

Rebeca Sobral Freire

Feminist

**HIP
HOP ?**

Conventions
of Gender and
Feminisms in
Salvador's
Hip-Hop
Movement



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Rebeca Sobral Freire

Feminist Hip-Hop?
Conventions of Gender and Feminisms
in Salvador's Hip-Hop Movement

Salvador
EDUFBA
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With much love,
I dedicate this book to my beloved power trio, *in memoriam*,
my mother, Socorro Sobral,
Professor Doctor Ana Alice Alcantara Costa,
and Minister Luiza Bairros.
To the female hip hoppers of Salvador!
To Salvador, Bahia!
To our public university, UFBA!

I am forever grateful!

I also wish to dedicate this book to all of the families and individuals
who have suffered and endured loss during the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil,
the United States, and all over the world.

Acknowledgments

This book discusses questions concerning gender conventions and feminisms in hip-hop in the city of Salvador, Bahia, through the prism of young female activists. My particular interest is to determine the possible existence of a feminist hip-hop in Salvador, with the broader intention of understanding feminism in its plurality as a social movement. To this end, I ponder the ways in which feminist rhetoric is appropriated, as well as to what extent my research's female subjects represent the movement's ideologies in their activism.

I wish to stress the connection between social markers such as gender, sexuality, and race in the political practice under investigation. By adopting qualitative methodology, this ethnographic-based analysis employs semi-structured interviews carried out in partnership with female hip hoppers. Another research method is participatory observation following my own interaction with this group, guided by Gender and Feminist studies.

I am grateful to have my master's thesis, *Feminist Hip-hop? Conventions of Gender and Feminisms in Salvador's Hip-hop Movement*, available in English as a publication of Edufba, who supported the idea through my own initiative and financial support. The English edition is now a reality as a result of collaboration between many individuals, including Professor Flávia Goulart Roza, Susane Barros, and Josias Almeida Jr. from Edufba. They were the key players who mobilized the publication of this book, and it simply would not have been possible without you all.

Many thanks to the translators of this book: Jeffrey Stewart, a US American young black man who worked at the Federal University of Bahia as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in 2019, and Professor Monique Pfau from the Institute of Languages and Literature at the Federal University of Bahia. Thank you both so much for your generosity and dedication in expanding the geographical horizons of this book. The English edition uniquely has a preface from Dr. Gladys Mitchell-Walthour, co-coordinator of the U.S. Network for Democracy in Brazil and professor at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee.

I am grateful to the Hip-hop movement and the female hip hoppers who partnered with me in this project: Carla Cristina de Jesus Santos (Kaia na Paz), Simone Gonçalves Santos (Negramone), Ana Paula Conceição Oliveira (Azeviche), Eliciana Santos Nascimento (Lis), Priscila Nayala da Costa Lino (*in memoriam*), Vivian Quatuni (Olhasse), Dina Lopes, and Mônica Reis (Índia). I want to give a special mention to *Rede Aiyê Hip-Hop*, and to the groups *Munegrade* and *Hip-Hop Coisa de Menina*. You all are the main inspiration of this work, and therefore I express to you all my deepest congratulations and sincerest gratitude. A special thanks is in order to Jorge Hilton, who ushered me into the hip-hop world of Bahia and invited me to various events, to Gilmara de Lima Souza (Mara Asantewaa), to the friends of the group *Fúria Consciente*, and to all friends, colleagues, and artists of whom I am a fan. I also wish to thank Mônica Reis and Jackson Barbosa (Pinel) for the graffiti images.

The first edition of this book was approved for publication only in Portuguese in 2018 following the theses and dissertations contest hosted by the Federal University of Bahia's (UFBA) *Programa de Pós-Graduação em Estudos Interdisciplinares sobre Mulheres, Gênero e Feminismo* (graduate program in interdisciplinary studies on women, gender, and feminisms - PPGNEIM) for Coleção Bahianas/Edufba. The timing was quite special since it coincided with PPGNEIM's ten-year anniversary. That project was developed with resources from PROPG/UFBA (Pro-Consolidar 2012) as one of the initiatives of the *Projeto de Incentivo à Produção Acadêmica* (incentive for academic production project) in the area of Feminist Studies. It was an opportunity to present young female researchers in Feminist and Gender Studies in the state of Bahia and throughout Brazil. To that end, I want to send a huge thank you to everyone from Coleção Bahianas, a paramount piece of the *Núcleo de Estudos Interdisciplinares Sobre a Mulher* (center for interdisciplinary studies on women - NEIM).

I am chiefly grateful to critical partners. I would like to thank all of my professors, especially my master's advisor, Professor Alinne de Lima Bonetti, for her dedication to her profession which guided me through my studies. You passed on to me imperative lessons for the life of a young female researcher. These lessons then manifested themselves in my master's degree program as a scholarship recipient of Capes, which ultimately brought this book to fruition.

To Professor Márcia Santana Tavares, a significant supporter of this publication in its first edition and whose introduction is also present in

this one. I would like to express my gratitude to all of the women that supported me on this path with their friendship and solidarity. Particularly, I wish to name my dearest Zelinda Barros for her essential tutelage and partnership in embedding decolonial feminist knowledge in my personal and academic education, which played a crucial role in the first steps of this research and its ideas.

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To Capes again I express my gratitude for assuming the paramount task of financing my research during my master's degree in the academic exchange program in Florianópolis (PROCAD), in which I visited the Federal University of Santa Catarina's (UFSC) *Programa de Pós-Graduação em Ciências Humanas (graduate program in human sciences)*. I am grateful to the professors and colleagues in the South of Brazil and, especially, to the family of Gleidismara dos Santos Cardozo. To Professor Angela Maria de Souza, who received me in the South and whose preface I am proud to have in my first book sharing Latin-American hip-hop and black feminisms. I want to also thank Professor Tanya Saunders who received me in the Ohio State University, and wrote the afterword.

Many thanks to all of my male and female colleagues. Gilberta Soares was essential in her academic and scientific connections. Gean Carlos dos Santos Barreto Souza made photographic contributions with "Blessing by Baia de Todos os Santos" and my personal photo in this book. To all of those who read this work all over the world, whether in Portuguese or English, thank you dearly.

I am grateful to have had the support of two very important research groups from UFBA: Feminaria Musical from the School of Music, under the direction of Dr. Laila Rosa, and PORRA from the School of Dance, under the direction of Dr. Lucas Valetim. Both groups were robust sources of inspiration and truly believed in my research and its potential. Thank you all!

Furthermore, I am grateful to have had indispensable support from Coletivo Famílias pela Diversidade in my second book project through Dirce Meire Neves Novais and coordinator Valéria Saraiva, two activists very dear to me who spread positive energy in all colors of the rainbow and taught us with so much love. I would also like to thank my beloved teacher Jorge France, who inspired me to be a political scientist and professor before I dove into higher education. All of you have been remarkable in my life in Bahia. There are no words.

To my family. My grandmother Geraldina Sobral and my mother Socorro Sobral (*in memoriam*), and my aunt Solange, who have always supported my studies. To all my friends, colleagues, and to the families from Fortaleza, Ceará; Salvador, Bahia; and the United States. I am forever indebted to you all. I want to take this opportunity to say thank you Bahia in particular, and to all of the movements of social and political struggle for democracy and their life lessons. It was in Bahia that I became a true *Soteropolitana panamefricanista* (with influence from Lélia Gonzalez's coining of the term *amefricanidade*), where I found my true self as a queer, colored, and free feminist woman.

To my beloved Esclitória Studio, the sacred, powerful feminine space where I was free to develop creatively alongside the teachings of so many amazing writers, professors, students, and partners.

It is with great honor that I take this final moment to dedicate this work to Professor Paulo Freire—who gave new meaning to my last name, something we will always share—and bell hooks, two colossal figures responsible for crucial questioning of the status quo. To all of the hip-hop writers and communities, the true representation of hip-hop, you are my utmost inspiration, for real!

Throughout the creative process as a student at UFBA's School of Dance, I came to adopt a social name: Rasbeca Quincê. Rabeca, modified slightly to Rasbeca for Pan-African affirmation, refers to a musical instrument native to the Northeast of Brazil and is used in forró music and poetry. The community and territory once known as Quincê is presently the municipality of Acopiara in the interior of Ceará, where the roots of

my family are planted. I was the first to be born in the capital of Ceará, Fortaleza. For that reason, I affirm my stance as a proud *Nordestina* in contemporary Brazil, where we boldly fight for democracy and the right to citizenship amid severe inequity. For everyone and everything that was involved in this process, I am eternally grateful!

A note from the translators

What a pleasure it has been, and a great responsibility, to take Rebeca Sobral Freire's local and global work and render to the international community. We stress this point because the English language, as much as Freire's work, has transformed itself into a multifaceted identity. That is one of the reasons we believe that this "four-handed translation" managed to express both the local and global aspects present in this particular book. We are natives of the United States and Brazil, respectively, and we often had to negotiate our local and global knowledge in order to make this translation as culturally rich as it deserves to be.

We do not take such a task lightly, and fully understand the magnitude of the mission. Despite Brazil's massive territorial reach—with a population totaling more than half of South America in its entirety—, we find that, for whatever reason, surprisingly little is known about the country on a global scale. This translation aims to shine a brighter light on just a portion of what makes Brazil the incredible entity that it is.

The reader will encounter numerous footnotes in the text itself, which in the original version are considerably less. This occurrence is due to the numerous cultural, historical, and social references that to a Brazilian reader are self-explanatory and common knowledge. Such would probably not be the case for readers of other nations. These in-text situations thus necessitated further explaining on our part to facilitate the reader's experience in following Freire's logic and references. Indeed, the reader gains much more than a mere presentation of research findings.

One of the most thrilling elements of this task was interacting with colloquial and vernacular language. Such was evident in the accounts given by Freire's research subjects and the rap lyrics that were used to illustrate hip-hop discourse in Salvador. This research is about Black women in hip-hop. We therefore wanted to align our choices in a manner consistent with authentic hip-hop lingo. However, we recognize that hip-hop lingo can be problematic; in fact, it can—and more often than we might like to

admit, does—work against the very agenda that hip hoppers wish to push forward. Freire herself uncovers and leans into such contradictions in her work, which are a part of the wider narrative and must not be ignored.

When it came to deciding on how to best navigate the lingo used in the research subjects' speech, we kept in mind two guiding factors: avoiding problematic language wherever possible (although it is undoubtedly present in hip-hop) and catering to a universal English-speaking audience. An overarching theme that seeps through these two factors is the painstaking effort to maintain the (Brazilian) cultural identity unique to each individual.

As for the rap lyrics, we took the liberty of translating them with the strict purpose to better comprehend Freire's arguments. Rap is one of the art forms expressed in this book, and as such we decided to translate rap into rap. In this sense, we aimed to preserve the rhymes and rhythms to the same extent as the discourses of resistance all in a vernacular tone. To achieve that objective, we had to change words, reorder sentences, and replace social symbols of oppression and resistance to communicate similar ideas that concern a particular reality of a social group from Salvador.

Although hip-hop does have its origins and strongest influences stemming from the United States of America, its current global presence is solidified and deserves attention beyond the geographical context of its founding. What began as one identity and purpose has since blossomed into something much larger. How has hip-hop molded and adapted itself into so many different cultures and social realities? The following text will tackle that inquiry by sharing its impact on Black women in Salvador, Brazil.

Jeffrey Stewart and Monique Pfau

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Preface

Gladys Mitchell-Walthour¹

In “Feminist Hip-Hop? Conventions of Gender and Feminisms in Salvador’s Hip-Hop Movement,” Rebeca Sobral Freire uses qualitative methods to examine how young women Hip Hop artists’ in Salvador, Bahia both challenge and affirm gendered norms present in society. Freire’s work is innovative and a welcome intervention in scholarship on Hip Hop as she focuses on women in Hip Hop in Brazil, where the largest population of African descendants live outside of the country of Nigeria. Furthermore, her research takes place in Salvador, Bahia, a city that is over 80 percent Afro-Brazilian. While scholars such as Tricia Rose, Joan Morgan, Elaine Richardson, Ronald a few, have examined gender and Hip Hop in the United States and there has been less work focused on gender and Hip Hop, published in English, focusing on Brazil. Scholarship available in English that focuses on Brazil, includes Darek Pardue’s and Jaqueline dos Santos’s work. Both of these authors focus on the city of São Paulo. There has been less work focused on challenging gender norms in Hip Hop with a focus on Salvador, the city often referred to as ‘the Black Rome.’

