/Todos eles com medo generalizam demais/Dizem que os **negros** são todos iguais ...*
> *... Mais da metade do país é **negra** e se esquece/Que tem acesso apenas ao resto que ele oferece/Tão pouco para tanta gente/Tanta gente na mão de tão poucos ... (CD2 – 1)*
> (I know you've got too many problems/ and not even in the street they let you alone/between fucked madams and brain-damaged uniformed racists/that don't leave you in peace/and afraid they all generalize/they say that blacks are all alike … More than half of the country is black and forgets/that it has access only to the rest that it offers/so little for so many people/so many people in the hands of a few…)
>
> *Nas universidades brasileiras, apenas 2% dos alunos são **negros** ... (CD4 – 3)*
> (At Brazilian universities, only 2% of the students are black...)

In the first excerpt, from the song '*Beco sem Saída*', which discusses the situation of homeless people, we see, in one end of the socioeconomic scale, the homeless blacks who are called beggars by society and, on the other end of that scale, the bourgeoisie that hates them. The title of the song, a dead-end street, is a metaphor for a life without perspectives for many poor blacks.

That seems to reflect even in the way the text is structured, as poor blacks are shown as passive recipients of the evaluations made by the bourgeoisie: society calls them beggars, the bourgeoisie hates them and feels disgusted by them while homeless blacks are represented as simply living like rats, sleeping and dying. We learn later in the lyrics of that song that such passivity enables the rapper to develop his argument that part of the blame for that lies on those blacks who accept that passive attitude: '*mas muitos não progridem na verdade/porque assim querem/ficam inertes, não se movem, não se mexem...*' (but many don't go ahead in life/because that's how they want to be/they stay as they are, they don't move forward…). By the end of the song, the rapper incentives change:

> *Leia, ouça, escute, ache certo ou errado/mas meu amigo não fique parado/.../-Ei cara, o sentido disto tudo está em você mesmo. Pare, pense e acorde, antes que saja tarde demais. O dia de amanhã te espera, morô? Edi Rock, KLJay, Racionais!* (CD1 – 3)
> (Read, listen, think if it's right or wrong/but my friend, don't be passive/ … / Hey man, the sense of all that is within yourself. Stop, think, and wake up before it's too late. Tomorrow is waiting for you, get it? Edi Rock, KLJay, Racionais!)

In the other examples above we can observe that blacks are discriminated against because of their race/colour and because of their social class/condition as poor people. Such condition is due to the persistent unequal access that blacks have to all levels of empowering opportunities such as jobs and education.

It appears, then, that the construction of the African Brazilian identity as poor blacks uses that lack of access to better conditions as an argumentative strategy, emphasizing the divide between the rich/whites and the poor/blacks: '*mais da metade do país é negra e se esquece/que tem acesso apenas ao resto que ele oferece…*' (more than half of the country is black and forgets/that has access only to the rest it offers); '*nas universidades brasileiras apenas 2% dos alunos são negros*' (in Brazilian universities only 2% of the students are black). Even the comparison with poor whites is denied, stressing that discrimination is not the same as it is for poor blacks ('*negro e branco pobre se parecem mas não são iguais…*' – poor blacks and poor whites seem the same but they are not – CD1 – 5 above). It is important to observe, however, that this is linked to the previous topic, common place of origin: the poor blacks that are referred to in the songs are the ones living in the shanty towns of the country and do not include the African Brazilian middle-class, for instance.

The linguistic elements related to the construction of a black/white dichotomy seen so far is, on the one hand, the term '*negro(s)/a*' which is collocated with nouns and adjectives such as '*indigentes*' (indigent), '*pobres*' (poor), '*pobreza*' (poverty), and, on the other, the nouns '*sociedade*' (society), '*burguesia*' (bourgeoisie), '*classe nobre*'(high class), '*os sociólogos*' (sociologists) and the personal pronoun '*eles*' which refer to '*madames fodidas e os racistas fardados de cérebro atrofiado*' (fucked up madams and brain-damaged uniformed racists) who are represented as making discriminatory evaluations against blacks such as feeling disgust and hate (CD1 – 3) and the covert expression '[racistas otários, policiais] *dizem que os negros são todos iguais*' (they say all blacks are the same), which implies despicable characteristics (Hall, 1997).

In the next examples discrimination and prejudice are performed by a well-known institution or members of that institution: the police force and/or policemen. In the discussion of police violence in the previous chapter, we saw that the discriminatory practices of the police force against poor blacks are historical (Alvito, 2004). The examples show that power abuse, brutality and even killings of black people are frequent and perhaps seen as natural by the police due to the contempt felt for blacks.

> *O abuso é demais/Pra eles tanto faz/Não passará de simples fotos nos jornais/Pois gente **negra** e carente/Não muito influente/E pouco freqüente nas colunas sociais/ ... Os poderosos são covardes, desleais/Espancam **negros** nas ruas por motivos banais* (CD1 – 5)
> (Too much abuse/and they don't care/'cause it'll be nothing more than a picture in the papers/'cause poor black people/are not very influential/and do not appear on social columns/ … The powerful are cowards, dishonest/they beat up blacks in the streets for foolish reasons)
>
> *Um **negro** a menos contarão com satisfação/Porque é a nossa destruição que eles querem* (CD2 – 4)
> (One less black they'll say with satisfaction/because it's our destruction that they want)
>
> *60% dos jovens de periferia sem antecedentes criminais já sofreram violência policial/A cada quatro pessoas mortas pela polícia, três são **negras**/ ... A cada quatro horas um jovem **negro** morre violentamente em São Paulo* (CD4 – 3)
> (60% of young people from the shanty towns without criminal records have already suffered police violence/In every four people killed by the police, three are black/Every four hours a young black dies violently in São Paulo)

In the excerpts above the African Brazilian identity is presented through the contrast between blacks and their relationship with the police. The strategy is to emphasize the abusive power of the police force/policemen, on the one hand, and stress the lower hierarchical position of poor blacks and discriminate them due to that position/social class as well as their colour/race, on the other.

The first instance above seems emblematic of the contempt policemen have towards '*gente negra e carente*' (poor black people) because, since they are not influential (and possibly regarded as second-class citizens) any kind of abuse seems or

becomes trivialized/naturalized ('*o abuso é demais/pra eles tanto faz/não passará de simples fotos nos jornais*' – too much abuse, and they don't care, 'cause it'll be nothing more than a picture in the papers). In addition, we can observe the inclusion of another social identity, youth, together with the African Brazilian one. And as the last example stresses (CD4 – 3, above), African Brazilian youth is the most susceptible social group to police violence in Brazil (*cf.* Adorno, 2002; Zaluar, 1997, 2000).

Another type of discrimination and prejudice African Brazilians undergo is the lack of representation in mainstream media. In the excerpts below, the rappers argue that African Brazilians are given no prominence on television and in carnival, for instance:

> *Mas onde estão/Meus semelhantes na TV,nossos irmãos?/Artistas* **negros** *de atitude e expressão/Você se põe a perguntar por que?/Eu não sou racista/Mas meu ponto de vista é que/Esse é o Brasil que eles querem que exista/Evoluído e bonito, mas sem* **negro** *no destaque/Eles te mostram é um país que não existe/Escondem nossa raiz/Milhões de* **negros** *assistem/ ...*
> *... Modelos brancas no destaque/As* **negras** *onde estão?/Desfilam no chão em segundo plano/Pouco original mais comercial a cada ano/O carnaval era a festa do povo/Era, mas alguns* **negros** *se venderam de novo/Brancos em cima* **negros** *em baixo/Ainda é normal natural/400 anos depois 1992 tudo igual/Bem-vindos ao Brasil colonial e tal* (CD2 – 1)
> (But where are the black people on TV, my brothers?/Black artists with attitude and eloquence/you then ask yourself why/I'm not racist/but my point of view is that/this is the Brazil that they want it to be shown/beautiful and developed but without blacks in leading roles/they show a country that does not exist/they hide our roots/and millions of watch that/ … White models on the top/anf the black ones where are they?/they parade on the ground/less original but more commercial every year/Carnival was a party of the people/it was, some blacks have sold it again/whites on the top, blacks on the ground/it is still natural/400 years after, 1992 everything is still the same/welcome to colonial Brazil)

Although recently there has been some increase in the visibility of African Brazilians on television with some TV commercials, soap operas and films with blacks in leading roles, it is still far from desirable if we take into account that 48% of the population in Brazil, according to PNAD 2004 – (official household survey), is comprised of '*pretos*' and '*pardos*' (categories used in the survey).

The strategy used in those instances is to emphasise the minor role African Brazilians have in mainstream media. The lines '*onde estão meus semelhantes na TV*' (where are the ones like me on TV?) and '… *sem negro no destaque*' (without blacks in leading roles) portray that inequality and the reference to carnival reminds the listener that there has been few changes in social positions since colonial Brazil.

In this sub-section I have presented the construction of the African Brazilian identity in relation to prejudice and discrimination, more specifically in relation to social class and/or position and the divide between classes, the lack of representation of blacks in mainstream media, and the discriminatory practices of the police. In addition to that, the linguistic elements that refer to African Brazilians as a group are shown in some of the examples in the table below:

References to the African Brazilian group
*A **maioria** negros, já não é segredo, nem novidade*
*[a burguesia] odeia **todos nós**, negros pobres*
*adoram **nossa** pobreza, pois é dela que é feita sua [da burguesia] maldita riqueza*
*[os sociólogos] dizem ser financeiro o **nosso** dilema*
***mais da metade do país** é negra*
*é a **nossa** destruição que eles [sociedade, polícia] querem*
*mas onde estão **meus semelhantes** na TV, **nossos irmãos**?*
*Eles [programas de TV] te mostram um país que não existe/escondem **nossa raiz***

Table 4. References to the African Brazilian group

As seen in the previous topic, the linguistic elements that are used to show similarity and a common African Brazilian identity are the adjective possessives '*nosso/nossa*' (our), superlatives '*maioria*', '*mais da metade*' (the most/more than half), the determiner '*todos*' (all) and the nouns and pronouns '*nós*' (we), '*semelhantes*' and '*irmãos*' (fellows/brothers). Note that, as said earlier, most of these elements are related to African Brazilians who live in the suburbs or '*periferia*' of the country and the problems they go through.

In the next sub-section, I present the African Brazilian identity as constructed through the reinforcement of blackness and self-esteem.

5.3.2.2 The reinforcement of blackness

Race, race relations and racial identity are complex issues and have been researched by sociologists and anthropologists in Brazil since the early years of the 20th century (*cf.* Guimarães, 1999 for a detailed review of race relations in Brazil). My aim here is to show how racial identity is addressed in the songs analysed. Nevertheless, it is important to understand the reinforcement of the black identity or blackness as a way to promote pride and self-esteem of African Brazilians as opposed to the whitening ideology (Maggie, 1996; Hasenbalg, 2005) whereby miscegenation was emphasized and light-coloured individuals would have better chances of climbing up the social ladder than their darker counterparts. Critics of that ideology (Larkin Nascimento, 2004; Nascimento, 2002) stress how efficient it was in preventing many African Brazilians from assuming their blackness. Maggie (1996, p. 232) states that

> the whitening myth, the logical operator that organizes our society, makes the subjects interviewed [for the official household surveys – PNAD], in their quest to identify themselves with the lighter-skinned, reclassify themselves switching from 'pretos' [blacks] to 'pardos' [mixed], but not from whites to blacks.