¹ Associate Professor of Public Policy & Political Economy in the Department of African & African Diaspora Studies (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee), and the president of Brazil Studies Association (2018-2020).

Freire intervenes with book in which she interviews a diverse group of women Hip-Hop artists. She focuses on those involved in graffiti, break dancing, Hip Hop artists, and those who identify as Hip Hop militants. These interviews reveal that some of these women face sexism as many artists and non-artists alike, believe that Hip Hop is the domain of young men. However, these women challenge the notion that *Hip Hop é a coisa do menino* or that Hip Hop is a thing for boys. Yet, challenging gender stereotypes sometimes occur at the same time as young women perform gendered expectations and roles. One example, is an artist who although is in a Hip Hop group (which challenges the notion that women cannot be in such groups) still has to fulfil the gendered expectations that women must take care of things for the group and ensure that the other artists are cared for and supported. In the case of b-girls, they visibly break gender conventions with their physical appearance as they have toned muscles which challenges notions that women are delicate and that only men should have muscles. Young women b-girls unite to practice together and form groups, as is the case with young girls who take b-girl classes together whereas the young men are less likely to work together.

Women involved in graffiti sometimes replicate gendered notions that women should be submissive to men in their art. Many young men do not invite them to participate in projects with them. Yet some women, attempt to challenge the conventions that women cannot be graffiti artists by uniting with other young women. When they reach out to other young women, these women are hesitant to work together on projects.

Freire has many findings and through her interviews and analyses, allow those who have traveled to Salvador or who are simply interested in Hip Hop in Brazil, to see the many layers of this art form. As Freire notes, Hip Hop is at the intersection of culture and politics. It is political and in Salvador, although young Black Women Hip Hop artists face the challenge of sexism and gendered notions of femininity, some of these artists are feminists and take feminist standpoints in their participation in Hip Hop. This excellent book tells their story.



Preface

Angela Maria de Souza¹

Undertaking research on the Hip-hop movement raises an array of debates and propositions. If this movement is then undertaken by women, the discussion only broadens. This is one of the aspects that I would like to accentuate in this work: the problem-setting and provocations that it places before us and requires us to reflect on the claims and demands called for by these women of Salvador.

If we look back to the 1990s—the beginning of research on the Hip-hop movement—we are able to observe significant changes with respect to the expansion of this subject matter in diverse areas of knowledge. Nonetheless, this expansion is not tantamount to academic openings for the debate surrounding the Hip-hop movement itself and what it proposes. On the contrary, barriers persist. I wish to problematize this very issue based on the relationship and sense of belonging established among the research's female subjects, which in turn vehemently transforms the academic views and practices around subject matters such as the Hip-hop movement.

1 Lecturer in the Anthropology Department in the *Programa de Pós-Graduação Interdisciplinar em Estudos Latino Americanos* (graduate program in interdisciplinary latin american studies - PPGIELA), Dean of Extension at the Federal University for Latin American Integration (UNILA), and Coordinator of the *Núcleo de Estudos Afro-Latino Americanos* (center for afro-latin american studies - NEALA).

It was Black Women who drove this work forward, including its author, Rebeca Sobral Freire, who possesses a focused and refined vision in the way she incites discussion with other women within the Hip-hop movement in Salvador. Rebeca un.masks two combinations that often-times escape our attention: women in the Hip-hop movement, and their practices within the perspective of Salvador, Bahia, a city well-known for many other musical styles. This fact alone makes all the difference not only in producing a feminist hip-hop movement or a movement mobilized by women, but also in producing this work.

With an intersectional mind-set, this work outlines a cornerstone debate on a triple perspective: gender, race, and class. Further overarching elements of this debate includes the universe of women and the Hip-hop movement in Salvador, with particular focus on youth as being instrumental in giving direction to this triple perspective.

In addition to intersectionality, ethnography also results from the way in which Sobral engages in her work in this space of political debate and strife. With all academic rigor, this research is the product of a political involvement which makes a true difference in the relationships established with women in the Hip-hop movement. Such relationships are questioned in academia and is oftentimes referred to in a derogatory sense as militancy. There is no way for one to think strictly on an academic wavelength here, because, as young Black Women of the lower classes, our research investigations are traversed and ultimately established in field work. Such is evident in the research presented here, and it becomes a structural difference in this work.

The trajectories of the women in the Hip-hop movement are not so distant from the researcher's universe. Engagement and commitment go far beyond what is merely academic and they cross paths with each other as life trajectories that mark these pages, presented here as research. We are faced with an epistemic movement, one that is crucial to the rethinking of the cornerstones upon which academic knowledge stands: in other words, to bring them into question. Knowledge has motives, but we need to be aware of and define what these motives are, what they mean, and how they are used in academic spaces. Such spaces are indeed spaces of power defined by masculine-based, racialized practices. To problematize these spaces is to problematize the ways in which they are occupied, which in turn signals political action within academic spaces. Activist and academic positions then begin to collide; they are indeed political positions.

By entering into the university sphere, our bodies speak. They make it clear who we are: Black Women. Just that alone would be enough for us to have a political stance in the midst of the forces that affect or mobilize us. I include here, among those forces, the choices that we make in constructing our academic trajectories, wherein various subject matters and research approaches that we undertake also lie. All of these factors inform our political positions in academic spaces.

As for the research presented here, we cannot go on without reiterating that within the Hip-hop movement, Black Women have been the instigators of its resignification. If there is indeed a process of renewal of the current Hip-hop movement, it is because of the women within the movement and their stances, positions, and artistic-cultural output. Their claims, trajectories, and demands give an authentic dynamic to the Hip-hop movement, and the men need to step up and make their positions clear, including those in relation to the spaces that they occupy. These women are bringing about change in these spaces, and for that alone they ought to be considered feminists. Yet, they represent something more. They are the symbols of a trajectory rendered invisible: the history of Black Women. Their history is more revolutionary than feminist, in fact it is the history of resistance. When Eliciana tells us that “[...] *something that I always hear is that, while white women were burning bras, black women were setting entire farms ablaze!*”,² she is really driving home the point of how strongly these women would position themselves. With all of the due proportions engraved among the various eras and historical movements, she brings to our attention that for us, Black Women, fighting for our rights, equality, and citizenship is our history. The resistance itself is what pushes us forward in perseverance. Throughout history, not once did we ever have the chance of not fighting, after all, our very existence depends on it.

The Black Woman’s struggle will forever be against the enslaving patriarchal system that we live through every day. This racist, patriarchal system can be read through statistical data (IPEA, 2017)³ about the alarming mortality rates among black youth (71%). Even with the passing of

2 T.N.: All citations in Portuguese and Spanish have been translated into English for this book and are followed by a footnote with the original text. [...] *uma coisa que eu sempre ouço é que enquanto as mulheres brancas estavam queimando sutiã, as mulheres negras estavam incendiando fazendas!*

3 The Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA) and the Brazilian Forum on Public Security (FBSP). Atlas of Violence 2017. Rio de Janeiro, 2017.

public policies and the Maria da Penha law,⁴ rates of violence against Black Women have gone up from 54.8% in 2005 to 65.3% in 2015. Youth and Black Women are the principal aspects that delineate the demands of the women in the Hip-hop movement, and their life experiences are the spaces in which they surface and are politicized.

This setting reflects reinforcing the politicization of the Hip-hop movement, which is often compromised when young people are seduced by media and commercial practices. These women take back and renew discussions that strengthen the Hip-hop movement as a space of struggle and contestation, having principally their life trajectories as conduits for their own activism and political practices. For these women, rhetoric and praxis are constituents of the same action.

At this time, I would like to draw the reader's attention to another aspect that I consider pertinent in this book. If various works on the Hip-hop movement are related to gender by analyzing rap lyrics and using women's rap references from a Brazilian context, then they present us with ethnography realized amongst young women that produce rap from an intersectional perspective. The women of the Hip-hop movement in Salvador pave the way to dig deeper into the debate, which even today is not given very much thought in academic spaces. In other words, they are perspectives perceived as irrelevant within academia and to actually go further into the debate would imply that universities are taking a political stance. Through the voices of the women within the Hip-hop movement of Salvador, through their perspectives, and political and activist positions, this work aims to widen women's citizenship on all levels. With that being said, special focus is given to the rights of Black Women.

Even though the Hip-hop movement is a predominantly masculine space, these women do not just "discover loopholes," they conquer spaces from their stances and claims. They bring fresh air to the Hip-hop movement with demands stemming directly from their life experiences as young, black women and as political subjects, like the author of this work. In this position, the challenge then follows to make the Hip-hop movement a social movement in the practices of the Afro-Latin American diaspora.

The Black Women's Hip-hop movement generates the renewal of political struggles from a myriad of other movements, including: Black

4 Entered into force on August 7, 2006, Brazil's Federal Law No. 11340, more popularly known as the Maria da Penha Law, was created to target gender-based violence, particularly domestic violence against women.

movement, Feminist movement, Youth movement, Inner-city movement, Artistic-cultural movement, and many more. The practices and interventions of all of these movements pave the way for a broader political debate in a local-transnational perspective that is constitutive of its practices, as Negramone notes:

This local feminism, we can say that, as youth, as women, it exists, but [...] understanding its diversities, understanding [...] how we want feminism to be. It's not universal, it's like hip-hop. The Hip-hop movement isn't universal within the politics of social justice, racial justice. It exists in its diverse forms, it has its own philosophical aspects just like feminism. That's why we're going more in the direction of a local feminism, a local movement, but always remaining in dialogue with its national and international diversity, and understanding that diversity.⁵

Negramone's words take us back to one of the cornerstones of the Hip-hop movement, one which disregards the local context for its formation, creation, and struggle; however, it is always in dialogue with international spaces and the transnational policies surrounding the subject matter and demands that affect these spaces. The same is true with feminism, since its specific claims and demands are constitutive of the practices from the Black Women's Hip-hop movement, and they are connected with much wider contexts that bring struggles together and therefore renew feminist practices. What we have is black feminism, rooted in practices and efforts from the Hip-hop movement and vice-versa, as a space of political strife. The way in which these young women appropriate themselves and spread the Hip-hop movement gives form to the political battles of young black women, that is, from an intersectional perspective.

Rounding back to the central question of this study –the threefold connection between the Feminist movement, the Black movement, and the Youth movement— I must make it very clear that this position is based on the personal and historical trajectories of these women's experiences. As is the case for numerous Black Women, the struggles are daily and everlasting, yet they make their way into the academic sphere when researchers are also Black Women. This discussion is paramount for us to

5 T.N.: *Esse feminista local a gente pode se dizer que a gente, enquanto juventude, enquanto mulheres, ele existe, mas [...] entendendo as suas diversidades, entendendo [...] como a gente quer o feminismo. Não é universal, é como o Hip Hop. O movimento Hip Hop não é universal dentro de uma política de justiça social, racial. Ele existe em suas diversidades, ele tem as suas outras vertentes de filosofia assim como o feminismo, entendeu? Por isso que gente vai direcionando pra aquele feminismo local, aquele movimento local, mas dialogando com essa diversidade nacional e internacional e entendendo essa diversidade.*

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think about political, academic, and activist trajectories that collide with each other and are a part of a life trajectory.

This research offers us a glimpse of avenues in renewing political and artistic-cultural movements paramount to the fight for a type of citizenship that is rooted in respecting the other, be it in the Feminist movement, Hip-hop movement, Black movement, or any of the youth movements. In all of these movements, there is a sense of belonging that both strengthens the fight and shifts these women's—directors of visibility and conquests—collective trajectory to an ever-more urgent light, especially in the current political times.



Introduction

Since its first edition in 1997, *Coleção Bahianas* has proven itself quite a challenging feat. Yet 20 years later, it continues to be a space for theoretical and empirical studies to freely intermingle. These studies are geared toward questioning gender conventions and stereotypes that —founded within a logic that remains binary— determine distinct positions and spaces for men and women. In the present day, these positions are only intensified when grouped with other categories such as race, social class, generation, and/or the territory in which these categories interact and are displaced.