It is precisely those African Brazilians who do not assume their blackness who are the target of three songs in particular, '*Voz Ativa*', '*Negro Limitado*' and '*Júri Racional*', as seen in the previous chapter. Those songs are rather significant here because the rappers overtly try to convince their African Brazilian youth audience that they have to assume their identity as blacks. Therefore, the construction of blackness is carried out in two main ways in the songs: a. through the black/white dichotomy (emphasizing the differences between the two groups); and b. reinforcing blackness, self-esteem and fighting passivity (with emphasis on sameness).

Since the first aspect was developed in the previous sub-section, I will now concentrate on the second one only. The latter is effected through:

a. the overt position of the rap group in assuming their blackness and questioning why other African Brazilians do not;

b. the overt reinforcement of self-esteem; and

c. the presentation of important African Brazilian and international (African descendant) figures who can become role models for the African Brazilian youth.

In the first item above, position of the rap group, we find that there is a clear objective to reach the audience through the use of first person pronoun '*Eu*' (I) to establish a direct interaction with the rapper's interlocutor, addressed as '*você*' (you). Also, the name of the band, 'Racionais' and the name of one of the rappers, 'Brown', are used as role models of having a firm attitude towards being black, as we can see from the examples below:

> *Eu tenho algo a dizer/E explicar pra **você**/Mas não garanto porém/Que engraçado **eu** serei dessa vez/Para os **manos** daqui/Para os **manos** de lá/Se **você** se considera um **negro**/Pra **negro** será, mano*
> *.... Mas **Racionais**, existente nunca iguais/Afrodinâmicamente manter a **nossa honra** viva/Sabedoria de rua/O rap, mais expressiva/A **juventude negra** agora tem a voz ativa/ ... Descendente **negro** atual meu nome é **Brown**/Não sou complexado e tal/Apenas Racional/É a verdade mais pura/Postura definitiva*
> (CD2 – 1)

(I have something to say/and explain to you/but I cannot guarantee/that I'll be funny this time/for the brothers from here/and the brothers form there/if you consider yourself black/black you'll be brother/ … But Racionais, never the same/Afrodinamically trying to keep our honour alive/street knowledge/rap, the most expressive/black youth now has an active voice/ …a black descendant, my name is Brown/I don't have an inferiority complex/I'm just a rational being/it's the truth/definitive attitude)

***Racionais** declaram guerra/Contra aqueles que querem ver os **pretos** na merda/E os **manos** que **nos** ouvem irão entender/Que a informação é uma grande arma/Mais poderosa que qualquer PT carregada/Roupas caras de etiquetas, não valem nada/Se comparada a uma mente articulada/Contra os racistas otários é química perfeita/Inteligência, e um cruzado de direita/Será temido, e também respeitado/Um **preto** digno, e não um **negro** limitado* (CD2 – 4)
(Racionais declare war to all those who want to see black people in limbo/and the brothers that listen to us will understand/that information is a great weapon/more powerful than loaded gun/expensive designer clothes are worth nothing/if compared to an articulated mind/against the racist suckers is perfect chemistry/intelligence and right-hand punch/will be fear and also respected/a dignified black and not a narrow-minded negro)

We can observe that the group stresses values that African Brazilians should stand for such as honour ('*manter a nossa honra viva*') and respect which are earned through information and intelligence. Also, in the second example above, we can observe the use of the term '*preto*' collocated with the adjective '*digno*' (dignified) in opposition to '*negro limitado*' (a narrow-minded black). The term '*preto*', which is a referent to colour, gains prominence over the term '*negro*', which encompasses not only colour but also cultural values. That reversal implies attaching positive values to the term '*preto*'. In another song, '*Capítulo 4, versículo 3*', the group opposes the '*preto tipo A*' and the '*neguinho*', the latter being the one who co-opts with the whitening ideology:

*Que era um **preto 'tipo A'**/Ninguém entrava numa, mó estilo/De calça Calvin Klein, tênis Puma/É, o jeito humilde de ser, no trampo e no rolê /Curtia um funk, jogava uma bola/Buscava a preta dele no portão da escola/Um exemplo pra nóis, mó moral, mó ibope/Mas começo colar com os branquinhos do shopping/Aí, já era/Ih! Mano, outra vida, outra pique/E só mina de elite, balada, vários drink/Puta de boutique, toda aquela porra/Sexo sem limite, Sodoma e Gomorra ... o demônio fode tudo ao seu redor ... é, transforma um **'preto tipo A'** num **neguinho**...* (CD4 – 3)
(he was a 'preto tipo A'/no one messed with him, with style/with Clavin Klein's pants, Puma's shoes/humble way of being, at work and leisure/enjoyed funk,

> played football/picked up his girl at school/na example for us/but then he started to go out with the whites from the mall/that was it!/another life, another pace/only white girls, parties, lots of drinks/fashion shop bitches, all that shit/unlimited sex/Sodoma & Gomorra… the devil fucks everything around you, … yeah, it transforms a 'preto tipo A' in a 'neguinho'…)

Like the word *black* which was used negatively in the United States in the 60s and was given a positive meaning with the song 'Say it loud – I'm black and I'm proud' by James Brown, Racionais MC's seem to be doing the same with the word '*preto*', which also carry negative connotations in Brazilian Portuguese (*cf.* Guimarães, 2003c)..

According to Silva (1998, p. 129)

> … the term 'preto' emerges in the discourse of rappers charged with political content. In opposition to the black movement and the scholarship, which elected the term 'negro' to refer to African descendants , the rappers reaffirm blackness making the term 'preto' positive as a way to value their African origin through colour.'

In addition to the group's positioning regarding blackness, they also make explicit statements that try to foster the African Brazilian youth audience's self-esteem. This can be seen, for instance, in the excerpt below:

> *Precisamos de **nós** mesmos essa é a questão/DMN meus irmãos descrevem com perfeição então/Gostarmos de **nós**, brigarmos por **nós**/Acreditarmos mais em **nós**/Independente de que os outros façam/Tenho orgulho de mim, um rapper em ação/**Nós** somos negros sim de sangue e coração* (CD2 – 1)
> (We need to like ourselves that is the issue/DMN my brothers describe with accuracy/Enjoy ourselves, fight for ourselves/believe more in ourselves/independently of what others do/I'm proud of myself, a rapper in action/yes we're black in our hearts and our blood)

In that example we have once again the use of the personal pronoun '*nós*' (we) (which in fact is working as a reflexive pronoun – ourselves) encompassing the rap group and the African Brazilians in general, even those who are not concerned with their blackness. That pronoun, used with the verbs *need*, *like*, *fight* and *believe*, guides the audience to a significant aspect for African Brazilians as a group: the importance of being united.

Besides portraying themselves as role models for their African Brazilian audience, Racionais MC's also present national and international African descendant figures that have a positive attitude towards blackness. The examples below show that concern of the band:

> *Precisamos de um líder de crédito popular/Como **Malcom X** em outros tempos foi na América/Que seja negro até os ossos, um dos nossos/E reconstrua nosso orgulho que foi feito em destroços ...*
> *.... Minha pergunta aqui fica/Desses artistas tão famosos/Qual você se identifica?/Então, **Lecy Brandão**, **Moisés da Rocha**,/**Thaíde & Dj Hum**, **Ivo Meireles**, **Moleques de Rua** e tal/Da Zona leste de São Paulo Grupo **DMN**.* (CD2 – 1)
> (We need a leader who is popular/like Malcom X was in América in old times/someone who's black to the bones, one of us/and reconstruct our pride that was shattered…)
>
> *Gosto de **Nelson Mandela**, admiro **Spike Lee**/**Zumbi**, um grande herói, o maior daqui* (CD3 – 5)
> I like Nelson Mandela, I admire Spike Lee/Zumbi, a great hero, the greatest from here)

It seems not to matter whether the relevant figure is African Brazilian, African American or South African but it has to be one that the African Brazilian audience is able to identify with and one who is proud of being black, like Malcom X was in the United States: '*que seja negro até os ossos, um dos nossos*' (someone who's black to the bone, one of ours). Besides the famous Zumbi dos Palmares, a symbol of resistance and a hero for the slaves in colonial Brazil, more recent figures come from the music business such as the radio DJ Moisés da Rocha, samba artists such as Lecy Brandão, Ivo Meireles and Moleques de Rua and rap groups Thaíde & DJ Hum and DMN.

The aim of providing role models is, thus, to present significant figures who have self-esteem and value black culture and race. In stark opposition are those African Brazilians that betray their origins. In the song '*Júri Racional*', the rappers of the group are categorical:

> *Você não tem amor próprio, fulano/Nos envergonha, pensa que é o maior/Não passa de um sem vergonha/Seus atos por si só definem sua personalidade/Mas é*

inferioridade o que você sente no fundo/Dá aos racistas imundos/Razões o bastante pra prosseguirem nos fodendo como antes/Ovelha branca da raça, traidor/Vendeu a alma ao inimigo, renegou sua cor/Mas nosso júri é racional, não falha/Por que? Não somos fãs de canalha (CD3 – 5)
(You don' have self-respect/you embarass us, you think you're great/you're actually nothing more than a shameless person/your acts alone define your personality/but it is inferiority that you feel deep inside/you give the dirty racists/reasons to keep fucking with us like before/white sheep of the race, traitor/you sold your soul to the enemy, denied your colour/But our jury is rational, it does not fail/why? We're not fans of scumbags)

As mentioned earlier, the position assumed by the rap group Racionais MC's suggests the rejection of the racial democracy myth and affirms the conscious awareness of their racial identity. To what extent their views are accepted and followed by their target audience, the African Brazilian youth, is out of the scope of this study. However, it might be said that their work, along with the work of other rap groups and the hip hop movement as a whole has been able to promote positive attitudes concerning race and racial identity (Herschmann, 1997, 2000; Silva, 1998, 1999; Weller, 2000, 2004; Dayrell, 2005).

5.3.3 The construction of the 'survivor/fighter'

The idea of a 'survivor/fighter' has emerged from the situations in which most of the poor young urban African Brazilians represented in the songs find themselves in. It is a social 'category' or identity that stems from life in the suburbs as a metaphor of war. Songs like '*Pânico na Zona Sul*' and '*Racistas Otários*' which discuss the killings of innocent people by the vigilantes and the police show the chaotic daily routine those people have to go through.

Although the song '*Hey Boy*' from the first CD already mentioned that life was a battle ('*A vida aqui é dura/Dura é a lei do mais forte/Onde a miséria não tem cura/E o remédio mais provável é a morte/Continuar vivo é uma batalha/Isso é se eu não*

cometer falha'), it is with the fourth CD, '*Sobrevivendo no Inferno*' that the 'survivor' comes into being. The second track of that album, '*Genesis (Intro)*', presents the listener with that position:

> *Deus fez o mar, as árvore, as criança, o amor. O homem me deu a favela, o crack, a trairagem, as arma, as bebida, as puta. Eu? Eu tenho uma bíblia velha, uma pistola automática e um sentimento de revolta. Eu tô tentando **sobreviver no inferno**. (CD4 – 2)*
> (God made the sea, the tress, the children, love. Men gave me the slum, crack cocaine, deceitfulness, guns, booze, bitches. Me? I have an old bible, an automatic weapon and a feeling of revolt. I am trying to survive in hell).

In the song that follows that introduction, '*Capítulo 4 Versículo 3*', we have some statistics that are presented by a guest speaker/rapper, Primo Preto:

> *60% dos jovens de periferia sem antecedentes criminais já sofreram violência policial/A cada quatro pessoas mortas pela polícia, três são negras/.../A cada quatro horas um jovem negro morre violentamente em São Paulo/Aqui quem fala é Primo Preto, mais um **sobrevivente**. (CD4 – 3)*
> (60% of the young people living in the slums without criminal records have already suffered police violence/In every four people killed by the police, three are black/…/every four hours a young black male dies violently in São Paulo/here is Primo Preto, another survivor)

Like the first topic we have seen above, a common place of origin, which was also constructed on the problems shared by the members of the communities, the construction of the 'survivor' involves managing to keep oneself alive where police violence, drugs, alcohol and criminality are a constant feature.

In the last record, '*Nada Como um Dia Após o Outro Dia*', the metaphor of war is used to take the 'survivor' to another level, that is, he/she becomes the 'fighter' ('*guerreiro*'), also a metaphor for that person who does not give up even though odds are against him/her, as can be seen from the examples below:

> *Vamo acordá, vamo acordá/Agora olha bem pra sua cara/Sou mais você nessa **guerra**/A preguiça é inimiga da vitória/O fraco não tem espaço e o covarde morre sem tentar/Não vou te enganá, o baguio tá doido/Ninguém confia em ninguém, nem você/E os inimigo vem de graça/É a selva de pedra, ela esmaga os humilde demais (CD5 – disc1 – 1)*
> (Let's wake up, let's wake up/now take a good look at your face/I bet on you in this war/laziness is the enemy of victory/the weak doesn't have a place and the

coward dies without trying/I'm not going to fool you, the scene is crazy/nobody trusts anybody, not even you/and the enemies come for free/it's the concrete jungle, it crushes the humble people too much)

*Fé em Deus que ele é justo/Hei irmão, nunca se esqueça/Na guarda, **guerreiro** levanta a cabeça, truta/Onde estiver, seja lá como for/Tenha fé, porque até no lixão nasce flor* (CD5 – disc1 – 4)
(Have faith in God that he's fair/hey brother, never forget/on guard, fighter raise your head brother/wherever you are, the way it is/have faith 'cause even in the waste land flowers grow)

*Pra quem vive na **guerra**, a paz nunca existiu* (CD5 – disc1 – 5)
(For those who live in war, peace has never existed)

*O pobre, o preto no gueto é sempre assim/O tempo não pára, a **guerra** não tem fim/O crime e a favela é lado a lado/É que nem dois aliado, o isqueiro e o cigarro/Na viela, no beco, na rua sem saída/Na esquina da quebrada continua a sina, mesma vida/Rotina aqui é assim vai e prossegue/Vitorioso é aquele que se pá/Consegue **sobreviver** e não deitar crivado de bala* (CD5 – disc2 – 3)
(the poor, the black in the gheto is always like that/time doesn't stop, the war never ends/the crime and the slum are side by side/it is like two partners, the lighter and the cigarette/in the alley, in the street, in a dead-end street/on the corner of the hood the same life goes on/daily routine here is like that goes on and on/winner is that who can survive and not lay down full of shots)

In the first excerpt from the introduction, '*Sou + você*', to the last record, the interlocutor/listener is awaken by the sound of an alarm clock and the rapper speaking as a DJ for a radio station (This last record is actually constructed as a radio show with the introduction, '*Sou + você*', opening the show and the last song of the double album, '*Da ponte pra cá*', closing the radio show). The rapper/radio station DJ tells his listener to wake up and face another hard and difficult day. By siding with his listener he encourages him/her to fight his/her war and not give up ('*sou + você nessa guerra*'), stressing that cowardice, weakness, and laziness won' take him/her anywhere.

In the second example, which can be connected to the previous one, more encouragement is given to the interlocutor/listener. Where there is no trust and enemies are easily made, and the concrete jungle crushes people down, faith in God is an important support for the fighter ('*guerreiro*'). And the last two examples reinforce once again the idea of war that is present in the slums.

All such situations that make up the environment of the stories of the rap songs also promote, on the other hand, the bonding between the characters/rappers/audience. Those who struggle to survive and who try not to get involved with the criminality, for instance, become part of a group, the 'fighters' ('*guerreiros*'). The excerpt from the song '*V.L. (Parte II)*' (CD5 – disc2 – 7) places emphasis on unification:

É só questão de tempo, o fim do sofrimento
Um brinde pros **guerreiro**, Zé povinho eu lamento
Vermes que só faz peso na terra
Tira o zóio, tira o zóio, vê se me erra
Eu durmo pronto pra **guerra** e eu não era assim
Eu tenho ódio e sei que é mal pra mim
Fazer o quê se é assim, vida loca cabulosa
O cheiro é de pólvora e eu prefiro rosas

E meus **guerreiro** de fé quero ouvir, quero ouvir
Meus **guerreiro** de fé, quero ouvir

Firmão, programado pra morrer nóis é
Certo é certo é dê no que der

Porque um **guerreiro** de fé nunca gela
Não agrada o injusto e não amarela
O rei dos reis foi traído e sangrou nessa terra
Mas morrer como homem é o prêmio da **guerra**

Opposed to the '*Zé Povinho*' or '*vermes*' , those who like to talk about other people's lives or betray his/her friends, the '*guerreiros*' are those who are always ready to fight and are programmed to die. More important, however, is the co-operation and unification that the term fosters among those who share the same problems and want to overcome them. It is like promoting a brotherhood among the youth audience and the values they should stand by ('*porque um guerreiro de fé nunca gela/não agrada o injusto e não amarela*' – a real fighter never gives up, does not praise the unfair and doesn chicken out).

As mentioned earlier, the construction of the 'survivor/fighter' presupposes a problematic or difficult situation. In the case of the lyrics by Racionais MC's, that problematic situation is actually the chaotic living conditions that most of those who

live in the slums share. Such conditions are related to the neglect of the state in providing proper infra-structure as well as services that can benefit that population and the rise of violence that is usually related to activities that involve drug-dealing and its repression by the police.

The strategy then used for the construction of the 'survivor/fighter' is based on an emphasis on 'shared sorrow or worries' (Wodak et al. 1999) which prompt unification. And the linguistic elements that signal that strategy are ones making reference to those shared worries such as '*guerra, crime, violência policial, mortes violentas, crack, trairagem, armas, bebidas, sofrimento*' among others. The co-operation and unification is expressed with the adjective possessive '*meus*' as in '*meus guerreiro de fé*'.

5.3.4 The dismantling of the 'Other'

Although we have seen earlier that constructing identities is usually based on strategies of sameness and/or difference (Wodak et al., 1999), and that some of the differences are related to an opposing 'other' which we saw already in sub-section 5.3.2.1, for instance, I have decided to compile under one section the most relevant 'others' that are present in lyrics analysed here. According to Wodak et al. (1999, p. 33),

> [d]ifference which is linguistically constructed through strategies of dissimilation, and which in reference to marginalised groups of others is frequently portrayed as deviance from a preferred norm, here does not usually introduce subtle distinctions, but, on the contrary, implies the affixing of undifferentiated and usually derogatory labels on the group concerned.

We will see below that in the data analysed here we seem to have a reversal of that order, that is, the rappers, who are African Brazilians and as such are commonly portrayed as deviant, place the 'Other' as deviant.

One of the first 'others' that were selected is the '*poderosos*'. In the examples below we can observe that they do not respect the rights of fellow citizens, despise them and prefer that they live like beggars; that they are disloyal cowards, beating up black people in the streets; and that, as they are in power, they lie and would like blacks to die.

> *Os **poderosos** ignoram os direitos iguais/Desprezam e dizem que vivam como mendigos a mais* (CD1 – 2)
> (The powerful ignore the equal rights/despise and say that we should live like beggars)
>
> *Os **poderosos** são covardes desleais/Espancam negros nas ruas por motivos banais* (CD1 – 5)
> (The powerful are disloyal cowards/they beat up blacks in the streets for foolish reasons)
>
> *O domínio está em mão de **poderosos**, mentirosos/Que não querem saber/**Porcos**, nos querem todos mortos* (CD1 – 6)
> (The domain is in the hands of the powerful, liars/who don't want to know/pigs, they wants us all dead)

Other examples use the personal pronoun '*eles*' to refer to the 'other' and in some instances we are left to interpret it through the context of the song:

> *Tanto dinheiro jogado fora/Sendo gasto por **eles** em poucas horas/Tanto dinheiro desperdiçado/E não pensam no sofrimento de um menor abandonado* (CD1 – 6)
> (So much money thrown away/being spent by them in a few hours/so munch money wasted/and they don't think of the suffering of an abandoned minor)
>
> *Entre **madames fodidas** e os **racistas fardados/De cérebro atrofiado** não te deixam em paz/Todos **eles** com medo generalizam demais/Dizem que os negros são todos iguais* (CD2 – 1)
> (Between fucked up madams and brain-damaged uniformed racists that don't leave you in peace/afraid, they all generalize too much/and say all blacks are the same)

The first example, (CD1 – 6), seems to refer to politicians as we might infer from other lines of the same song such as '*ao invés de fazerem algo necessário/ao contrário, iludem, enganam otários/prometem sempre, sempre prometem/mentindo,*

fingindo, traindo' (Instead of doing something necessary/On the contrary, they deceive and fool suckers/[they] Promise always, always promise lying, faking and betraying). In the second example, however, the referents are clearly stated: the brain-damaged uniformed racists refer to the police force or policemen. There is one song form the first CD (CD1 – 5) we have already seen in Chapter 4 that refers exclusively to the police officers as '*racistas otários*'. Other songs use the term 'police', as we can see below:

> *Não confio na* **polícia**, *raça do caralho/Se eles me acham baleado na calçada/Chutam minha cara e cospem em mim* (CD3 – 4)
> (I don't trust the police, damned race/if they find me shot on the sidewalk/kick on my face and spit on me)
>
> *A* **polícia** *passou e fez o seu papel/Dinheiro na mão, corrupção à luz do céu* (CD4 – 10)
> (The police passed by and played its part/pocket money and corruption in daylight)
>
> *A* **polícia** *sempre dá o mau exemplo/Lava minha rua de sangue, leva o ódio pra dentro* (CD4 – 10)
> (The police always give the bad example/washes my street with blood, puts hate inside it)

As the examples above have shown, the representation of the 'others' in the lyrics by Racionais MC's are mostly related to discrimination and/or violence (involving killings). The deviant behaviour is then placed on those who discriminate and are violent. Some derogatory terms can be seen in the examples such as '*porcos*' (pigs) referring to the powerful or politicians, '*madames fodidas*' (fucked up madams) and '*racistas fardados de cérebro atrofiado*' (brain-damaged uniformed racists)

The dismantling of the 'other', therefore, is based on the disparaging of the actions of people like the policemen, politicians and the white elite.

5.4 Concluding remarks

The aim of this chapter was to provide evidence of the discursive construction of identities through the methodological approach proposed by Wodak et al. (1999) and Wodak (2000). As we have seen, the approach concentrates on three dimensions of analysis, namely, contents/topics, strategies, and means and forms of linguistic realizations.