In the same way, *Coleção Bahianas* has been sharing the very questions that instigate feminist thinking, whether that be in regard to bringing under suspicion the Cartesian logic that governs how knowledge is disseminated and proposing a critical review of contemporary science's pillars, hence overcoming the polarity between subject and object to incorporate diversity (PASSOS, 1997), or by having this very feminist thinking established in spaces of dialogue for new female researchers who adopt in their studies a gender and feminist perspective in order to map new feminisms in programs like PPGNEIM. In fact, since 2008 *Coleção Bahianas* has brought forth editions via compilations, containing articles that are either the products of successfully-defended master's theses in PPGNEIM, or that illustrate the

theoretical and methodological diversity present in the multidisciplinary dynamics that define the program's academic output (COSTA, 2011).

In 2012, under the coordination of Professor Ana Alice Alcantara Costa, PPGNEIM launched an internal posting concerning its selection process that sought to publish influential works (theses and dissertations) of the program. The selected works were to be published by UFBA's own publishing house, Edufba, through *Coleção Bahianas* as part of the efforts of the *Projeto de Incentivo à Produção Acadêmica (incentive for academic production project)* in the area of Feminism and Gender Studies. This initiative would be implemented with resources from PROPG/UFBA (PRO-CONSOLIDAR, 2012).

Among the selected works, I have the great pleasure of presenting *Feminist Hip-hop? Gender Conventions and Feminisms in the Hip-hop Movement of Salvador*. The author, Rebeca Sobral Freire, scrutinizes how gender conventions and feminisms are configured in the Hip-hop movement stemming from concerns about how young women operate within it. She analyzes the existence of a young, black, feminist hip-hop in Salvador through the prism of the women actually involved. Her interest is in understanding how these women interpret feminism (or the feminine). If there is any influence from these women's experiences in the midst of a context in dialogue with the current, local political culture, the ins and outs of that influence are to be examined.

Just like the subjects of her study, Rebeca Sobral is a young feminist whose intellectual curiosity and sensitive approach are reflected in this agile, instigative, and innovative text that is attentive to the intertwining of social markers of difference (gender, generation, race, sexuality, and social class). The text invites us to get to know young feminists in motion, such as the hip hoppers, their reflections, feminist rhetoric, and how they latch onto politics. We are also invited to look into the challenges faced in consolidating a feminist hip-hop that, as the author herself stresses, contests the feminism of white and European origin with which these hip hoppers do not identify. They give new meaning to feminism, constructing it upon their own, lived experiences as poor, black working women.

As Ana Alice Costa reflects, feminism constantly changes in response to each new demand and each accomplishment; however, she also points out that in the Feminist movement dialectics travel at the speed of light, and for those who have not experienced its inner movements it would be impossible to capture this type of dynamism. In this sense, Rebeca Sobral's

book can help the reader understand the way in which new feminisms are reinvented from the young, feminist hip hoppers' reflections and practices, and to gain a glimpse of feminist possibilities in its battle for equal existence with men in hip-hop and in life.

Therefore, upon celebrating PPGNEIM's tenth year of existence, we consider the publication of Rebeca Sobral's book (master's thesis version) to be quite timely and fitting. The book enables us to reach a wider audience and socialize the academic output of a generation of young female researchers, which both illustrates the educational process of our program's student body and reveals the paths and directions that new feminisms are taking.

Happy reading!

Márcia Tavares



Zooming in on the fields: gender and hip-hop

From its inception, a study on women in hip-hop was considered quite an undertaking, respectively, in the fields of Political Science and Interdisciplinary Studies on gender and feminisms. By grounding this proposal in feminist theory, it then became possible to dismantle a restricted understanding of what would be considered “political”,¹ and adopt a wider vision that entails dialogue between politics and culture. This dismantlement is what paved the way for dialogic interaction to be mapped between diverse perspectives of knowledge with a common interest in the relation between gender and hip-hop.

Having its origins in the United States of America² in the 1970s, hip-hop was characterized as a political and cultural movement constituted under the influence of two other important movements in the country: The Civil Rights Movement (led by Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.) and The Black Power Movement (led by Angela Davis and The Black Panther Party). Both of these movements were precursors of hip-

1 Initially linked to an institutionalized interpretation, more so to the field of formal “politics,” including political parties, elections, representative positions, terms, public policies, etc.

2 To describe someone from the United States of America, every effort is made to avoid the term “American,” which perpetuates the colonizing perspective in relation to one country. In this text the term is used to encompass all countries of the Americas. T.N.: In the Portuguese version of this book, the term *estadunidense* was used. In English, we chose the term *US American*.

hop that shared claims and demands against social inequalities, which were more specifically directed at issues of race. According to Patricia Hill Collins (2006), the rise of hip-hop, marked by the end of The Black Power Movement, represents The Post-Civil Rights Movement. It came into being as an alternative to the blindness inflicted by myths that racism had ceased to exist³ and that the “American dream” of equal opportunity for all people was still alive and well –while still witnessing the ghettoization⁴ of poor people and of the young, US American black working class.

The American media created and commercially broadcasted hip-hop as a type of ‘Black-American culture’, connected to poverty, drugs, violence, and the hypersexualization of black bodies –specifically those of Black Women. Collins (2006) explains that this propaganda publicized fashion styles of blackness based on the elements of hip-hop, thus transforming it into a million-dollar industry. Hip-hop, in its various aspects, then became a target of interest for the Social Sciences. Collins goes on to point out that the younger generation –made up of teens and recent young adults born after the victories of the Civil Rights era (economic integration) and the economic crises in the United States—, regardless of social class, gender, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, commonly views this period as a chapter of politicizing social life.

It is worth noting that the victories won through The Civil Rights Movement in the United States reverberated throughout the entire world and influenced movements in the fight for citizenship in other countries. How else would the youth in *From Black Power to Hip Hop* (COLLINS, 2006) find it within themselves to question the problems that they face on a daily basis, to the point of inspiring and sharing experiences of inequality and strategies to overcome it, while in such distant places?

3 Especially by the institution that had put an end to racial segregation laws in the United States which separated blacks and whites.

4 I understand “ghetto” as a reference to a space of living restricted to a certain ethnic group and poor class, which goes on to determine lifestyle and conditions in the face of social exclusion.

Hip-hop as a youth movement spread throughout the world based on its four elements: breakdancing,⁵ graffiti,⁶ rapping,⁷ and DJing. Only with all four of these elements existing in unity do they constitute hip-hop, by promoting interaction between culture and politics. A fifth element must be taken into consideration, which permeates the classic four: politicization that encourages youth to get involved both individually and collectively in issues relevant to their everyday lives and identities. More often than not, the youth of The Movement identify with these issues through ‘activism’.

In the 1980s, The Hip-hop Movement arrived in Brazil’s two main capitals, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. It reached Brazilian shores particularly within the context of social problems that target Brazil’s inner-city population. Its culture and aesthetics for affirming black identity infiltrated ‘Black’ dances, which were originally initiated by Brazilian funk⁸ —dance parties that prioritized musical styles of both national and international black artists and bands, such as James Brown and Jorge Ben Jor. Given that these were common events in the inner cities, this phenomenon stimulated a scene of dancing, flashy attire, and various hairstyles favorable to curly hair, all of which were staples of the so-called ‘Black Power’ style. The idea was to challenge the imposition of a specific beauty model attached to ‘whiteness’.

At that time, in the city of Salvador, in the national state of Bahia, ‘Black Bahia’ dances were occurring as well. They would take place in the inner-city neighborhood of Periperi, in which funk groups, such as *Cobra Funk* (only boys) and *Cobra Funk Girls* (girls of at least 10 years of age), would perform. These groups presented the first expressions of hip-hop with dance music. In 1996, when the formation of hip-hop was solidified as a social movement, its first expressions united to create its first group in Brazil, *Posse Ori*.

5 Those who practice and perform breakdancing are known as b-boys and b-girls.

6 Graffiti artists work with spray cans to create designs using specific techniques. An interesting question in the context of Brazil is the distinction between what is considered *grafite* and what is considered *pichação*. The former is seen as an urban art form that began on city walls, and later on makes its way into art galleries, exposing everyday urban issues as well as current issues in society. The latter, *pichação*, unique to Brazil, is viewed as visual pollution and urban vandalism with the intention of depreciating city spaces.

7 Also known as MCing, those who practice and perform this element of hip-hop are known as rappers or MCs (masters of ceremony).

8 T.N.: A music genre originating from the slums of Rio de Janeiro which derives from Miami bass and gangsta rap. Since its inception, it has become popular within the Brazilian working classes all over the country.

According to Aldenora Lima (2006, p. 13, our translation), *posses* can be understood as “[...] a center of work and reflection in The Hip-hop Movement, a place where weekly meetings take place, future projects are discussed, and events and parties are advertised”.⁹ Priscila Matsunaga (2008) actualizes a new term for these groups, also known as crews, with a connotation specific to dance and/or graffiti groups. Both authors agree that, through their artistic manifestations, young men and women in hip-hop go on to politically comprehend their own citizenship.

In addition to the artistic works that the *posses* undertook around the elements of hip-hop, they also promoted community engagement. The engagement activities would take on diverse formats, such as lectures in schools and colleges (WELLER, 2000) as well as roundtable participation in seminars, conferences, and openings of events dealing with different social topics –especially with a focus on youth and race. It was due to the efforts put forth by the *posses* that hip-hop in Salvador was able to congregate young people of the same neighborhood and region, who developed the elements that characterize The Movement and acted politically on behalf of the demands of their communities and issues that affect their everyday lives.

Furthermore, engagement in the *posses* and hip-hop groups (such as rap groups) enabled many young people to explore areas outside of their own inner-city neighborhoods –which are mostly quite distant from the historical and traditional city centers— and circulate through others, including the city centers.¹⁰ Not only did this opportunity allow them to navigate ‘uncharted territory’, it also offered them the chance to enter into the city’s historical and political spaces, to meet new people, and to engage in other cultural and political activities that tackled a diverse range of subjects.

In the present day, hip-hop can be found in both big capital cities and in more rural areas of smaller municipalities in various nations around the world. Big urban centers are the largest settings of hip-hop’s

9 T.N.: [...] um núcleo de atuação e flexão do movimento Hip-hop, local onde ocorrem reuniões semanais e são discutidos os projetos futuros e divulgados eventos e festas.

10 On many occasions, these young people would frequent areas and urban circuits that their relatives had never been to yet, as they would restrict their own circulation within the neighborhoods in which they live. At best, they would sporadically go to the city center when it had to do with something work-related, or for medical or bureaucratic necessities. They were not exactly frequenting and familiarizing themselves with free, recreational areas such as plazas, theaters, or even the Historical Center of Pelourinho (Field Diary, *Reunião “Curso de formação de b-girls,”* April 2008).

proliferation and elements, taking into account its evidence primarily in contexts of development, migration, and, above all, intense social inequalities (BILL, 2005).

In Bahia, a state in the Northeast of Brazil and home to one of the largest contingents of Black People, marked by huge disparities with respect to income distribution, The Movement highlights the racial aspect as extremely relevant in acknowledging its personal and group identity. As is noted in this research, the growing affirmation of the presence of women shines the spotlight on pertinent aspects of the recent Hip-hop Movement's configuration in Salvador.

To this end, I wish to now take a moment to contextualize contact with the world of research. Although the musical element of hip-hop (rap) has already been proliferated socially, hip-hop does not bring itself to the forefront as a social movement in Salvador until the turn of the century. The investigative interest on this topic was sparked from a rich hip-hop experience in the *III Encontro de Gênero e Hip-hop* (3rd meeting on gender and hip-hop), in 2005, in the municipality of Lauro de Freitas (FREIRE, 2010). This event crystallized hip-hop's potential as a topic and subject of study, above all due to the increasing engagement of women who affirmed their demands in The Movement's agenda.

In general, that space brought about a series of issues to be raised involving concern with the citizenship of Bahia's Black Youth, and even more so with the Black Youth of inner cities. Not only was this concern directly related to the struggle for obtaining human rights, but also to objectifying the discussion in that space around men-to-women, men-to-men, and women-to-women relations. Included in that same discussion was the context in which masculine hegemony is reproduced within The Movement itself and its implications on everyday life as well as in the activism of its members.

What ultimately grabbed our attention was the fact that, while women themselves were creating a space of dialogue, they prioritized male involvement on the second day of scheduled events. Such prioritization was groundbreaking, or at the very least, eyebrow-raising in the face of other groups and mixed political sectors of existing social movements of that time. Two other relevant aspects to be noted are this sector's self-identification as youth and its engagement with issues surrounding feminism.