I have divided the topics of identity building into common place of origin, the African Brazilian identity, the 'survivor/fighter', and the dismantling of the other. For each of those topics, strategies of assimilation or strategies of dissimilation were used along with other strategies that suggested unification, for instance. In addition, some of the linguistic terms that were used to support those strategies were also presented.

Some other actors/characters that can be found in the songs, however, were not considered here in this chapter. In Chapter 4, for instance, one of the themes discussed was related to criminality and portrayed the involvement of young men with drug-dealing. From my perspective, though, it seems that such identity is rejected by the rappers as models not to be followed and therefore I have not considered it as a constructive strategy.

On the whole, then, we could observe three topics that help to construct the rappers and their target audience and one topic that provides the opposing characters against whom they build their own identities.

Chapter 6

Brazilian Hip Hop Language?

An investigation of the lexical, grammatical and phonological features

in the lyrics by Racionais MC's

'No meio de vocês ele é o mais esperto,
xinga e fala gíria, gíria não, dialeto'
(in Negro Drama, Racionais Mc's)

6.1 Introduction

Hip hop as a cultural movement has originally revolved around four main elements, namely, break dancing, graffiti art, DJing and MCing, as we have seen in Chapter 3. Nevertheless, '… the commercialization of rap music expanded the definition of hip-hop culture beyond the four elements to include verbal language, body language, attitude, style, and fashion.' (Kitwana, 2002, p. 8) Thus, members of the hip hop community have since been producing a wide range of cultural practices to which (mostly, but not exclusively) African Brazilian urban youth have been able to identify with.

Among those practices, '…[verbal] language is perhaps the most useful means with which to read the various cultural activities of the Hip Hop Nation (HHN).'[1] (Alim, 2004a, p. 388) Or, as Morgan (2001, p. 187) puts it, '…the Hip Hop nation has emerged

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[1] According to Alim (2004a, p.388) the '... borderless HHN comprises numerous hip hop communities around the world.'

as a cultural, social, and political force, constituted and instantiated through language style, often illustrated in the rap itself.'

Thus, given the pervasiveness and importance of language within hip hop and rap, in this chapter I present a descriptive analysis of the language of African Brazilian rap as exemplified in the work produced by Racionais MC's. The focus here is on the lexicogrammatical and phonological features of the lyrics, especially the vocabulary used by the rappers.

The analysis is based upon the concept of antilanguage developed by Halliday (1978) and presented in Chapter 2 (section 2.6), which he uses as a point of departure to arrive at a discussion and explanation of the concept of social dialect. The latter concept is especially important here because I assume that the language of hip hop and rap can be considered a social dialect[2] with important implications for the social construction of identities of both the artists and their audience/listeners, as we will see below. I also draw upon Alim's (2004a) discussion of the hip hop nation language and its main tenets in the United States in order to contrast with the language found in the Brazilian rap songs.

In the next section I present the features of the hip hop nation language and, after that, I present the analysis of the lyrics of the songs and discuss the results found.

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[2] I use the term social dialect here, following Halliday (1978, 1989), as the variety of language according to the user as opposed to register which varies according to the use. Some researchers, Bagno (1999) for instance, would prefer to use the term non-standard variety(ies) as in the opposition between Standard Portuguese and non-standard Portuguese.

6.2 Hip hop nation language

The nation language concept that Alim (2004a) refers to is taken from Brathwaite (1984, *apud* Alim 2004a, p. 391) who states that '[n]ation language is the language which is influenced very strongly by the African model, the African aspect of our New World/Caribbean heritage. English it may be in terms of its lexical features. But in its contours, its rhythm and timbre, its sound explosions, it is not English.' Such definition then stresses the importance of the term African in African American language. For Alim (2004a, p. 392) 'HHNL [Hip Hop Nation Language] is, like Brathwaite's description, new in one sense and ancient in another. It comprises elements of orality, total expression and conversational modes.'

Moreover, according to Alim (2004a, p. 393-394), 'HHNL [Hip Hop Nation Language] can be characterized by ten tenets', as follows:

- HHNL is rooted in African American Language (AAL) and communicative practices;
- HHNL is just one of the many language varieties used by African Americans;
- HHNL is widely spoken across the country, and used/borrowed and adapted/transformed by various ethnic groups inside and outside of the United States;
- HHNL is a language with its own grammar, lexicon, phonology as well as unique communicative style and discursive modes;
- HHNL is best viewed as the synergistic combination of speech, music, and literature;
- HHNL includes attitudes about language and language use;
- HHNL is central to the identity and the act of envisioning an entity known as HHN;
- HHNL exhibits regional variation;
- The fundamental aspect of HHNL is that it is central to the lifeworlds of the members of the HHN and suitable and functional for all of their communicative needs;
- HHNL is inextricably linked with the socio-political circumstances that engulf the HHN.

The tenets above have been compiled after extensive research on the connection between the language used in hip hop and rap and AAL (Alim, 2002, 2003, 2004a, 2004b; see also section 3.4 in Chapter 3 above). In Brazil, however, to my knowledge, there has not been yet any linguistic study focusing on the language and on the diverse discursive practices of the Brazilian hip hop movement. In addressing the discursive construction of identities, this study is an initial attempt to fill that gap. However, it is limited in the sense that, focusing only on rap lyrics, it did not collect and analyse ethnographic data from other practices of the hip hop community and its members such as interviews, rehearsals, concerts and meetings which are (partially) mediated through language. Such task would have probably rendered a more revealing perspective of the features of the language used within that youth cultural movement and its relation to other linguistic and discursive practices outside it. Despite those shortcomings, the descriptive analysis of the language of rap lyrics in this work aims at providing some insights of its specificities and its contribution to the construction of identities.

At this point, I would like to start by looking at the Brazilian hip hop and rap language in relation to the HHNL tenets seen above and Halliday's (1989) concept of social dialect. I have mentioned that I assume here that the language of the Brazilian hip hop and rap can be considered a social dialect. According to Halliday (1989),

> A dialect, or dialectal variety, can be defined as a variety of language according to the user. That is, the dialect is what you speak habitually, depending in principle on who you are; and that means where you come from, either geographically in the case of regional dialects, or socially in the case of social dialects. In modern urban life, of course, the dialect pattern is predominantly a social one, so that dialect variation reflects the social order, in the particular sense of the social structure. … In dialects, we meet with subcultural varieties, dialects that reflect castes or social classes, or the distinction between town and country, or between parents and children, old and young, male and female, and so on. (*in* Halliday & Hasan, 1989, p.41)

Looking at the definition above more closely, we can observe the connection between dialects and identity since, according to Halliday (1989), dialects depend on

who the individual or group of individuals are and also on their origins, either geographically or socially. That is why we might refer to the language used in Brazilian hip hop and rap as a social dialect: it is the language of a (more or less) determined group – (mostly)[3] poor young urban African Brazilian rappers and their audience. That means that the language used by the rappers is determined (in part) by their age, place of origin and social class, variables that help to form the linguistic identity of that group.

One important variable, however, is left out: race. Unlike the African American language in the United States, which is widely spoken by African Americans, in Brazil we do not find a language which is widely spoken by African Brazilians[4] only, which is why the race variable should not be included in the composition of that social dialect. Nevertheless, although the language used in Brazilian rap songs is the Brazilian Portuguese spoken across races/ethnicities, the variables seen above help to determine the variety of that Brazilian Portuguese (BP hereafter).

To be more precise, the language used in Brazilian rap songs derives (in part) from the language spoken by a Brazilian urban youth, usually poor, that lives in the urban shanty towns of the country. That language, thus, can be considered a non-standard variety, or a social dialect, of the BP even though, unlike HHNL, it is not an 'African Brazilian' variety of BP.

Therefore, if we refer back to the HHNL tenets above, we cannot compare the language used in Brazilian rap songs to the features in the first three tenets. The fourth one, however, can also be applied to the non-standard variety of the BP, as we will see in the analysis. As far as the other six tenets are concerned, it is possible to say that they are also related to the language of Brazilian rap. For instance, in many songs analysed

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[3] Although in small numbers non-African Brazilians (whites) also make up the audience of the Racionais MC's. Likewise, not every African Brazilian is a rap fan/listener.

[4] There are studies that deal with the influence of African languages in the formation of Brazilian Portuguese (*cf.* Lucchesi, 2001, Tarallo, 1993) and others that investigate the dialects of isolated African Brazilian communities or Kilombos (*cf.* Vogt, C & Fry, P. 1985, 2005).

here conversations and/or dialogues are emulated, which emphasise the combination of speech, music and literature. Moreover, the attitudes about language and language use can be best understood from the words of Mano Brown, the lead rapper of Racionais MC's:

> *Hoje tem música que eu nem canto porque tenho raiva da letra. Voz Ativa [CD2 – 1], mesmo, tenho raiva da música. ... Tinha medo de falar gíria, medo de ser mal interpretado, da música ser vulgar. Se você ouvir, vai ver que as palavras... parece que eu sou professor universitário... Tudo quase semi-analfabeto querendo falar pros cara da área, e ficava parecendo que não éramos nós. Aí eu falei: "Não, pára, mano!"* (Kalili, 1998, p. 31)
> Today there are songs that I don't sing because I hate the lyrics. '*Voz Ativa*', I hate the lyrics. … I was afraid of using slang, afraid of being misinterpreted, of the song being vulgar. If you listen to it, you'll see that the words… it seems I am a university professor… Almost all semi-illiterate trying to talk to the guys in the 'hood, and it didn't sound it was us. Then I said: "No, stop, brother!"

We can observe in the quote above the clear position the rapper has in assuming the non-standard variety of the BP in order to reach the intended/target audience of his rap group. And we can also see how the language one speaks is related to one's identity, as when he mentions that the way they were singing did not sound like them: '*Tudo quase semi-analfabeto querendo falar pros cara da área, e ficava parecendo que não éramos nós.*' (Almost all of us semi-illiterate trying to talk to the brothers in the 'hood, and it didn't sound like it was us). Thus, in assuming the language variety that the people of his community use, the members of the rap group reinforce their identification with that community, its values, beliefs and attitudes.

Now, since there are some similarities between HHNL and the language of the African Brazilian rap songs regarding their functional aspects within the practices of hip hop, we could ask whether the language used in the rap lyrics by Racionais MC's could be considered a Brazilian hip hop language (BHHL). The analysis presented in the next sections may give us a few hints into that direction; however, to affirm that that would be the case (as mentioned earlier) would require a much more complex research

involving not only the study of a higher number of lyrics from different rap groups from all over the country but also an ethnographic collection of data from other discursive practices of the hip hop community. Such future enterprise is going to be addressed in my final considerations in Chapter 7.

6.3 The variables and procedures for the analysis of the language in the rap songs

According to Halliday (1989, p.41), '… dialects tend to differ not in the meanings they express but in the realisation of these meanings at other levels – in their grammar, in their vocabulary, in their phonology, in their phonetics.' In the discussion of the concept of antilanguage (Halliday, 1978), which is the idealized extreme opposite of an also idealized homogeneous language and which explains the emergence of social dialects along that sociolinguistic scale (see section 2.6 and fig. 1 in Chapter 2), we saw that one of its features is that it is overlexicalised, as in the example of 22 different words for bomb and 41 for the police used in the Calcutta underworld language. Thus, as antilanguages and dialects vary significantly in their vocabulary, this will be one of the main variables analysed here, along with variations in grammar and phonological aspects.

Many grammar and phonological variations are related, as we have seen above, to age, social class, geographical region and level of education. In the BP, the higher the level of education one has, the closer to the standard variety of BP (the variety which is taught in schools) his/her speech will be. That is one of the reasons why non-standard varieties of BP are stigmatized. These varieties are usually associated with the population which has little or unequal access to formal education and come from the lower social classes, thus being subject to linguistic as well as social prejudice (*cf.* Bagno, 1997, 1999; Bortoni-Ricardo, 2005). Some grammar and phonological features

usually associated with non-standard varieties of BP, according to Bagno (1997, 1999), are for instance:

      1. Number agreement

Unlike the standard variety of BP, non-standard ones usually mark only one word (such as determiners and possessives) to indicate the plural as for instance in '**as criança**' where only the article is marked.

      2. Verbal agreement

Different from standard BP, which has distinct verb forms to agree with the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd singular/plural persons, in non- standard BP two forms are usually used:

> Standard BP: *Eu amo, tu amas, ele/ela ama, nós amamos, vós amais, eles amam.*
> Non-standard BP: *eu amo, tu/você ama, ele ama, nós/a gente ama, vocês ama, eles ama.*
> (Bagno, 1997, p. 66)

      3. '*Yeismo*' or the transformation of *LH* into *I*

Through an assimilation process, the *LH*, realized as a palatal lateral approximant phoneme, merges into the *I*, which is realized as a palatal fricative or affricate phoneme due to their proximity, as in '*bagulho > baguio*'.

      4. Reduction of the dipthong *OU* into *O*

Again through an assimilation process the dipthong *AU* in Latin words such as *paucu-* and *lauru-* were slowly transformed into the *OU*, **pouco** and **louro**, and later reduced to the *Ô* sound as in *poco* and *loro* (Bagno, 1997, p. 83).

      5. Reduction of the dipthong *EI* into *E*

Bagno (1997) argues that reduction happens not because of the assimilation of the semivowel *I* by the vowel *E*, but because of the assimilation of that semivowel by the

consonants *J* and *X* of, for instance, the words *queijo* and *queixo* which, like the semivowel *I*, are palatal phonemes, thus being pronounced *quejo* and *quexo*.

6. Denasalization of postonic vowels

Nasalized postonic vowels in words such as *homem* and *ontem* are denasalized and are pronounced *home* and *onte*.

7. Transformation of *ND* into *N*

Due to their proximity in articulation, both are dental consonants, the plosive *D* is assimilated by the nasal stop *N*, as in '*falando* > *falano*' and '*cantando* > *cantano*'.

8. The rhoticization of the *L* in consonant combinations

According to Bagno (1997), in Portuguese there is a natural tendency in transforming the *L* consonant sound into the *R* consonant sound in consonant combinations due to the rhotic inclination of the tongue, such as in the words '*Inglês* > *Ingrês*' and '*chiclete* > *chicrete*'.

These features of non-standard BP, when present in the language of rap, are important in the sense that their use in the lyrics establishes the artist's connection with the language of the community they belong to. For instance, in Alim's (2003) study of the copula absence (absence of *is* and *are* in present tense forms in AAL) in the lyrics and speech of two hip hop artists in the United States he found that '... in the case of Hip Hop lyrics, the data suggest that the more attention the artists pay to their speech (comparing interviews to lyrics) the more "non-standard" their speech becomes – as indicated in the increase in the frequency of the copula absence' (ibid., p. 52).

That attention paid to speech is a feature of the artists, African Americans or African Brazilians, as we saw in the quote by Mano brown in the previous section. As Alim (2003) argues, '... Hip Hop lyrics are not as spontaneous as free-flowing speech.

Lyrics are sometimes written, rehearsed, performed and recorded several times before they appear on CD. Hip Hop artists, in general, pay a great amount of attention to their speech.' And this has to do with the audience that is targeted by the artists, as we can see from another quote by Mano Brown:

> *A parte mais difícil da fita toda é fazer o favelado te ouvir, não o classe média. O classe média estuda, analisa o que você fala. ... Já o favelado compra axé, sertanejo, samba (esse samba que os caras fazem hoje), que é já pra não ouvir a letra. Pra você fazer esses caras ouvirem o seu rap, truta, se você tiver um estilo, vamos dizer, aristocrata, não vai conseguir. A minha intenção é fazer eles ouvirem, porque o rap é música popular, é música do povo. Então eu não posso falar que nem um político, com o linguajar político.*
> (The most difficult part of the whole thing is to make the 'favelado' hear you, not the middle-class one. The middle-class one studies, analyses what you say. … The 'favelado' buys 'axé', 'sertanejo', 'samba' (the samba that they make today), not to hear the lyrics. For you to make those guys listen to your rap, brother, if you have an, let's say, aristocratic style, you won't succeed. My intention is to make them listen to it, because rap is popular music, it's music of the people. Thus, I can't talk like a politician, with the language of politics.)
> (Pimentel, 2000, p. 54)

Let me now turn to the procedures I have used to analyse the data in this study. In order to deal with lexical features, for instance, I have identified and classified words that I interpreted as related to social dialect of the rappers and their audience, dividing them into forms of address (such as '*mano*' – brother), nouns and adjectives used to refer to people/things (such as '*goma*' – casa), verbs (such as '*embaçar*' – chatear), as well as idiomatic expressions. The meanings of words that were difficult to be understood were then looked up in the electronic version of the Houaiss Dictionary of the Portuguese language (2004) and also in the dictionary/dialect sections of two websites, www.bocadaforte.com.br and www.capao.com.br, where many terms and expressions used by rappers and the community are explained.

The grammar and phonological features were identified according to their occurrence and classified in relation to the list presented above. Phonological features,

more specifically, found in the lyrics are presented in the examples/excerpts and in the appendixes as they were/are pronounced in the recordings.

In the next section, I will present the most frequent lexical, grammatical and phonological features that were found in the analysis carried out in this study.

6.4 The analysis of the language in the lyrics by Racionais MC's

We saw earlier, in a quote by Mano Brown, the lead rapper of Racionais MC's, that, lyrically, the initial songs of the band resembled the speech of a university professor: '*se você ouvir, vai ver que as palavras ... parece que eu sou professor universitário...*' [if you listen to it, you'll see that the words … it seems I'm a professor] (Kalili, 1998). Roughly, that initial phase encompasses the three first CDs of the band, '*Holocausto Urbano*', '*Escolha seu Caminho*' and '*Raio-X do Brasil*', although changes can already be noticed in the latter. However, it is in the fourth and fifth CDs that we can observe that the rappers of the band fully assume a non-standard variety of BP, a variety closely connected to the urban youth community that the band belongs to.

In my analysis of the language of the lyrics, I have decided to divide it into two parts: the first one deals with the initial phase mentioned above and provides a general picture of the most relevant linguistic features of that phase; and the second presents the lexical, grammatical and phonological changes that have occurred in the last two CDs. Such division was meant to make more clear the shift from the use of the standard BP, implied in '*parece que eu sou professor universitário*' (it seems I'm a professor), to the use of a non-standard variety of BP, aimed at making the youth audience living in the slums listen to their music ('*pra você fazer esses caras ouvirem o seu rap ... eu não posso falar que nem um político*', [for you to make those guys listen to your rap … I cannot talk like a politician], Mano Brown in Pimentel, 2000).

6.4.1 The initial phase

The songs of the first CD, for instance, deal with themes that are related to the local realities of the members of Racionais MC's and of their target audience. The language used in the lyrics (specially the grammar structure of some of the sentences), however, seems more related to the standard variety of the BP. In this sub-section, thus, I will focus on features of standard BP and discuss their implications to the linguistic identity of the group and their music.

In the lyrics for the first track of the first CD, '*Holocausto Urbano*', before the song actually starts we are introduced to a casual conversation among the members of the rap group. In this conversation we can notice one of the most important lexical items used in the identification processes within the hip hop cultural movement, the word '*mano*' (brother). Although a term which is also used outside the hip hop cultural movement to refer to one's siblings or a close friend, the term '*mano*' has gained special status in the hip hop community not only to address fellow members but also to imply holding the same values, attitudes and beliefs (in the last CD, the term '*guerreiro*' has also gained the same importance, as we have seen in the previous chapter).

In contrast to that lexical feature, we also find in the same conversation a more conventional grammatical structure, which is an example of the use of the standard variety of BP:

> - Aqui é Racionais MC's, Ice Blue, Mano Brown, KL Jay e eu Edy Rock. E aí, Mano Brown, certo ?
> - Certo não está, né **mano**, e os inocentes, quem **os** trará de volta?
> - É...a nossa vida continua, e aí quem se importa ?
> - A sociedade sempre fecha as portas mesmo, cara. E aí, Ice Blue?
> - Pânico!

The use of the object pronoun '**os**' in the question '*quem os trará de volta?*' shows the attention the rappers had in 1990 with the language in their songs. Their focus was on writing songs following the standard variety and it is not possible to know

whether that was a concern of the artists themselves or a concern from the record company. The important thing is that the use of the object pronoun is one of the most salient features of this first phase of songwriting by Racionais MC's. We can see some more examples of the use of the object pronoun in the examples below:

*Ao que **me** parece prevalence a ignorância /.../E porque ajudariam se **nos** julgam delinqüentes/.../Temos que parar de se acomodar e acatar o que **nos** prejudica* (CD1 – 1)
(what it seems to me is that ignorance prevails /…/and why would they help if they think we are delinquents/…/ we cannot yield and accept what harms us)

*Ei mano, dê-**nos** ouvidos* (CD1 – 2)
(hey, brother, listen to us)

*Racistas otários **nos** deixem em paz* (CD1 – 5)
(Racist suckers leave us alone)

*Poluíram o ar e **o** tornaram impuro* (CD1 – 6)
([they] polluted the air and made it impure)

*filhos, é fácil, qualquer um faz/mas criá-**los** não, você não é capaz* (CD2 – 4)
(a son is easy, anyone can make one/but raise them, no, you're not capable of that)

*Você não tem amor próprio fulano/**nos** envergonha* (CD3 – 5)
(you don't have self-respect/you embarrass us)

*e o que vale a negritude se não pô-**la** em prática*? (CD3 – 5)
(and what is blackness worth if it is no put into practice)

*quero **nos** devolver o valor que a outra raça tirou* (CD3 – 5)
(I want to give back what the other race took from us)

Some of the constructions that are sung by the rappers are very formal instances of the standard BP such as '*dê-nos ouvidos*', '*mas criá-los não*' and '*se não pô-la em prática*'. Those instances undoubtedly confirm the use of the standard variety of BP.