From this experience, the analytical profitability of a study on The Hip-hop Movement —specifically of youth, feminist, and black

character— became clear; as well as the extent to which such a study could simultaneously engage different fields of study. On the one hand, it brings into question the hegemony of the male subject from an analysis of political studies; and on the other, it challenges the predominance of adult women as a focal point of gender and feminist studies (FREIRE, 2010). Furthermore, this experience includes elements of field studies on identity which are linked to ethnic-racial and age/generation relations. Both of these areas are undernourished in studies on gender and politics.

As for the involvement of young women, with the focus on the generational aspect, they take on a distinct character in relation to adult women. There is a void with respect to their participation in cultural and political manifestations (WELLER, 2005). In the case of any neglected people, it is fundamental to salvage their history due to the necessity of understanding the past's historic reality, its repercussions in the present, and its possibilities for the future.

In this case, women's absence and feeble visibility are also observed in hip-hop studies. What we find in the representation of hip-hop is that, when women's engagement is not understood from a feminist perspective of gender, a masculine predominance tends to prevail (MARTINS, 2004; MIRANDA, 2006; MORAES NETO, 2006; OLIVEIRA, 2007). Nonetheless, scientific production interested in the youth's experiences has expanded in recent years. These experiences are attached to The Hip-hop Movement, in contact with gender and feminism, and established in men-to-women and women-to-women relations within The Movement and its cultural and artistic elements.

The majority of these studies is only geared towards one element of hip-hop as a subject of study: rap. To this end, I will present some research projects that exemplify this exclusivity of interest. The public at large often refers to rap as 'hip-hop', as if it only represented this single element, which is due to the general understanding around this musical style.¹¹

Rodrigo Gomes (2008), in his work on feminist band members' performances across various musical styles in the southern Brazilian city of Florianópolis, supports this notion. Among the five groups that were researched, one of them was identified with the hip-hop style, a group

11 By common authorial nature, rap songs and lyrics are in large part written and performed by the composers themselves, that is, the rappers. In order to build up a group's repertoire, one may find rap groups that own collective compositions or that share lyrics written by only one member of the group.

known as *Declínio do Sistema*, which provides evidence that women were involved in the musical element of hip-hop. According to Gomes, from these rappers' performances:

We noticed that women, in particular Black Women, are finding a significant space to promote discussions around feminine causes, providing through their lyrics women's awareness on topics such as abortion, bodily care, and the use of contraceptives. It is also the locus for making their civic rights known, such as, for example, maternity leave, retirement pension for home owners and housemaids, denouncing violence committed against women, etc. (Gomes, 2008, p. 144, our translation).¹²

In addition, Gomes (2008) points out the need for more studies on the growing engagement of women in the musical sphere, both as producers and consumers of this developing art form in Brazil. In the field of art, music represents a privileged space to analyze society through the work and diverse, artistic expressions of specific individuals, be they musical, theatrical, through dance, or even visual arts. Nevertheless, he does not set out to evaluate the relationship of the women's musical groups with groups of The Womanist Movement, or even with hip-hop *posses*.

Priscila Matsunaga (2008) also tackles the social representations of women in The Hip-hop Movement through rap. She analyzes the lyrics of 32 rap songs, of both men and women, all of which were produced in the cities of Piracicaba and São Paulo. She comes across the existence of three feminine roles: mother/girlfriend, struggling black woman, and vulgar object. In this context, we are able to understand some of the females rappers' positions. Matsunaga identifies them as feminists due to their resistance in being subjected to the hierarchical system of men (above) and women (below) —thus orienting behaviors pre-established by gender in hip-hop— in addition to the fact that they seek out a wider space to discuss their political demands. However, she does not advance in questioning positions related to a feminine or feminist identity through the hip hoppers.

12 T.N.: *Percebemos que as mulheres, em especial mulheres negras, estão encontrando um significativo espaço para fomentar discussões sobre as causas femininas, provendo através das letras das canções a conscientização das mulheres sobre os temas como aborto, cuidado com o corpo, uso de anticoncepcionais. Este também é um locus para a divulgação dos seus direitos civis, como, por exemplo, licença maternidade, aposentadoria para donas de casa e domésticas, denúncia à violência contra mulheres, etc.*

“Are there feminists in hip-hop, even in the midst of masculine predominance?” (Silva, 1995, our translation).¹³ This is a pertinent question, and one of interest in this book. According to Silva, women in hip-hop were present at the most important feminist events, on the national and international level alike, including the Beijing Conference.¹⁴ They had a relevant role in coordinating and strengthening The Brazilian/Latin American Feminist and Womanist Movement.

Silva elaborates that “[...] these girls have the ruse, slyness, and swagger of a *miudinho* samba tune to navigate in predominantly masculine spaces” (Silva, 1995, p. 516, our translation),¹⁵ and also to enter into spaces that are considered exclusive to adult women. She goes on to assert that, whether these female rappers of São Paulo assume identities as feminists or not, without labels, those who self-identified as Black showed awareness of inequalities related to gender, race, and generation that must be surmounted. They affirm that they use rap as a ranting mechanism and as a way to make themselves heard. Nevertheless, Silva’s research points out that the subjects are not concerned with assuming identities as feminists or not, and therefore does not go more in depth about the rappers’ understanding around conceptions of feminism and their arguments in defense, in opposition, or even in favor of belonging to this political identity.

All of the consulted research pointed to experiences of female discrimination when it came to their artistic expression of rap and their performances on the hip-hop stage. On many occasions they are experiences marked by attempts to impose limits on what these young women can and cannot do on stage, but are also related to controlling their bodies, from the clothes they wear at The Movement’s events to their sexual behavior in relationships within the group itself. Of course this is not to omit the restrictions placed on employment opportunities in the rap field (SILVA, 1995; MATSUNAGA, 2008; GOMES, 2008). Together, these investigations contributed to demarcating the woman’s image in The Hip-hop Movement, especially in lyrics and performances.

13 T.N.: *Há feministas no Hip-Hop, mesmo no cenário da predominância masculina?*

14 The Beijing Conference, as the Fourth World Conference on Women came to be known, took place in Beijing, China, in 1995. The conference brought together governmental delegations and non-governmental organizations from various countries to discuss matters related to women.

15 T.N.: *[...] estas garotas tem a manha, a artimanha, a malemolência de um samba miudinho para se movimentarem em espaços predominantemente masculinos.*

All of these investigations point to the aspects of upholding a discriminatory vision toward women in the midst of reproducing a masculine model of hegemony. Within this model, the masculine figure is revered with reference to a legitimate 'subject' in that space, under the affirmation of black and inner-city identities through the "political culture" of The Hip-hop Movement. This is what developments in scientific production, now interested in Black Women engaging in politics, reflect in Brazil.

This 'Brazilian, young-feminist thought process' responds to a field that is still in development in Brazil, that is, a category yet to be established. In spite of this, such a category is constituted through criteria that clearly takes a youth and feminist stance (without exactly a pre-established age range). At the same time, it is concerned with problematizing youth activist experiences –especially feminine experiences— from a fresh view of feminist theory on plurality of expressions (dialogue between categories) of feminism as a social movement.

In Brazil, we can cite the example of a special publication, a compilation entitled *Jovens feministas presentes* (present, young feminists - 2009), which, in its first version, brings together works that are recognized from both, the feminist and the youth's perspective. The works are produced by young female researchers who are concerned with expanding the working field of feminist theory. They bring new references and experiences of young women's endeavors, organization, and intervention in spaces of power, be they within The Movement, channels of engagement, or in public policy.

In the article *Jovens no feminismo e no Hip Hop na busca por reconhecimento* (young people in feminism and hip-hop in search of acknowledgement – 2009), Julia Zanetti and Patrícia Souza attempt to analyze the challenges and alternatives identified by young women who are a part of The Feminist and Hip-hop Movements, two spaces of distinctly different activism. They expose generational conflicts and advancements achieved in The Feminist Movement in relation to the youth, not to mention their contextualization of the hip-hop phenomenon in Brazil and in the world, thus shining the spotlight on women's weak participation in this ambit.

Zanetti and Souza conclude that, from the 1990s on, in light of the women's involvement in hip-hop and their connection with the feminism discussion, "The Feminist Movement was obligated to recognize a new group demanding space and visibility for their own way of understanding

and expressing their issues” (Idem, p. 101, our translation).¹⁶ In the same fashion, hip-hop has been obligated to recognize The Womanist Movement and feminist hip hoppers’ engagement as a part of it. This is the first work that narrows the scope on the direct relationship of The Hip-hop Womanist Movement with The Feminist Movement, giving priority to contextualizing their conflicts and challenges. However, Zanetti and Souza do not elaborate on matters concerning what this feminism could mean for The Hip-hop Movement. In this context, feminism is produced differently, in thought and in action, than a youth-centered feminism, and, especially, in a mixed-gender movement.

In the article *Hip Hop Mulher: experiências de organização* (hip-hop woman: experiences of organization), Atiely Santos and Fernanda Sunega (2009) problematize the concept of female hip hoppers’ political engagement beyond the formal and party-system environment by shedding light on the manifestations and interventions in the city’s public spaces or urban centers. Furthermore, the autonomy of women’s organizations is presented in diverse interactions with other organizations, groups, movements, and feminist institutions.

Santos and Sunega highlight this movement’s relation with the use of new technology, which can be separated into two phases. The first phase, from its beginning in the 1970s in the United States and later on during its global expansion, was implicit in the use and development of record players, microsystems, pick-ups, radiolas, cassette tapes, vinyl discs, and others. Some of this equipment still accompanies hip hoppers to this day, especially DJs in their current work.

The second phase, characterized by its relatively recent rise, also makes use of technological tools. At the forefront are access to computers and learning how to operate them and navigate the internet, and trailing behind that would be the research and output of virtual spaces such as websites, blogs, involvement and interaction on discussion lists, emails, and virtual communities. All of this is done with the intent of establishing rapport and getting the word out for events to be held by general and specific networks, taking after the virtual feminist networks of hip-hop. There has even been talk about online activism, which was indeed used by male and female hip hoppers alike to establish contacts and organize events of all scales for The Movement.

16 T.N.: O movimento feminista foi obrigado a reconhecer um novo grupo demandando espaço e visibilidade para sua própria forma de perceber e expressar suas questões.

This alternative engagement, even being through virtual mediums in many cases, has both enabled and broadened the possibilities of exchange among individuals and groups of different locals –not to mention a newly-gained facility in disseminating event information. The internet has been a loophole for hip-hop to get its foot in the door. Such is especially true for young women, who are often overwhelmed due to a double or even triple work day, which in addition to a normal job includes tending to house chores, their children, and their studies. All of these responsibilities inevitably bind them to the domestic space. This is not the case for young men, who, in their majority, do not tend to domestic tasks, which in turn gives them more access to public spaces.

In the Brazilian hip-hop universe, the ethnic-racial aspect carries a relevant dimension of identity for the majority of The Hip-hop Movement's young female activists who identify themselves as black. Their engagement can therefore be understood as part of the role played by young, feminist Black Women. The challenges that they face in accessing spaces, such as those of social movements, then becomes a hurdle twice as high in the face of racial and gender discrimination (SILVA, 1995; CARVALHO; QUINTILANO, 2009). They also bring reference to their status of class and the context in which most of them live, in the urban inner cities.

The experiences of women in certain groups and sectors of hip-hop in Salvador fundamentally serve for the founding of a Womanist Movement within the larger movement. One would then question if this women's organization surfaced as a part of The Feminist Movement, since they share some of the same struggles such as female autonomy, legalization of abortion, women's empowerment, and combating violence against women, among others. Would these groups and individuals be concerned with or even defend a politically feminist identity, a mostly female identity, or neither of the two positions? It is also important to note that, among the ideologies that The Hip-hop Womanist Movement in Salvador bolsters in its struggles are those of generational and ethnic-racial issues.

With these questions in mind about the specificities of The Hip-hop Womanist Movement, a hypothesis of analysis was formed with the intention of examining the gender conventions and political attitudes bred in this movement in Salvador through the prism of the female activists. The Movement is constituted from the specific combination of three political origins: The Feminist Movement, The Black Movement, and The Youth Movement.

The Feminist Movement is viewed as separate from The Women's Movement, because it opposes the white, classist character of the first generations of feminism. This movement has its ideologies centered on combating racism and sexism, ultimately grounded in combating violence against women. Other notable aspects are issues of Black Women being discriminated against in the job market, which has to do with wages and positions, oftentimes denied to them. There is also the discussion and restructuring of issues such as domestic work, being tended to in public health services, and others.

In regards to The Black Movement, there is high concern with creating legislation and implementing policies across all sectors. To be cited specifically are policies that combat racism, such as education laws that interfere in the content studied in grade school to include African and Afro-Brazilian culture and history. Affirmative action policies would be another worthy citation, particularly in public universities (at the state and federal level), taking after the quota policies and student retention programs.¹⁷ Among others, there are four existing topics within these political origins that ought to be mentioned here: the health of the black population, such as in the case of sickle-cell anemia; the right to practice religions of African descent; combating religious intolerance; and the particular way in which racism affects Black Women.

The Youth Movement is defined by the fight for inclusion in the job market without the heavily-biased criteria of having a "good appearance",¹⁸ and, more specifically in The Hip-hop Movement, considering its elements—such as works of art-education—to be professional occupations. The category of violence stands out against both men and women. Young men are victims of urban violence due to the extermination of Black Youth, and young women are victims in the midst of unsafe abortion practices. Both of these topics were listed by the *Fórum Nacional de Juventude Negra* (black youth national forum) in the *I Encontro Nacional de Juventude Negra* (1st

17 T.N.: The Quota policy, signed into law by the Brazilian government in 2012, was created to increase access to higher education for those graduating from Brazil's public high schools (the population of these schools is overwhelmingly black, mixed-race, and indigenous). These policies are seen as a huge step toward social equality in the country.

18 T.N.: In Brazil, studies have revealed a history of hiring managers having specific phenotypic preferences for the employees they hire into their companies. By having applicants attach a photo to their resume, the competition is then unjustly swayed in favor of those with the hiring manager's preferred phenotypic features. Freire refers to this concept in Portuguese as *critérios de boa aparência*.

national Black Youth encounter - *Enjune*), held in June of 2007 in Lauro de Freitas, Metropolitan Region of Salvador (Carvalho; Quintiliano, 2009).

These three political origins share the incentive to affirm identities and learn how to deal with differences. They are three origins that remain in constant dialogue and interaction in configuring the hip-hop ambit in Salvador.

Thus, from the concerns around young women's participation in The Hip-hop Movement, our investigation takes place on how 'gender conventions and feminisms' are configured in The Hip-hop Movement in Salvador in relation to the existence of a young, black, feminist hip-hop. To this end, attention is given primarily to the perspectives of women who are actually in The Movement, and above all to the interest in understanding how they interpret feminism (or the feminine). If their interpretations contribute in any way to their experience in the midst of a context that is in dialogue with the current, local political culture, those contributions are to be examined further.

In building this research, some inquiries unfolded from the central question: Is there a young, feminist hip-hop in Salvador? If so, how is it constituted? What are its conceptions, references, and practices around the models of femininity and masculinity that are expressed in its gender conventions? Are there feminists in hip-hop? What do they understand as feminism? What distinguishes them? What type of feminism do they constitute? Are these feminisms able to identify strategies to surmount the differences between men and women, and explain gender conventions surrounding models of masculinity and femininity? Can men be feminists? These are among the questions that sparked and guided this research project.

Some conventions were adopted in the writing of this book to identify certain textual particularities. I use italics in the body of the text to denote the personal accounts given by the research subjects as well as non-English words, font size ten to distinguish notes from my field diary, and quotation marks to highlight concepts and expressions currently in use.

In the second chapter, I present theoretical and methodological aspects which guide my research, together with the investigative techniques used in its realization. The third chapter seeks to identify the gender conventions that inform the models of femininity and masculinity, forged from lived experiences in The Hip-hop Movement in Salvador through the prism of female activists. The fourth chapter offers some interpretations of The

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Movement as a space to contest gender conventions. Even though The Movement is mainly masculine, the female hip hoppers, attentive in using The Movement's protest method as an instrument capable of contesting gender conventions, discover a loophole for their political demands. The fifth and final chapter presents analytical considerations on the conceptions of feminisms and rhetoric of the hip hoppers around a feminist hip-hop. Then I close with the research conclusions.



Hip-hop don't stop! ¹

The emergence of feminist theory is configured on the basis of producing feminist science or a feminist perspective of science (SARDENBERG, 2002). In this sense, feminism comes to dialogue with women's diverse experiences and to collaborate with the analysis of gendered social relations related to such experiences. In turn, a number of issues encompass the theoretical need for feminist science that takes into consideration different views on women, namely: the issue of patriarchal manifestations and its perceptions, the deconstruction of a universal thought process in terms of diversity, and the rupture of concepts that create a hierarchical ladder of relations between masculine and feminine.

In this sense, constructing feminist thinking has its foundation in the dialogue between theory and women's everyday practices in their distinct configurations and relations. To this end, Maria Betânia Ávila (2000) defines feminism through composition between political practice and critical thinking. She contends:

The Feminist movement is that which looks to the transformation of gender relations, whose focus of action is the fight for freedom and

¹ This title can be considered one of hip-hop's slogans that elucidates The Movement's resistance and persistence in its struggle, a sentiment that I myself share in the undertaking of this work.

equality for all women, which then makes The Movement one against the exploitation and domination to which women are subjected (Ávila, 2000, p. 6, our translation).²

Feminism can be understood as a political project that seeks to construct a balance of power between men and women. It would therefore be capable of addressing reparations of social inequalities linked to gender relations (COSTA; SARDENBERG, 1994). The term gender cannot be used synonymously or interchangeably with women; rather, what is understood by the use of this term is men-to-women, women-to-women, and men-to-men social relations.

According to Joan Scott (1986, p.1055), understanding the importance of gender as a useful category “[...] requires analysis not only of the relationship between male and female experience in the past but also of the connection between past history and current historical practice.” On the basis of this concept that Scott addresses, two pertinent points arise when thinking about gender: it is the fundamental element of relations between the different sexes; it gives meaning to power relations.

Some key questions about these relations –which can only be addressed through analyzing the category of gender—can explain these points: How does gender function in human social relations? How does gender give direction to the organization and understanding of historical knowledge in different eras?

On the basis of this conceptualization, women and men would no longer find themselves inserted within separate or naturalized relationships, but instead within reciprocal ones. The separation between men and women as political subjects is elaborated by Maria Noemi Castilhos Brito (2001, p. 291):

Historically, the structure of men’s and women’s identities has been detailed in the dichotomy of the public and private spheres, assigning roles, attitudes, and values that were previously defined according to natural models (our translation).³

2 T.N.: *Movimento Feminista é aquele que tem como perspectiva a transformação das relações de gênero, cujo foco de atuação é a luta por liberdade e igualdade para as mulheres, o que o torna um movimento contra a exploração e a dominação às quais estão sujeitas as mulheres.*

3 T.N.: *Historicamente, a construção das identidades de homens e mulheres se tem configurado a partir da dicotomia entre as esferas públicas e privadas, com atribuições de papéis, atitudes e valores previamente definidos segundo modelos naturais.*

Therefore, gender identity is constructed socially and culturally within each society in its respective time and space.

Maria Betânia Ávila (2000) explains this very concept when she upholds understanding the relationship between equality and difference not as adversarial, but as a dilemma to be dealt with head on as a part of a dialectic process of social transformation. Yet, she calls to attention the cornerstone of unequal social relations in which the ideal of equality cannot be self-sustained, in the case of gender for example. In other words, gender acts within a mobile field, wherein power relations are constantly at play, negotiation, and reconfigurations in diverse contexts and spaces of society are fully recognized. Given its dimensions, social conventions can give gender a 'philosophical value'.

In spite of it all, gender encompasses two crucial dimensions to this analysis: the symbolic (cultural definitions) and the political. According to Alinne Bonetti (2003, p. 185):

The analytical category of gender articulates a cultural and historical understanding, being therefore based on available signifiers in the culture. These signifiers are appropriated by the social subjects, who assign to them certain purposes (our translation).⁴

The signifiers that are identified in culture –being material and/or non-material— give meaning to what is seen through gender, as if they were the source of its very form and essence. In that case, social relations can be understood from gender conventions. Bonetti, in her thesis entitled *Não basta ser mulher, tem de ter coragem –Uma etnografia sobre gênero, poder, ativismo feminino popular e o campo político feminista de Recife - PE* (It is not enough to just be a woman, one must be bold: ethnography on gender, power, grassroots female activism, and the feminist political arena in the city of Recife, state of Pernambuco in the Northeast of Brazil), makes it possible to identify specific gender conventions that

purposely adopt the clashing political practices as well as the different symbolic repertoires comprising the political context in question, in which they are opposing forces. This political context enables the uncovering of

4 T.N.: A categoria analítica gênero articula concepção cultural e historicamente situadas, partindo, portanto, dos significantes disponíveis na cultura. Estes significantes são apropriados pelos sujeitos sociais, os quais lhes atribuem determinados sentidos.

new potentialities in understanding feminist political practices (BONETTI, 2007, p. 27, our translation).⁵

Consequently, it is on the basis of culture that values are derived, which will influence the structure of the social subjects further down the line (BONETTI, 2003), keeping in mind that this process takes place in the midst of a context of social inequalities.

According to Donna Haraway (1995), there is a need to understand how bodies and significations are constructed. With this purpose in mind, she advocates for developing 'localized knowledge'. This is not to say irreducible knowledge, but partial knowledge vis-a-vis an embodied experienced. For her, this 'localized knowledge' signifies an embodied, feminist objectivity that is inscribed as a feminist body of writing, therefore being limited, partial, and fixed. This idea is linked to the fact that we ourselves become responsible for what we learn to see and for the knowledge that we produce.

In its political dimension, gender takes on a social character that denominates power relations among the sexes. To this end, in order to refute the biological determinism implicit in using terms such as 'sex' or 'sexual difference', gender promotes a distinction based on sex. Moreover, this category brings out the relational aspect of normative definitions of femininity and masculinity, which are socially constructed in distinct times and places.

As a result, the use of gender in a feminist mindset enables a promotion of deconstructing the culture-biology binomial, related to the man-woman and public-private binomials respectively (Ávila, 2007). This deconstruction is indispensable in widening the definition around what is political from the dialogue between the public and private spheres, which were previously distinct and separate.

The political arena has shifted towards a broader application not only in the public sphere but also encroaching upon the private sphere. Maria Noemi Castilhos Brito (2001, p. 296) demonstrates this point by highlighting both the new dimensions of politics and new, significant practices on other levels beyond the traditional. Incorporated within this idea, beyond acknowledging the political arena within the private sphere and the interaction between both spheres (public and private), these new

5 T.N.: ... adotam de sentido as práticas políticas em embate, bem como os diferentes repertórios simbólicos que compõem o contexto político em questão e nele se antagonizam. Possibilita o desvendamento de novas potencialidades para a compreensão das práticas políticas feministas.

dimensions do not conform to the male's representation as the universal acting subject of the public sphere, nor as a representative of the political arena. The old-fashioned, public-private binarism would not be able to explain the historical reality lived by the political subjects and their relations.

In this vein, digging deeper into the discussion around the political arena as the substance to uphold this study, Sônia Alvarez's article on Latin American feminisms (1998) observes the feminist political arena discourse based on the Latin American experience. Thus, Alvarez proposes a distinction between "politics" and "the political arena." In her own definition, politics is understood as a more classic sphere that is treated in more general terms (ALVAREZ, 1998). It thus circumscribes to political institutions, political parties, positions of political representation, and spaces in which political work is carried out (BONETTI, 2003). Examples of some of these spaces or channels would be human rights councils, or even social movements and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The current political arena, however, is "the broadest sense of exercising influence on what is cultural, symbolic, and the power/gender relations that are established and continuously reconfigured" (ALVAREZ, 1998, p. 167).⁶ It is in this arena that our research is embedded, in the interface between 'gender and politics' based on women's experiences and their discovered 'gender attributes'.

According to Alinne Bonetti (2003), the political arena is unmistakably masculine. The values and gender attributes culturally associate the masculine to a dominant-subject model. This position can be comprehended through Pierre Bourdieu's definition (2007) of the political arena as one of many forces. It is an area of strife in which relations and structures are in dispute with one another at any given moment in time. For Bourdieu, it is in this arena that certain outcomes –among them issues, programs, analyses, commentaries, concepts, and occurrences— are produced as instruments in interpreting and expressing the social world, principles of division, or even a space for opinions to be circulated (the results of censorship determining what can and cannot be said).