Apart form the use of object pronouns we can also notice that the grammatical features listed in the previous section, namely, number agreement and verbal agreement, also follow the use determined by the standard variety of BP. That use of number and

verbal agreement contrasts with their use in non-standard varieties of BP which we will see in the next sub-section. For now, I will just show a few examples of that feature from the standard variety perspective as they appear in the lyrics:

E as ocorrências prosseguem sem problema nenhum (CD1 – 1)
(and the occurrences continue without any problem)

se nós queremos que as coisas mudem (CD1 – 1)
(if we want things to change)

nossos irmãos estão desnorteados (CD2 – 2)
(our brothers are lost)

os ricos fazem campanha contra as drogas (CD3 – 4)
(the rich make campaigns against drugs)

Those examples show that articles/possessive adjectives all agree with their respective nouns (*as ocorrências, as coisas, nossos irmãos, os ricos*) and that those nominal groups also agree with their verbs (*as ocorrências prosseguem, nós queremos, nossos irmãos estão, os ricos fazem*). Many other examples of those features can be found in the lyrics; however, it seems that an endless list will not add in significance to the analysis and therefore will be no further dealt with. Like those grammar features, phonological features have also remained within the patterns of the standard variety of BP. There has been no significant phonological reduction such as the ones listed in the previous section. Therefore, I will not address any of them here.

More interesting perhaps is to check some expressions that start to appear in this early phase and that suggest a possible change towards a non-standard variety of BP. One relevant characteristic of some songs is that they have casual conversations between the rappers or between the characters of the stories sometimes before the song starts and sometimes also in-between stanzas. Those conversations, unlike the rest of the

lyrics, present more informal instances of language use. For instance, the initial conversation in the '*Hey Boy*' song we have the expression '*cola aí!*', which in the context of the dialogue means '*chegar mais próximo*' or get closer/nearer. Still in the same song, we find the expression '**estar sempre quente** *pra não ser surpreendido de repente*' which we might infer[5] that it means to be alert (be always alert not to be caught unaware).

Other expressions found are, for instance, '**esteja constante** *ou abrirão o sue bolso e jogarão um flagrante*' (CD1 – 5), (have a firm attitude or [the police] will frame you); '*aí você tá me **tirando**?*' (CD2 – 4) (are you taking the piss out of me); '*não **pega nada**' (CD3 – 1), (nothing happens); and '*olha aquele clube que **da hora**' (CD3 – 1), (look at that great club).

Apart from expressions, nouns such as '**crocodilagem**' in '*crocodilagem demais/vagabundas e drogas*' (CD2 – 2), (too much falsehood/bitches and drugs); '*quebrada*' in '*estou a uma hora da minha **quebrada**' (I'm an hour away from my hood) (CD3 – 1); and '*treta*' in '*alcoolismo, vingança, **treta**, maladragem*' (CD3 – 1), (Alcoholism, vengeance, row, trickery) also point out to some changes from the standard variety to a non-standard variety of BP in the first three CDs by Racionais MC's.

Those expressions and nouns contrast with the sometimes very formal grammar structures used in some of the songs by the rappers. What is important is that they have recognized that the language variety they were using was too formal and then decided to switch to the non-standard variety they and their target audience are acquainted with. In the next section, I will move to the last two CDs to compare what has changed in the language of the lyrics in relation to this initial phase.

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[5] Some expressions were not found in the Houaiss electronic dictionary (2004) nor in the websites mentioned in the variables and procedures section. Thus, some of my interpretations are only speculations.

6.4.2 The non-standard variety phase

In Chapter 4 we have seen that the main themes found in the rap songs by Racionais MC's changed throughout their recording career. In the first CD, for instance, the songs discussed police violence and the vigilantes, inequalities between the poor and the rich and also class struggle ('*mano*' x '*playboy*'). In the second, the theme focused on racial identity and in the third, we found the first songs about criminality, involving drug-dealing.

All those themes, in a higher or lower degree, also appear in the fourth and fifth CDs. However, it is in the fifth one that we find songs that deal with personal relationships within the (hip hop) community. Three songs in particular, '*V.L. (Parte I)*', '*V.L. (Parte II)*' [*V.L.* stands for '*Vida Loca*'] and '*Jesus Chorou*', are narratives that seem to expose the problems the lead rapper, Mano Brown, has due to his artistic success and fame. His success, we hear/read in the songs/lyrics, causes different reactions, such as envy, and the songs sound as a response to those reactions.

And because those songs present personal issues and have an informal conversational style, they seem to exemplify more closely the language variety of the rapper(s) and his/their audience. Let us take a look at the '*V.L. Intro*' and the first excerpts of '*V.L. (Parte I)*' song below from CD5 as illustration:

03 – V.L. (INTRO)

- Então, demorô.
- É em cima?
- É em cima.
- Então, é no 21B.
- Quando toca, nóis pega. Acho que é aqui.
- Aí, o Brown tá aí, meu?

04 – V.L. (PARTE I)

- Vagabunda! Queria atacar o do malucão, usou meu nome. O pipoca abraçou, foi na porta da minha casa lá, botou pânico em todo mundo, 3 hora da tarde, eu não tava lá! Vai Vendo!
- É, mais aí Brown ó, tem uns tipo de mulher aí truta que não dá nem pra comentar!
- E eu nem sei quem é os maluco, isso que é foda!
- Que? Vamo atrás desses pipoca aí e já era.
- Ir atrás de quem ? Ir aonde? Sei nem quem é mano! Mano, não devo, não temo, dá meu copo que já era!

- E aí bandido mau, como é que é meu parcero?
- E aí Abraão, firmão truta?
- Firmeza total, Brown! E a quebrada aí irmão?
- Tá a pampa. Aí, fiquei sabendo do seu pai, aí lamentável, hein, truta, mó sentimento memo, hein mano!
- Vai vendo Brown, meu pai morreu e nem deixaram eu ir no enterro do meu coroa, ó irmão.
- Vixe, cê é loco! Cê tava aonde na hora?
- Eu tava batendo uma bola, ó meu. Fiquei na mó neurose, ó irmão!
- Aí foram te avisar?
- Aí vieram me avisar. Mas tá firmão, Brown, tô firmão e logo mais eu tô aí na quebrada com vocês aí!
- É quente. Na rua também não tá fácil, morô truta. Uns juntando inimigo, outros juntando dinheiro, sempre tem um pra testar sua fé, mas tá ligado sempre tem um corre a mais pra fazer. Aí mano, liga, liga nóis aí qualquer coisa cê tá ligado mano, lado a lado nóis até, até o fim, morô irmão?
- Tô ligado, mano!

In the introductory part, '*V.L. Intro*', we hear two guys talking and then knocking[6] at Brown's door. After that, in '*V.L. (Parte I)*', we understand that those two guys were trying to frame Brown for supposedly cheating with the wife of one of them. In that first dialogue we can already observe some of the features seen in the previous section: we can find nouns to refer to people, such as '*pipoca*' (meaning someone who chickens out), verbs such as '*abraçar*' (meaning to believe) and '*botar pânico*' (to cause panic). In the second dialogue, a conversation on the phone with a friend, we find different forms of address such as '*bandido mau*', '*parcero*', '*truta*', '*mano*' and '*irmão*' as well as some phonological features such as the reduction of '*maior*' into

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[6] In the recordings we hear the knocking sound, background noises, and conversations on the phone as well as the speech of the characters. It is a multimodal discourse experience that, unfortunately, cannot be grasped in written form.

'*mó'*, '*mesmo'* into '*memo'*, '*louco'* into '*loco'*. Two lexical items in particular seem to be features more commonly found in the city of São Paulo: the verb '*morar'* (meaning to understand or comprehend) as in '*lado a lado nóis até, até o fim, **morô** irmão*?' and the adjective possessive '*meu'* (my) without its referent, as in '*Eu tava batendo uma bola, ó **meu***'.

Other expressions found are '*vai vendo'* (check out), '*é quente'* and '*tá a pampa'* (meaning (it's) ok, right, fine), '*testar sua fé'* (check whether or not one stands by his/her values), '*um corre a mais pra fazer'* (job, something to be done), '*tá ligado/tô ligado'* (do you get it?), '*liga nóis'* (get in touch, call) and '(*tô*) *firmão/firmeza total'* (I'm fine/ok, everything's fine/ok and/or resistant/standing by values).

What is important to observe is that the grammar, lexical and phonological features seen so far do not make up, or are exclusive to, *the* language of Brazilian rap. They are, most probably, features found in the non-standard variety of BP used in the suburbs of São Paulo ('*Zona Sul'* and '*Zona Norte'*), where the rappers are from, and which they use in their songs. Therefore, the use of the social dialect of the community constitutes perhaps the most important identification variable between rappers and their audience. Obviously, we should not forget the music and fashion style, for instance, as other variables. However, as we have seen earlier in the quotes by Mano Brown, it seems that for him and his audience linguistic identity is essential.

Rap lyrics then have an important function: they foreground features that mark identity. This is the case, perhaps, of the expressions '*firmão/firmeza total'*, terms that have gained emphasis in the lyrics by Racionais MC's. Likewise, '*É nóis'* and '*liga nóis'*, not only identifies the rappers and the audience but places them as a group and bounds them together through hip hop and rap.

After the two dialogues already discussed above, we have the first stanza which starts the song proper. Following a reference to religion and faith in God, the rapper presents his personal narrative:

Fé em Deus que ele é justo
Hei irmão, nunca se esqueça
Na guarda, guerreiro levanta a cabeça, truta
Onde estiver, seja lá como for
Tenha fé, porque até no lixão nasce flor
Ore por nós pastor, lembra da gente
No culto dessa noite, firmão segue quente
Admiro os crente, dá licença aqui
Mó função, mó tabela, desculpa aí
Eu me sinto às vezes meio pá, inseguro
Que nem um vira-lata, sem fé no futuro
Vem alguém lá, quem é quem
Quem será meu bom?
Dá meu brinquedo de furar moletom
Porque os bico que me vê, com os truta na balada
Tenta ver, quer saber, de mim não vê nada
Porque, a confiança é uma mulher ingrata
Que te beija e te abraça, te roba e te mata
Desacreditar, nem pensar, só naquela
Se uma mosca ameaçar me catar, piso nela
O bico deu mó guela, ó, pique bandidão
Foi em casa na missão, me trombar na Cohab
De camisa larga, vai saber, Deus que sabe
Qual é a maldade comigo, inimigo no migué
Tocou a campainha, plim, pra tramar meu fim
Dois maluco armado sim, um isqueiro e um estopim
Pronto pra chamar minha preta pra falar
Que eu comi a mina dele, ah, se ela tava lá
Vadia mentirosa, nunca vi, deu mó faia
Espírito do mau, cão de buceta e saia
Talarico nunca fui e é o seguinte
Ando certo pelo certo, como 10 e 10 é 20
Já pensou doido e se eu tô com meu filho no sofá
De vacilo desarmado era aquilo
Sem culpa e sem chance, nem pra abrir a boca
Ia nessa sem saber, pro cê vê
Vida loca

He is feeling insecure and that feeling has to do with the relationships he has where he lives/goes. We are introduced to the term '*os bico*', people who '*tenta ver, quer saber, de mim não vê nada*', that is, people who are intrusive or nosy. Those people are the ones who went to his place, armed with guns, to try to kill him because of

a supposed love affair. They are also called '*maluco*' ('*dois maluco*'), which can mean a regular/ordinary guy and/or also used as a form of address (as in '*e aí, maluco, firme?*'); and '*um isquero e um estopim*', which are used, as in the context of the song, to refer to people who gossip, a metaphor for the one who tells the gossip and the one who expands/exaggerates it. The rapper, on the other hand, denies being a '*talarico*', someone who flirts with other men's wives.

In that excerpt, we can also find comparatives such as '*Eu me sinto às vezes meio pá, inseguro, que nem um vira-lata sem fé no futuro*' or '*ando certo pelo certo, como 10 e 10 é 20*', and discourse tropes such as personifications, '*a confiança é uma mulher ingrata que te beija e te abraça, te roba e te mata*', and metaphors, '*se uma mosca ameaçar me catar, piso nela*', all of which relate to the rapper's attitudes, behaviour and relationships. In the next excerpt, relations are again emphasised:

> Mas na rua, né não
> Até Jack, tem quem passa um pano
> Impostor pé-de-breque, passa por malandro
> A inveja existe, e a cada 10, 5 é na maldade
> A mãe dos pecado capital é a vaidade
> Mas se é pra resolver, se envolver, vai meu nome
> Eu vou fazer o que se cadeia é pra homem
> Malandrão, eu? Não, ninguém é bobo
> Se quer guerra, terá
> Se quer paz, quero em dobro
> Mas, verme é verme, é o que é
> Rastejando no chão, sempre embaixo do pé
> E fala uma, duas veiz, se marca até três
> Na quarta, xeque-mate que nem no xadrez
> Eu sou guerreiro no rap, sempre em alta voltagem
> Um por um, Deus por nóis, tamo aqui de passagem
> Vida loca, eu não tenho dom pra vítima
> Justiça e liberdade, a causa é legítima
> Meu rap faz o cântico, dos loco e dos romântico
> Vou por um sorriso de criança aonde for
> Pros parceiro, tenho a oferecer minha presença
> Talvez até confusa mas real e intensa
> Meu melhor Marvin Gaye, sabadão na Marginal
> O que será será, é nóis vamo até o final
> Liga eu, liga nós, onde preciso for
> No paraíso, ou no dia do juízo, pastor
> E liga eu e os irmão, é o ponto que eu peço
> Favela Fundão, imortal nos meus verso
> Vida loca

From that excerpt we learn that envy and vanity are common feelings (with another personification '*a mãe dos pecado capital é a vaidade*') and that relationships can be based on the 'an eye for an eye' motto, '*se quer guerra, terá/se quer paz, quero em dobro*'. We also have a reference to '*verme*' which refers to those who betray people and their values, a traitor that, like in jail, might pay with his life.

In the last stanza, the rapper stresses his position in the rap scene and what he represents for his audience: '*meu rap faz o cântico, dos loco e dos romântico/vou pôr um sorriso de criança aonde eu for/Pros parcero, tenho a oferecer minha presence/talvez até confusa, mas real e intensa...*' And whatever happens, they'll be together up until the end: '*o que será, será, é nóis, vamo até o final…*'

In the last four lines, the emphasis is on unity among the members of the (hip hop) community and 'Favela Fundão', with the expression '*… e liga eu e os irmão, é o ponto que eu peço/Favela Fundão, imortal nos meus verso/ Vida loca.*'

This song, thus, seems to provide examples that confirm the assumption taken here that the language of the lyrics by Racionais MC's can be considered a social dialect. The list below summarizes the grammar, lexical and phonological features found in that particular song, '*V.L. (Parte I)*':

1. Phonological features

A. reduction of dipthong *EI > E*

'*parcero*', '*guerrero*'

B. reduction of the dipthong *OU > O*

'*Vixe, cê é **loco**!*'

'*Ia nessa sem saber, procê vê, vida **loca***'

'*que te beija e te abraça, te **roba** e te mata*'

C. Rhoticization of the *L*

'*Não truta, jamais vou lever* **pobrema** *procês ...*'

D. The drop of the consonant *S*

'*mesmo > memo*'

'*mó sentimento* **memo**, *hein mano ...*'

E. Reduction of vowel and semivowel

'*maior > mó*'

'**mó** *sentimento memo, hein mano ...*'

'*Fiquei na* **mó** *neurose, ó irmão ...*'

F. Inclusion o semivowel *I*

'*nós > nóis*'

2. Grammar features

A. Number agreement:

'*tem* **uns** <u>*tipo*</u> *aí que não dá nem pra comentar ...*';

'*e eu nem sei quem é* **os** <u>*maluco*</u>, *isso é que é foda ...*';

'*vamo atrás* **desses** <u>*pipoca*</u> *aí e já era ...*';

'*admiro* **os** <u>*crente*</u>, *dá licença aqui ...*';

'*porque* **os** <u>*bico*</u> *que me vê com* **os** <u>*truta*</u> *na balada ...*';

'**dois** <u>*maluco*</u> *armado sim, um isquero e um estopim ...*';

'*a mãe* **dos** <u>*pecado*</u> *capital é a vaidade ...*';

'*meu rap faz o cântico* **dos** <u>*loco*</u> *e* **dos** <u>*romântico*</u> *...*';

'*Favela Fundão, imortal nos* **meus** <u>*verso*</u> *...*';

'*E aí Brown, e* **os** <u>*pião*</u> *irmão?/ -Tô com* **os** <u>*mano*</u> *aí, ...*';

'*manda um salve* **pros** <u>*mano*</u> *da quebrada aí, morô ...*'

B. Verbal agreement:

'*porque os bico que me **vê** com os truta na balada/tenta **vê**, **quer** saber, de mim não **vê** nada ...*'

3. Lexical features

A. Forms of address:

'*os maluco*', '*mano*', '*bandido mau*', '*parcero*', '*truta*', '*irmão*', '*doido*'.

B. Nouns/adjectives referring to people/things:

'*o pipoca*', '*os bico*', '*um isquero e um estopim*', '*talarico*', '*impostor pé-de-breque*', '*verme*', '*quebrada*'.

C. Verbs:

'*o pipoca <u>abraçou</u>, foi na porta da minha casa lá, <u>botou pânico</u> em todo mundo, ...*';

'*o bico <u>deu mó guéla</u>...*';

'*vadia mentirosa, nunca vi, <u>deu mó faia</u> ...*';

'*Até Jack, tem quem <u>passa um pano</u>...*';

'*Foi em casa na missão, me <u>trombar</u> na Cohab ...*'.

D. Expressions:

'*A pampa*'; '*é quente*'; '*testar sua fé*'; '*um corre a mais...*'; '*vai vendo*'; '*firmão/firmeza total*'; '*É nóis/liga nóis*'; '*tá ligado/tô ligado*'; '*mó função*'; '*mó tabela*'; '*na missão*'; '*e os pião*'; '*brinquedo de furar moletom*'.

As we can see from the list above, compiled from only one song taken from the corpus as illustration, there are some significant grammar, phonological and lexical features present in that song. As far as phonological features are concerned, the number of instances or examples is quite reduced even though we found six different

characteristics of phonological reduction/transformation/inclusion. Similarly, grammar features were mainly related to number agreement, with fourteen instances/examples, and only four instances of the verbal agreement feature. On the other hand, the most significant feature found in that particular song seems to be the lexical diversity of the terms used by Racionais MC's.

A striking feature of that diversity seems to be related to the quite large number of lexical items referring to relations. Since the theme of the song revolves around a supposed love affair, the choice of wordings reflect that through the number of nouns referring to the people involved, specially negative ones such as '*pipoca*', '*os bico*', '*isquero*', and '*estopim*', which are related to foolishness, gossip and being intrusive. On the other hand, the same problem triggers the alliance between the '*manos*' (brothers) and helps the rapper to fight negative values such as envy and vanity. That is why we find a number of terms that are used to address friends such as '*mano*' and '*truta*'.

Moreover, those terms of address and expressions like '*É nóis/liga nóis*' and '*firmão/firmeza total*' are lexical items that seem to symbolize the language of rap. More than just their meaning, they carry the attitudes and values of the hip hop community: the former reinforces the group, and the latter, the attitude.

Since the most relevant phonological and grammatical features found in the other songs of the corpus are the same as those already shown in the list taken from the sample song analysed above, I will not further address them. Likewise, I will not further list the lexical items that distinguish or characterize the language of the rappers and their audience since I contend that providing a list of nouns and their meanings would not add in relevance to what has been already discussed. Thus, I move now to my concluding remarks.

6.5 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have described and analysed the lexical, grammatical and phonological features that are present in the lyrics written by Racionais MC's. The aim of that analysis was to address whether and how the language used in the lyrics by the rappers reflected the linguistic identity of the group and its (hip hop) community and supported the discursive construction of identities presented in Chapter 5.

In my analysis, I could observe a shift from the use of the standard variety of Brazilian Portuguese in the initial phase of the group's recording career towards the use of a non-standard variety of the BP in their most recent works. Such shift from one variety to the other provides evidence for the fact that the construction of identities occurs *through* language/discourse and *in* language.

Therefore, this chapter, in conjunction with the previous one, presents an overall picture of how the discursive construction of identities can be effected.

Chapter 7

Final remarks

The main objective of this study was to explore and describe how identities are constructed in discourse. In order to do so, my first assumption was to consider discourse as language-in-use and also as one form of social practice (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). That assumption implies that: a) analysis of discourse is conducted on real or authentic instances of language and not on artificially created ones; and b) through any instance of language-in-use social relations, identities, representations and social structures are being constructed, contested and/or transformed.

My second assumption was to acknowledge the importance of cultural practices, and specially their (partially) linguistic character, in the construction of identities. Here, I have taken into consideration the increasing importance of the production and consumption of cultural commodities such as films, TV programs, fashion, and music, among others, as new sources of identification (Herschmann, 1997; Kitwana, 2002).

Furthermore, I assumed that one of those new sources of identification, namely, rap music, has been specially relevant for a considerable part of the (mainly) African Brazilian urban youth (*cf.* Silva 1998, Weller, 2000; Felix, 2006).

With those assumptions in mind I set out to explore how the linguistic/discursive element of rap music, its lyrics, enacted identities.

That investigation was carried out based on four research questions. These questions will be addressed and answered separately below.

7.1 Research questions revisited

Question 1

What are the 'recontextualised social practices' (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999)

being represented in the rap songs in which identities emerge?

According to van Leeuwen & Wodak (1999), when we represent, that is, when we explain, report, and so on, any given social practice we are displacing it from its original context (social, institutional, situational) and placing it into another one, thus, recontextualising it. By using that concept in my analysis in Chapter 4, I meant that the narratives or stories in the lyrics of the rap songs were recontextualised, that is, taken from their original context and placed into a new context, the songs and their lyrics. Looking again at it, we could probably say that instead of being only recontextualised the narratives or stories in the songs are perhaps recreated, that is, recreated in the sense of presenting one's own perspective of a particular social practice. For instance, when asked whether his lyrics incited violence, the lead rapper of Racionais MC's, Mano Brown, replied

> *Isso não tem jeito. Tudo bem, o rap tem o poder de fazer o cara se inspirar às vezes numa fita ou outra, só que ele não é realidade pura, mano. É como tirar uma paisagem da vida real e fazer um desenho. Se você pega um quadro, pinta uma criança catando lixo, na vida real é feio pra caralho, mas todo mundo vai querer comprar. Entendeu a diferença? Aí é que tá o barato do rap. O rap é o retrato do barato…*
> (You cannot do anything about that. Ok, rap has the power to make a guy sometimes gets inspired by one thing or another, but it is not pure reality, brother. It's like making a drawing from a real landscape. If you get a canvas and paint a child picking up waste, in real life it is very ugly, but everyone will want to buy it. Did you get the difference? That's the hook of rap. Rap is the painting of the landscape …)
> (*in* Pimentel, 2000)

Thus, when recreating or 'painting' the reality of their local communities the rappers of the group are positioning themselves in relation to that reality, constructing representations, relations and identities through the stories and their characters. That is why those recreated practices or realities are very significant in this work: they are the ground where identities emerge.