Consequently, it is in the political arena that worldviews are in conflict with one another, including the configuration of gender and its conventions. There is then a type of hegemony (in the sense of direction) being exercised over a world-view model, a model in which behavioral

6 *En el sentido más amplio de incidir en lo cultural, lo simbólico, y en las relaciones de poder/de género que allí se constituyen y se reconfiguran continuamente.*

patterns, values, consumer options, etc., are all defined. This worldview which prioritizes the masculine figure is at conflict within this arena stemming from the gender dynamics experienced in society, under a logic of reciprocity and social give-and-take between the masculine and feminine.

Alinne Bonetti (2004) demonstrates this point in examining the work of *Promotoras Legais Populares do Partenon* (a group of populist female prosecutors - PLP), in the neighborhood of Porto Alegre, in 1999. According to Bonetti:

Studies on the conceptualizations around politics among Brazilian, urban, populist groups show that the logic of reciprocity that informs worldviews also extends to the world of political relations. From this base point, it is made apparent that politics acquire a particular significance within the symbolic logic of the group (BONETTI, 2004, p. 136, our translation).⁷

However, the politics around the concept of gender is used as a tool of analysis containing an interdisciplinary character. In this case, gender is assumed as a relational category linked to distinguishing the configurations of gender relations experienced in society and/or in a specific field to be examined. It is also open for considering interaction with other categories of analysis, for instance: race/ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, sexuality, and age/generation among others.

To this end, gender presents itself as a concept capable of aiding fields of study focused on women's engagement and gender conventions in experiences with feminism and the social movement established by different youth sectors.

An example from the field of study in this text is the hip hoppers revealing their engagement in The Hip-hop Movement as a political practice based on their manifestations of women's political demands for both The Movement and society (FREIRE, 2010). Through their rhymes, artwork, and initiatives, they express the challenges faced by young women that—in public and private spaces alike—collide with forms of prejudice and discrimination as culprits of being females. These young women use their experiences to reformulate The Hip-hop Movement's pursuits by attaching specific claims to its agenda. In that case, it then becomes necessary to take

7 T.N.: *Estudos sobre as concepções acerca do político entre grupos populares urbanos brasileiros revelam que a lógica de reciprocidade que informa as visões de mundo é estendida também ao mundo das relações políticas. A partir disso, salienta-se que o político adquire um significado particular dentro da lógica simbólica de grupo.*

a look at some other pertinent categories to understand this phenomenon more holistically.

It is for this exact reason that Alda Britto da Motta (2004, p. 353) both acknowledges and criticizes the urgency of directing much more attention to the generation category in feminist and gender studies. She affirms that this issue is almost invariably omitted. As a result, the adult-woman category is treated as a universal subject in this field of study, thus configuring a centralization around adults while completely discounting other acting sectors within The Womanist and/or Feminist Movements.

It is worth noting that the first studies to corroborate the youth category specifically and give visibility to what the youth were doing began within the political context of the 1960s and 1970s, which were, for years, influenced by participatory experiences in social movements (MOTTA, 2004). These movements were represented in diverse initiatives around the world, taking after The Hippie Movement, mobilizations against the war in Vietnam, the 'Second Wave' of Feminism, The Student Movement, and The Black Movement. This generation has only recently been acknowledged, and that is how they characterized the youth category in their era. They shaped the category with elements identifying it as contestatory, revolutionary, and intervening, among other characteristics.

Alda Britto da Motta (2004) reiterates the importance of understanding generational relations in political dynamics and social reproduction, as well as their significance in current times and interconnections with other categories such as race, gender, and social class. All in all, she considers the generation category to be an essential element in creating public policies suitable for all ages. By generation, Motta understands that this concept "designates a collective or group of individuals that live in a specific era or social time, are approximately of the same age, and somehow share an experience". (MOTTA, 2004, p. 350, our translation)⁸

The field of study under examination points to another theoretical and analytical challenge of the generation category. The definition of what would be a young generation has been surpassing the limits of an age range in its pre-established, chronological sense or of a determined period to live a youth-like lifestyle. For example, it can be noted that some of hip-hop's representatives are over the age of thirty, who up until that

8 T.N.: ... *designa um coletivo ou grupo de indivíduos que vivem em uma determinada época ou tempo social, têm aproximadamente a mesma idade e compartilham de alguma forma uma experiência ou vivência.*

point would have been considered not as youth, but as adult representatives of hip-hop's youth.

Fernanda Martins's study entitled *Rap, juventude e identidade* (rap, youth, and identity - 2004) confirms this ideology. She points to a flexibility in the idea of age, which has proven to be quite relative vis-a-vis the complexity of social practices in cultural studies. Such would explain the recognition with the youth style of rappers MV Bill and Mano Brown from the group the youth style.

According to Vera Cardoso (1994), understanding this involvement is directly connected to the citizenship problem, especially when it is related to actions of social movements in their link with history and the struggle for the collective rights of certain social sectors. Broadening how citizenship-building is interpreted, Cardoso highlights the importance of going beyond the idea of engagement that is merely delineated to the fight for justice and awareness, which in turn would also encompass the relations between State and civil society, and those between the public and private spheres.

Therefore, to be engaged is a constant battle to ensure, maintain, and broaden human rights. Among the many definitions of this term, here engagement is understood as a form of intervention—as a political subject—in the public and political decisions made in society, neighborhoods, communities, or any other group in which people live and interact, regardless of the institutional or autonomous dimensions present in these spaces.

Ana Alice Costa (1998) cites women's engagement, elaborating that women are as one in their methods and political demands when they begin to perceive themselves and to be perceived as 'political subjects' capable of intervening in history and politics. It is fascinating to note that the path taken by women's engagement in the fight for certain human rights has been interwoven the notion of equality, and, most of all, has implicated the creation of new vectors in practicing politics and the acknowledgment of new political subjects in the public setting.⁹

9 This affirmation may be briefly contextualized by the experience of The Brazilian and Latin American Feminist Movements that, in the second phase of some of their sectors, no longer having the State as an enemy, are geared toward a relationship with the State as an ally in their demands. This phase points to the institutionalization of having this engagement from The Movements, ensuring a new type of relationship with the State, taking after the Feminist and Womanist Movements in favor of specific public policies aimed at women. However, even with this new institutionalization secured on paper, it is a never-ending struggle to implement and build upon it, while at the same time supervising its execution.

Concerning the youth, Celecina Sales (2001) observes that, within the context of the political-representation crisis that Latin American countries have been confronted by in recent decades, formal political engagement (in political parties and channels of representation) was highly influenced by discreditation in these spaces. The scenes of corruption, privilege, nepotism, and, above all, blatant disregard for justice in thoroughly examining and punishing politicians has reinforced –especially for the youth– the idea of wanting absolutely nothing to do with politics. Although some changes have been underway, it is commonplace to hear from Brazilian citizens that they do not like politics and have not the slightest desire to get involved.

Furthermore, the Latin American, military, post-dictatorial climate in which the State was an extremely oppressive enemy must be taken into consideration. Even in light of beginning the re-democratization process, anti-party, anti-state, and anti-political system sentiments of engagement were not uncommon (SALES, 2001; GOHN, 2003). Nonetheless, the youth created autonomous alternatives of organization, including distinct alternatives to party representation. In any case, these alternatives were responsible for a transformation in the way people got involved in politics, which can be understood through social movements.

There is a myriad of interpretations when thinking about the history and organization of social movements in their diverse eras, ideologies, and battle strategies. Maria da Glória Gohn (2003) defines a social movement as a combination of collective social actions with a cultural and sociopolitical base whose objective is to organize society in diverse ways to call for demands and social changes. These social actions have been vital in the fight for citizenship, as they have already had an influence in social and political transformations throughout the history of humanity, taking after grassroots struggles and manifestations.

In Brazil, the operation of social movements –particularly social movements such as The Womanist, Black, Homosexual, Youth, Senior, Indigenous, and Ecologist Movements— was key in enshrining human rights protections into the Constitution of 1988. Maria Betânia Ávila (2000) adds to this debate by acknowledging new subjects and identities who are ultimately interlinked through the struggle for equal rights. She asserts that:

The plurality of political subjects, instituted by the functioning abilities of the contemporary social movements, shows that the construction of equality must undoubtedly pass through the deconstruction of the

social order, that which imposes a hierarchical system on differences, thus rendering them inequalities (ÁVILA, 2000, p. 6, our translation).¹⁰

The idea of new identities and battle strategies between equality and difference is what justifies the shared position among Gohn and other theorists who believe that the 1980s was a period that allowed a divisionist notion to take root between old and new social movements. For Gohn, those movements that would be considered old have an incentive through the more conventional struggles linked to material needs (e.g., employment, housing, and nourishment). These were the Urban, Rural, Labor, and Neighborhood Movements, all of which would go on to be identified as protest movements.

In contrast, the new social movements look to culture as the support base in understanding power relations' structural processes of conflict in a capitalist society, which are interpreted beyond ideological and economic terms. According to Gohn, the new social movements are understood from the basis of creating interpretative schemes geared towards "the culture, ideology, daily social struggles, solidarity between individuals of a group or social movement, and the formed process of identity" (GOHN, 1997, p. 121, our translation).¹¹ The motives that mobilize these movements are many, and they include: crises, unemployment, vulnerability, battles against violence, struggles for housing, land, culture, and art, among others. Representing these claims were The Indigenous, Ethnic, Ecological, Feminist, Homosexual, and Human Rights Movements. These would be classified as identity movements.

What justifies the distinction between these types of movements is rooted in the employment of cultural forces, as if the old movements did not make use of them while the new movements implemented them in their battle strategies. However, the trio of Sônia Alvarez, Evelina Dagnino, and Arturo Escobar (2000, p. 23) contest this concept, upholding that:

[...] The Urban Grassroots Movements of the favelas, The Womanist Movement and others, set cultural forces in motion. In their continuous battles against the dominant projects of nation-building, development, and repression, the grassroots actors collectively mobilize in groups that

10 T.N.: *A pluralidade de sujeitos políticos, instituída pela ação dos movimentos sociais contemporâneos, revela que a construção da igualdade passa, justamente, pela desestruturação da ordem social, que hierarquiza as diferenças transformando-as em desigualdades.*

11 T.N.: *... a cultura, a ideologia, as lutas sociais cotidianas, a solidariedade entre pessoas de um grupo ou movimento e o processo de identidade criado.*

differ quite a bit in significance and objective. In this sense, the collective identities and strategies of all the social movements are inevitably tied to culture (our translation).¹²

Consequently, the view of separating the social movements is counteracted by Evelina Dagnino's (1994) explanation, who upholds that there is indeed a battle for a new citizenship being waged by social movements that find themselves under the character of a political strategy. Nevertheless, the demand for a new citizenship is reserved for groups that reclaim the right to even have rights. These rights are especially linked to the urban space, thus establishing a demand for rights to the city made by both movements, be they The Urban and Identity Movements, or The Black, Womanist, LGBTQ+ Movements among others.

These groups and movements objectively press for a social transformation by constructing a new democratic culture, and therefore a new citizenship culture that is divergent from the hegemonic order. To this end, the political strategies that these groups and movements employ are in continuous development, being understood as a process rooted by practical and solidified battles which bring themselves up to date vis-a-vis the dynamics of social conflicts and are tied to their historical context (DAGNINO, 1994).

It is then noted that the central question of this debate on whether or not there is a division between old and new movements has no ground upon which to stand. What is really at stake is the interest around what motivates the engagement of these subjects. Eder Sader (1988), in agreement with the review of social movements, believes that people are mobilized by many issues defined around culture as a key aspect. This idea oriented his research on the new social configurations assumed by the working class in the greater São Paulo area during the 1970s, when social movements were creating new vectors and political spaces to deal with issues around rereading current issues in their daily experiences.

Sader points out that the changes contested by these movements could be the result of a delayed effect of repression from the military dictatorship, which caused civil society to emerge by exposing a crisis

12 T.N.: [...] os movimentos populares urbanos de favelados, de mulheres e outros, também põem em movimento forças culturais. Em suas lutas contínuas contra os projetos dominantes de construção da nação, desenvolvimento e repressão, os atores populares mobilizam-se coletivamente com base em conjuntos muito diferentes de significados e objetivos. Dessa forma, as identidades e estratégias coletivas de todos os movimentos sociais estão inevitavelmente vinculadas à cultura.

of representation and political references and to recognize politics as beyond the State and political parties. He justifies this process by stating, “as modalities of capitalistic production invade all cracks and crevices of society, they also incite a type of politicization unprecedented in society, which then overthrows politics” (SADER, 1988, p. 54, our translation).¹³ It is the “new,” in the sense of breaking a dominant model, that enables the creation of new means to practice politics that alter action strategies and redefine values. In this context, these movements experienced novel socialization in that relations of solidarity were being developed among the new political subjects.