Silva (1998, p. 128), has rightly stated that '[r]ap's poetic-musical discourse lies on the subjective dimension apprehended from the common experience lived by the black youth in the suburbs and shanty towns of the country.' In my discussion of the recontextualised, or recreated/reimagined, social practices presented in Chapter 4, it was observed that the practices/narratives/stories in the songs are based on that experience, or as I have said, they are based on sharing the same problems and difficulties and also on criticizing them.

The main themes were grouped under six headings: general social and economic problems; vigilantes and police violence; class struggle; the African Brazilian identity; criminality; and the neighbourhood or '*periferia*'. Under each of these headings, similar narratives discussed the experiences of the poor young African Brazilian youth in relation to those themes. Thus, songs discussing general social and economic problems focused on the inequalities between the rich and the poor and suggested that that distinction is reinforced by the white/black dichotomy. Also related to that is the class struggle theme, which discusses those dichotomies under a new one, the '*mano*' x '*playboy*'. That distinction, then, becomes the symbolic reference for the unequal relations between the lower and the higher social classes.

Under the vigilantes and police violence theme, we could observe that narratives involved two main groups of social actors. On the one hand, we have the local people of the community(ies) in poor shanty towns who suffer with the violence and power abuse

and, on the other, the police and the vigilantes who act violently and abusively. The criminality theme, instead, deals with the experiences that some of the young adults who live in those communities, for different reasons, enter the drug-dealing business. More than just narrating those stories, the songs show that the characters never have a happy ending, thus implying that illegal activities shorten the life span of those individuals.

The songs that present the African Brazilian theme place their emphasis on the need for young African Brazilians to assume their blackness. It is suggested that it is a matter of increasing one's self-esteem and being proud of his/her blackness. And encompassing all of those themes is the neighbourhood or '*periferia*' theme. I mean that it encompasses all the others because they are (mainly) situated within that particular spatial reference.

In sum, the themes of the songs form the stage where identities can be enacted and performed. The police, the poor and the rich, the black and the white, the '*mano*' and the '*playboy*' all interact with each other in the stories and their social positions are either contested or reinforced in them.

Question 2

What sort of discursive strategies (Wodak et al., 1999) are used in the construction of identities?

That question was based on the discourse-historical approach developed by Wodak et al. (1999) and which I have used to investigate the construction of identities in the discourse of rap songs.

Wodak and her colleagues devised such approach while investigating the discursive construction of the Austrian national identity. As we have seen in Chapter 2, their approach consists of three interconnected dimensions of analysis, namely, contents, strategies, and means and forms of realization. Strategies are further distinguished into justification, perpetuation, transformation, constructive and destructive macro-strategies. Those, in turn, make use of other argumentative strategies such as strategies of assimilation, which emphasise or presuppose sameness, and strategies of dissimilation, which emphasise difference.

In Chapter 5, I have analysed the lyrics in this study according to those three levels of analysis proposed by Wodak et al. (1999). Under contents, I have classified the construction of identities in the rap songs by Racionais MC's as related to 1) the construction of a common place of origin; 2) the construction of the African Brazilian identity; 3) the construction of the 'survivor/fighter'; and 4) the dismantling of the 'Other'. In each of these contents, the most used strategies were the assimilation and the dissimilation ones.

In addition to those strategies, I have shown that, for instance, besides sharing the same place of origin, the characters of the songs also share the problems and difficulties that living in that place presents. Thus, place of origin emphasizes not only spatial sameness but also similar struggles.

In my analysis of the construction of the African Brazilian identity I have perceived it as built into two distinct strategies: first, that identity is constructed over a dissimilation strategy, that is, through the presentation of the black/white dichotomy. That strategy emphasizes the differences between the two groups, specially portraying the white group as the negative other. Second, through an assimilation strategy, the

emphasis is on the reinforcement and promotion of the African Brazilian identity, demanding a higher self-esteem of the African Brazilian youth audience.

The construction of the 'survivor/fighter' identity is also built on an assimilation strategy, only that this time sameness is constructed in reference to a metaphor of war, that is, the adverse conditions that the common place of origin holds makes those who live in such conditions real survivors. Finally, the dismantling of the 'Other', which is related to the black/white dichotomy construction above, reinforces the negative attitudes and values of the 'Other', which can be enacted by the '*playboy*', the whites, the elite, and the establishment.

Those discursive strategies presented above were the main resources used by the rappers/songwriters to construct the relations and identities of the stories and the characters in their songs. Those strategies are also related to the third research question below.

Question 3

How are the young, urban, and African Brazilian identities discursively constructed, reinforced, challenged and/or transformed? What other identities emerge?

The young, urban, and African Brazilian identities are constructed through the strategies we have seen in the answer to question number 2 above. Moreover, although urban youth is not necessarily directly addressed, they are implied in the narratives of the songs. The urban identity, for instance, can be understood through the many references that are made to the places of origin, which are commonly related to the suburbs and shanty towns of São Paulo and other similar places in other cities in the country. Likewise, youth identity can be perceived through the stories, the use of some

forms of address ('*mano*'), and references to age ('*fiz dezessete tinha que sobreviver*') as well as sometimes directly addressed when the rappers state, for instance, that they are the voice of the black youth ('*a juventude negra agora tem voz ativa*').

More important than just constructing their African Brazilian identity, the rappers firmly reinforce it, even reaching the point of excluding or rejecting those African Brazilians that give in to the whitening myth (Maggie, 1996). In fact, that strong position is clearly a reaction not only to the whitening myth but also to the racial democracy myth that is still pervasive in Brazilian society and helps to conceal the racialised nature of many social inequalities in Brazil.

Besides the young, urban, and African Brazilian identities that are found in the lyrics of the songs by Racionais MC's, there are also other identities that emerge as a consequence of the narratives and/or the recognition of situations/relations that help to create new subject positions or social actors. That is the case of the 'survivor/fighter' identity we saw in the previous section. Such identity is actually an imagined/created category that has become relevant due to the comparison of life in the shanty towns to a war zone, as the title of the fourth album, '*Sobrevivendo no Inferno*', rightly puts it. Those young people who are able to live in such conditions are then recognized as survivors and/or fighters.

In the last album '*Nada Como um Dia Após o Outro Dia*', the use of a non-standard variety of Brazilian Portuguese by the rappers has produced a number of characters that reflect the relationships affecting the life of the rappers in their communities. As we saw in Chapter 6, the success and fame that the band conquered has triggered the resentment and jealousy of some of the members of their community producing the opposition between '*guerreiros de fé*' (the brotherhood of the hip hop community) and '*Zé Povinho*' (the resentful ones). Those referents foreground the

relational aspect of the choices made by the rappers and also the lexical creativity inherent in the non-standard variety of BP used by the rappers.

In sum, it was observed that identities, specially the African Brazilian one, was emphatically reinforced, and its denial also emphatically derogated/criticized. Moreover, social relations have also produced new identity categories which reflected the nature of those relations.

Question 4

How does language as a system, in its lexical, phonological and grammatical aspects underlie those identities?

Social groups are often established or identified in relation to and/or opposition to other groups, that is, a youth group implies the existence of an adult group or an old age group, and an African Brazilian one implies the existence of a non-African Brazilian or a white one and so on.

The strategies used to place an individual inside a group or to form a group are usually based on the presupposition of similarities or differences between an individual, the target group and opposing groups (recall the line '…*e a maioria por aqui se parece comigo*…' – CD3 – 1, seen in Chapter 5).

In addition to strategies used to identify a group/an individual, the linguistic characteristics of that group/individual can also identify them/him/her. Differences or variations in lexical, grammatical and phonological features can determine, more or less precisely, the origins, the age, the social position and the level of education, for instance, of a group/individual. Those variations can underlie or be references to the assignment of a group's identity.

In my analysis of the lyrics I have observed a shift in the lexical, grammatical and phonological features between the first three CDs recorded by Racionais MC's and their last two ones. Racionais MC's have actually started their recording careers writing lyrics using the standard variety of Brazilian Portuguese, a variety which later they acknowledged it was not the way their actual speech sounded (Pimentel, 2000).

I have actually divided the analysis into two parts: the first one comprising the initial phase of their career, and the second covering the last two CDs. In the initial phase, an interesting finding was that some of the grammatical structures were very formal such as, for instance, the use of object pronouns. At the same time, some informal instances, especially when there was a casual conversation between the rappers or the characters in the stories, the language used tended to be of a non-standard variety. Also, a few lexical items which were used also corresponded to that variety and their number steadily increased towards the third CD.

In the second phase, encompassing the last two CDs, the language used by the rappers was by then a non-standard variety. It is however with the last CD that a full fledged non-standard variety representing the language of the rappers and their audience and community took place. Lexical creativity was one of the most significant features but there was also phonological and grammatical features related to that non-standard variety.

I have also discussed in Chapter 6 some of the similarities and differences between the hip hop nation language in the United States (Alim, 2004a) and the language of the Brazilian rap and hip hop. Through the analysis of the lexical, grammatical, and phonological features in the lyrics we can state that it cannot be addressed as a language as Alim (2004a) does in the US. In the United States, the HHNL is firmly grounded on the African American Language, a language with its own

grammar, phonology and lexicon. In Brazil, the variety used by the rappers is not a language on its own. Nevertheless, it does present variations that can be related to that particular youth group and therefore be linked to rap music and hip hop.

Moreover, some of the features found in the lyrics such as overlexicalization (Halliday, 1978) suggest that there are some lexical items more closely related to rap and hip hop. However, as I have also mentioned in Chapter 6, to state more precisely the emergence of a language of rap would imply a much more comprehensive study involving the lyrics of other rap bands and also data collected from interviews, concerts and other hip hop environments. Only then, perhaps we could describe *the* language of rap.

7.2 Final considerations

In the beginning of this chapter I have stated that the aim of this dissertation was to explore how identities are constructed in discourse. With such a broad statement, virtually any instance of discourse, or language-in-use, could be analysed.

However, my academic interests ended up meeting with my personal interest in music. My constant quest for different sounds and words back in the 80s has led me to the African American sounds of the 70s, such as the great, and late, James Brown. Since then, my passion for music and lyrics has been accompanying me.

When I wrote my doctoral dissertation project I had already in mind it would follow what I had done for my master's research. Only that this time, I was sure I had to work with Brazilian music. My previous knowledge, then, of African American rap music has taken me to the Brazilian rap scene and its subtleties.

What called my attention was the incredible power of groups of African Brazilian teens in the late 80s to transform the first attempts to make music and rhymes

at São Bento underground station in São Paulo into one of the most relevant cultural phenomenon of the 90s in Brazil.

More than that, the combination of music and words has prompted a whole new perspective for that African Brazilian generation: they started making their own music and started speaking out what was so far concealed. Rap music and hip hop has provided a fertile ground for that urban youth to reconstruct its own identity.

In Mano Brown's own words (Pimentel, 2000, p. 55),

Pimentel: Qual foi a maior conquista do Hip Hop no Brasil?

Mano Brown: ***Foi assumir a raça. Ter orgulho da raça, identidade, né?***

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