Ana Maria Doimo (1995) introduces another relevant collaboration into the debate, which points to new contributions in reflecting on the theory of these new social movements, especially in regards to opening an expressive, ethnic-political field as a reflection of the Brazilian political process. Yet, in spite of her vast experience with diverse social movements—especially in the *Movimento de Luta Contra o Desemprego* (fight against unemployment movement - MCD) from 1982 to 1985— she affirms that “when I had to say that, in the MCD there was no such example to be found of these new political subjects who were destined to disrupt the system became even a bit awkward, rightly because the reality was cruel” (DOIMO, 1995, p. 29, our translation).¹⁴ This context was challenging for The Movements in the face of counteracting the dominant political culture. It is a context shared by different experiences of mobilization linked to issues concerning ethics in their relationship with the State, institutionalisms, political parties, leaders, and other movements. Other issues linked to these experiences are those around the very idea of immediate struggle, fragmentation of groups and demands, as well as the possibility for the struggle to lose momentum upon acquiring human rights.

Therefore, the discussion on the social movements’ perspective was put on the back burner in the face of more relevant issues, such as, for example, the dimensions that compose The Movements and direct their actions. In this sense, Evelina Dagnino (1994) upholds that all movements act under democratic strategies that are directed by political and

13 T.N.: ... à medida que as modalidades da produção capitalística invadem todos os poros da sociedade, provocam também uma inédita politização no social e, com isso, um descentramento do político.

14 T.N.: ... tornava-se até constrangedor ter de dizer que ali, no MCD, não se encontrava um exemplo desses novos sujeitos políticos, destinados a tal ruptura, mesmo porque a realidade era cruel.

cultural dimensions –these being situated in their specific time, space, and social context.

The cultural dimension spans across subjective aspects in which dialogue occurs between the new subjects' multiple constituent identities and their need for a new citizenship that acknowledges diversity. However, this demand is a learning process that interferes not just in the politics and institutionalisms of the State, but one that is also focused on social relations on all levels. This is the case especially with respect to the social dynamics of civil society beyond the State and formalized politics, in which the order being defended is the right to get involved and exercise citizen rights.

In this sense, the social movements' operations are initially characterized by a type of political practice created by and for the autonomous groups or organizations themselves, all of whom are representatives of civil society. This practice can then undergo a process of institutionalization in regards to a new method of building a relationship with the State (impacting public policies), institutions, and other groups and movements. Such practice can also be identified as cultural politics of a social movement, an idea to be discussed more in depth shortly.

Sônia Alvarez, Evelina Dagnino, and Arturo Escobar (2000, p. 21) all agree that “social movements are a crucial arena in understanding how the intertwining —perhaps precarious yet vital— of culture and politics takes place in practice” (our translation).¹⁵ The reference of experience in social movements gives visibility to the active and relational character of culture and politics that, combined within cultural politics, acts in such a way as to confront what would be the hegemonic political culture in society.

With that in mind, if social movements intend to modify social power and if the political culture now spans across institutionalized fields to negotiate power, then social movements must face the political culture head on. In many cases, social movements do not demand inclusion or seek to seize power, but rather to interfere with and reconfigure the dominating political culture. Therefore, they act in such a way as to modify the existing political culture in society.

Political culture then poses the question of what counts as politics, which also implies the question of who is/are the political subject(s). To that end, this debate encompasses an array of perspectives. Norberto

15 T.N.: ... os movimentos sociais são uma arena crucial para a compreensão de como esse entrelaçamento, talvez precário, mas vital, do cultural e do político ocorre na prática.

Bobbio (2000) understands political culture as a collection of elements that constitutes a certain society, wherein ideas, beliefs, regulations, traditions, and political institutions are all incorporated. According to Maria da Glória Gohn (2005), there is a connection between formal and informal spaces by considering political culture as a product of the educational process tied to the culture, to the past, and to the present. Both authors contribute to the discussion, yet they do not elaborate deeper on the relationship between the practices of social movements and political culture.

Dagnino, Alvarez, and Escobar (2000) uphold that the concept of political culture intertwines culture and politics, thus redefining its limits. Political culture makes it possible to recognize the power relations attached to the culture and that they are responsible for defining social practices. In that vein, these three authors define the concepts of culture and politics separately:

Culture is viewed as an understanding of the world, as a combination of significances that integrate social practices. It cannot be adequately viewed without considering the power relations attached to these practices (DAGNINO; ALVAREZ; ESCOBAR, 2000, p. 17, our translation).¹⁶

Politics is something more than a collection of specific activities (voting, campaigning, lobbying) that occur in clearly-delineated institutional spaces, such as in congressional bodies and political parties. It should be viewed as also encompassing power struggles waged in a wide range of spaces that are culturally defined as private, social, economic, cultural, and so on (Idem, p. 29, our translation).¹⁷

This constitutive bond also means power relations, whose expressions and meanings cannot be understood without acknowledging their active and cultural character. Consequently, culture and politics are intrinsically associated and mutually influence and constitute one another.

Culture is political because its definitions are constitutive of the processes that –implicitly or explicitly— seek to redefine social power; that is, when social movements present alternative conceptualizations around women, nature, race, economy, democracy, or citizenship, and

16 T.N.: *Cultura é entendida como concepção do mundo, como conjunto de significados que integram práticas sociais, não poder ser entendida adequadamente sem a consideração das relações de poder embutidas nessas práticas.*

17 T.N.: *Política é algo mais que um conjunto de atividades específicas (votar, fazer campanha ou lobby), que ocorrem em espaços institucionais claramente delimitados, tais como parlamentos e partidos, ela deve ser vista como abrangendo também lutas de poder realizadas em uma ampla gama de espaços culturalmente definidos como privados, sociais, econômicos, culturais e assim por diante.*

said conceptualizations destabilize dominating cultural definitions, they are enacting political culture (Idem, p. 24-25, our translation).¹⁸

In that same vein, practices of social movements can be understood through political culture, which are supposedly the result of minority groups' worldviews and understandings related to a specific, dominating cultural order. There are some interdisciplinary scholars that have dedicated to thinking about this topic, especially political and anthropological scientists interested in understanding what truly would be the new political practices and proposals of 'new political cultures', —particularly those constructed on the basis of the experiences of social movements.

It is worth reiterating that practices of The Movements are expressed in a myriad of ways, taking after the political debates that create or give new meanings to the dominating cultural interpretations of politics and that challenge subjects and political practices established as hegemonic. To this end, Dagnino, Alvarez, and Escobar (2000, p. 24) uphold that:

Cultural contestations are not mere “bi-products” of the political struggle, but rather, on the contrary, are constitutive of the efforts put forth on the part of social movements to redefine the direction and the limits of the political system itself (our translation).¹⁹

The vital part here is in getting involved and contributing to the debate and public decisions that interfere in people's lives and those of different generations. This is indeed a new way of getting involved since it is open to innovations and reconfigurations, along with new spaces, subjects, means, and instruments. Sader (1988, p. 32-33) explains further:

Small acts, which up until that point would have been considered as insignificant or as reiteration of incompetency, begin to receive new connotations. Demonstrations incapable of having impact on state institutionalism —once interpreted as a sign of political immaturity— now begin to be valorized as expressions of resistance, autonomy, and creativity (our translation).²⁰

18 T.N.: *A cultura é política porque os significados são constitutivos dos processos que, implícita ou explicitamente, buscam redefinir o poder social. Isto é, quando apresentam concepções alternativas de mulher, natureza, raça, economia, democracia ou cidadania, que desestabilizam os significados culturais dominantes, os movimentos põem em ação uma política cultural.*

19 T.N.: *... as contestações culturais não como meros 'subprodutos' da luta política, mas ao contrário, são constitutivas dos esforços dos movimentos sociais para redefinir o sentido e os limites do próprio sistema político.*

20 T.N.: *Pequenos atos, que até então seriam considerados insignificantes ou reiteração de uma impotência, começam a receber novas conotações. Manifestações incapazes de incidir eficazmente sobre a institucionalidade*

Digging deeper into the field of this research, the “new” space that hip-hop created as an artistic and cultural expression entered into the scene of political movements. Hip-hop was considered as one of the most important phenomena in the world today, and it even went on to be classified by Gohn (2004) as embedded in the role of new social movements. This would then mean that, in this role, hip-hop would integrate three postures: 1) to render feasible the inclusion of new actors in the context of political struggle, implicating identity building; 2) to use culture as a political weapon in the fight for human rights and citizenship; and, 3) to be tied to the international arena and the technological sphere in its history.

In the eyes of Priscila Matsunaga (2006, p. 12), The Hip-hop Movement is “the new among social movements” because:

[...] it promotes the ascension of actors/subjects who, while establishing themselves as a group that acts politically by using art, reclaim the recognition of their existence, human rights, and social pacts (our translation).²¹

The idea of the new is tied to hip-hop’s historical contextualization along its path of formation and expansion throughout the world, as well as through the experiences of its different generations and specialities that configure it as a social movement.

What is understood by hip-hop is a composition of manifestations expressed through art forms of African, Caribbean, and American cultural descent that are linked to modern aspects; among them would be the very union of diverse cultural origins, rebuilding identity in The Diaspora and technology. Hip-hop’s beginnings date back to the 1970s when Black Youth along with Latinx and Caribbean Immigrants residing in the Bronx, New York, molded the art form into its four basic elements: breakdancing, rapping, graffiti, and DJing (SANTOS; SUNEGA, 2009).

All of these element are expressed through hip-hop and configure its elements with a youth-centered language that are not strictly limited to the aesthetic and musical environment. They also produce rhetoric for the political fight, placing education —informal, produced in the streets in diverse urban spaces and daily situations, always stimulated and grounded

estatal--antes interpretadas como sinal de imaturidade política--começam a ser valorizadas como expressão de resistência, de autonomia e criatividade.

21 T.N.: [...] *promove a construção de atores/sujeitos que reivindicam, num primeiro momento, um reconhecimento de sua existência; reivindicam direitos e garantias sociais e se constituem como um grupo que atua politicamente utilizando a arte.*

on the youth's initiatives— at the core of its essence. This feature can be further understood from knowledge of how hip-hop and its elements came into being, which took place in the United States during The Post-Civil Rights Movement between the 1930s and 1950s.

The fight for civil rights influenced and gave birth to the first hip-hop generation in the United States, which later on would resonate with the newer generations in other countries in a myriad of ways. Among the giants of that era were Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and Angela Davis,²² in addition to the organization of political groups such as the Black Panther Party. It is also important to note the various strategies through which political demonstrations were manifested, such as bus boycotts, sit-ins, newspaper productions, and others.

Hip-hop's arrival on the scene was marked by the fusion of its four elements, which had already been in existence separately (e.g., breakdancing and graffiti, the 'old ones'). These elements were initially used as an alternative to leisure time for the Black and Latinx Youth of inner-city neighborhoods who lived in a harsh reality ravaged by gang violence. These gangs would wage street wars over territory, ideologies, and were extremely wrapped up in drug trafficking. It is in this context of social clash that hip-hop undergoes a transformation to become a viable political alternative.

The hip-hop and/or post-soul generation of the United States²³ recognizes common issues among Black and Latinx individuals and neighborhoods on the basis of hip-hop as part of a worldwide phenomenon. According to Collins (2006), Black Youth in the United States gained media visibility to dig deeper into the debates around issues of gender, race, nationality, age, and sexuality. They reflected the contradictions of

22 Four colossal names of The Civil Rights Era. Rosa Parks was arrested on December 01, 1955, for refusing to relinquish her seat for a white passenger on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, thus setting the stage for the historical Montgomery Bus Boycott which put an end to bus segregation nationwide. Martin Luther King Jr., along with others, led the bus boycotts that lasted over a year, and later on made his famous yet improvised "I Have A Dream" speech in Washington D.C. Malcolm X, who would be known following his journey to Mecca as El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, is also an iconic reference in the struggle for civil rights. Angela Davis, professor and writer, was a well-known activist in The Black Panther Party, who ran in the race for the presidency of the United States two times in the 1980s.

23 "Hip-hop generation," coined in the 1990s by Bakari Litwana, editor of The Source Magazine of Hip Hop, Music Culture and Politics, was a term given to identify the sector of Black Youth in the United States born between 1960 and 1980, which shared a system of values inherited from the previous generation. Later on, Mark Anthony Leal would refer to this youth sector as "post-soul," since the term described the political, social, and culture experiences of the young, Black population in the United States from the end of The Civil Rights and Black Power Movements (Collins, 2006).

new racism, living through times in which there was explicit legislation upholding racial segregation and the ideal of opportunity in a free 'America'.

Black and Latinx Youth in the United States went on to organize and promote socialization between groups through gang nonviolence, giving birth to artistic battles composed of dancing and freestyle rhymes. These activities led to the creation of The Movement's first organization, the Zulu Nation. This body was responsible for promoting hip-hop and its elements on the international stage with a slogan of bringing awareness to youth through education (informal and of the urban-artistic day-to-day). The Zulu Nation can be found on practically every continent, and was in charge of politicizing hip-hop culture and treating it as a weapon of political battle. In this vein, the Zulu Nation is acknowledged by The Hip-hop Movement in Bahia, with representatives present in Salvador.

Based on decolonial studies,²⁴ Stuart Hall (2003) and Paul Gilroy (2001) identify hip-hop as one of the cultural expressions of the African Diaspora. With this concept they set out to span a new phase of sociability for a new population or ethnic group marked by processes of displacement, fleeing, exile, and forced migration in reconstructing identity—under the belief that this concept can be used in substitution for the term 'race'. It allows for a connection to be explained between hip-hop, Black Youth, and the inner-city experience which are all characterized by social inequalities and are identified by the categories of race, class, generation, and space (that is, urban and inner-city).

The term 'Diaspora' offers insight into an understanding the social context in which hip-hop emerged in the United States, Brazil, and in other American, Caribbean, European, and even African countries in an array of configurations. Its emergence in both the United States and Brazil share a condition of a leisure alternative, a way to have fun and create mechanisms to contain and substitute the physical violence of gang wars for artistic battles. With the passing of time it would indeed become a political movement armed with the artistic expressions of its elements, as previously noted.

In its first generation in Bahia, the transformation witnessed in The Hip-hop Movement's Black Youth in regards to their social organization and engagement, which was initially geared toward the concerns of their

24 What I understand by decolonial studies are studies grounded on the deconstruction of a hierarchical and subordinate model of knowledge production, encompassing current matters such as identities, migration, territory, diaspora, and others.

own communities and understanding matters of their identity and history, was breathtaking. They would later go on to seek to broaden their scope of action in the city and their involvement in the discussion around public policies tied to the development of the Black community.

Examples of matters involving these policies are: Law No. 10.639/03 mandating the inclusion of African and Afro-Brazilian culture and history in school curricula; attention given to the health of the Black population (particularly to sickle-cell anemia); affirmative action policies and quotas in higher education; regulating domestic work; combating violence against women; and so on. These are among actions that are developed in coordination with other segments that launch their initiatives on the basis of dialogue “with the local public power, promoting interaction among other Brazilian cities, and holding gender and Northeastern encounters, with a grain of extremely exclusive organization” (OLIVEIRA, 2007, p. 66, our translation).²⁵

The art forms of hip-hop became an instrument to expose the youth condition and their reclaiming of rights together with the public power (Matsunaga, 2008). Through The Movement’s artistic elements, the youth of Bahia were able to file reports and complaints of social inequalities that the young, Black, and poor inner-city populations of Salvador were experiencing. A prime example would be the *Hip-hop pelas cotas* (hip-hop for quotas) campaign in which public interventions were carried out in the Federal University of Bahia’s (UFBA) general administration building. The campaign featured a break-dancing demonstration, rap groups, and even performances given by DJs and a female DJ —possibly the only female DJ in hip-hop. There were graffiti exhibitions and roundtable discussions with members of The Movement and guests representing other sectors of The Black Movement. The event was recorded in a documentary produced by UFBA’s TV station, in addition to UFBA itself producing the single *Quadro negro* (blackboard) of Salvador’s own *Simples Rap’ortagem* (OLIVEIRA, 2007).

Hip-hop emerged in Bahia in the 1990s during a time in which women’s engagement in The Movement had gained visibility in Brazil through interventions launched by iconic female hip hoppers who assisted in constituting hip-hop’s groups and actions. According to Maria Aparecida da Silva (1995, p. 516), that decade had great significance in regards to the engagement and identity of Black Women, given that “[...] the organization

25 T.N.: ... com o poder público local, promovendo interação entre as demais cidades brasileiras, e realizando encontros nordestinos e de gênero, com um grau de organização muito próprio.

of The Womanist Movement in Brazil is concomitant with the emergence of the first female rappers” (our translation).²⁶

It is within this context that young Bahian women are inserted into The Hip-hop Movement’s spaces in Salvador, understanding clearly that this movement establishes itself in one of the sectors of The Black Movement in Bahia in its first generation. After all, what would drive young Black Women in hip-hop to rise up and mobilize?

The answer to this question lies in discussions on an array of matters raised by members of The Hip-hop Movement and are bred from the everyday experiences that these young women live through –which interject in The Movement’s own claims and demands. As for the difference of experiences between men and women, Bahian rapper Mara Asantewaa points out:

It is not because there are different roles for one or for the other, but rather because a woman’s reality is different than a man’s reality, especially when it comes to social movements, including hip-hop (SOUZA; SANTOS, [2009], our translation).²⁷

What she says here sheds light on a path to be taken in order to understand —as is the focal point of this examination— the models of femininity and masculinity and their gender conventions in both The Movement and in society. Thus, taking this question into account, I now present the methodological steps used in this research for the analysis of the Hip-hop Movement of Women in Salvador.

Methodological Questions

As a qualitative research, this book relied on fieldwork divided into two stages. The first stage occurred during the first phase of research, in 2008, when I was working on my undergraduate thesis for my Bachelor’s degree in Political Science wherein I carried out interviews and participatory observation. That material served as the groundwork for this book, when I finally explored all of the collected material that I had no time to explore when I was working on my undergraduate thesis.

26 T.N.: [...] o surgimento da organização do movimento de mulheres negras no Brasil é concomitante ao surgimento das primeiras rappers.

27 T.N.: Não porque exista um papel para um ou para outro, mas é porque a realidade de uma mulher é diferente da realidade de um homem, principalmente quando é o movimento social, inclusive quando é o hip-hop.

The second stage was when I returned to the field from March to August in 2010, during my postgraduate studies. At this time, I worked with an interdisciplinary view and interest in the ethnography of the setting under examination. Just like Angela Maria de Souza (2009), who developed her work on *The Hip-hop Movement in Florianópolis* in two distinct stages, I also had the chance to revisit previous studies of my own (FREIRE, 2010).

During the period of time in between my two stages of fieldwork, I kept in contact with the research subjects and informants, not to mention eventually meeting them at other events around the city. Whenever that happened, we would exchange information, address questions on certain matters and I would update them on how my work was coming along, including the writing of “our book,” as some of them would refer to it.²⁸

In dealing with this feminist and interdisciplinary research, it is pertinent to reflect on the methodological questions that oriented our investigation. The methodological orientation was ultimately modified between Political Science and Anthropology in the middle of the writing process. With that in mind, the analysis that will be presented has a double sense of belonging. Another important aspect to be brought out is the very feminist stance upon which this research is based: it is derived from the analysis of gender relations—which I understand as power relations—experienced among men and women in society. Maria Betânia Ávila (2007) views society as capable of understanding the woman as a ‘political subject’ of a social transformation process, thus interjecting in social processes. This conceptualization allows for the possibility of breaking a naturalist perspective of women’s victimization and feebleness.

Another premise established by the feminist stance—the foundation of this study—is rooted in the experience of seeking out new theoretical references to analyze feminine behaviors (BRITO, 2001). Moreover, the direction went towards a relatively new contact point with

28 After completing my fieldwork in October and November of 2010, in the midst of my exchange experience at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) in Florianópolis, I had the chance to learn about the terrain that Angela Souza (2009) studied in that city--as she had also examined hip-hop in Lisbon. It was during this experience that I came into contact with a certain sector of *The Hip-hop Movement: gospel hip-hop*. In addition to learning about the expressions of their works by visiting an evangelical church, I also got to see a rap group’s performance and one of their videoclips. The church guaranteed quality equipment and material for production. According to Angela, these gospel hip hoppers claimed to be able to navigate through spaces that neither the police nor pastors could access today. We also scheduled to meet with a female rapper who did not belong to this hip-hop gospel sector, but unfortunately she did not follow through with the arrangement.

the fields of Anthropology and Feminist Ethnography (HARAWAY, 1995; SARDENBERG, 1998; BONETTI, 2007).

The choice to reiterate the production of set knowledge (HARAWAY, 1995) is grounded by research that leans towards ethnography. In this particular case, the ethnography would be free of pretensions of an anthropologist's view (*per se*) while acknowledging the political science base, yet willing to reflect on its ubiquities (BARROS, 2007) by zooming in on its relation and identity with its research subjects. For that reason, this research aims to dabble in the field of Anthropology and of production carrying an ethnographic origin.

When pondering the challenges of the field, right away in the initial contact with The Hip-hop Movement, issues were raised that, in some fashion, were shutting out or restricting individuals' and groups' interaction with researchers. The social movement itself showed some hesitance in making information available or even opening up its spaces for outsiders. To understand this field, it would be crucial to see things from the native's point of view. No pretension had been made to carry out or employ ethnography, but rather to use ethnographic strategies to understand the hip-hop setting along with its key issues and constraints. Clifford Geertz (1984) advocates for such a stance—in his study on the Javanese, Balinese, and Moroccan people—to ensure that the researcher's personal view does not end up perforating the research, or vice versa, so that there is no type of hierarchy separating the researcher from the group being researched, all for the sake of grasping the sense and symbols of the environment surrounding the group, wherein lie sentiments, expectations, and viewpoints. This lesson can very well open us up to comprehending the field in question.

In this sense, these research restrictions—which did not cease—would actually represent a type of defense mechanism in The Movement against researchers using its image and accessing its information. The idea of preservation is one shared by many entities that we may refer to as social movements and/or religious and cultural groups who are highly sought out by both local and international scholars alike for research purposes. These entities would be justified in this idea, many times because the works rendered by these research purposes pump nothing back into

the community(ies) that was(were) researched. To that end, The Hip-hop Movement came up with possible alternatives for, as they themselves call it, an atmosphere of feedback, that is, give-and-take relationships and partnerships between The Movement and the researchers. This alternative created bonds between the research, the researcher(s), and the group(s) being researched.

In what would be the first phase of this research during my undergraduate studies, many important actions were developed. Among these actions, the English course “I Have a Dream: English for Black Empowerment”²⁹ had significant relevance for The Hip-hop Movement and other social movements, which took place in 2007 at UFBA’s *Centro de Estudos Afro-Orientais* (center for afro-oriental studies)³⁰ (FREIRE, 2010). This was an extremely rich experience in many ways. I increased my contact with members of The Movement, affirmed my position as a researcher of this topic, and created a give-and-take opportunity with The Movement on the basis of its principle demands: education and broadening strategies of employment opportunities for the Black and inner-city youth—in this case learning English, be it for college entrance exams or for the job market. The initiative brought together different youth groups and was well-received by The Movement and many organizations. Unfortunately, the course did not last long due to a lack of resources.

While reflecting on the research in a conversation with rapper Mara Asantewaa, she shared with me that for a certain period of time she had decided to “no longer speak with researchers,” due to relationship complications between researcher and subject(s). In one of the accounts taken from fieldwork, it was discovered that pictures of Bahian hip-hop groups were being featured in magazine publications and research projects in Europe and the United States. The hip-hop groups were completely unaware of these publications and of those who captured the images. No

29 A partnership between the *Núcleo de Mulheres da Rede Aiyê Hip-Hop* (women’s cohort), one of the sectors of The Hip-hop Movement in Salvador bringing together many *posses*, and the group “We are problematic! English for Black Empowerment.” The course was created by UFBA’s Social Sciences students who were participants in the exchange program *Raça, Desigualdades e Desenvolvimento: uma comparação Brasil e Estados Unidos* (race, inequalities, and development: a comparison between Brazil and the United States) (UFBA and Vanderbilt University). They took it upon themselves to select the didactic material and administer the course. I took part in this group and project as an advocate.

30 O *Centro de Estudos Afro-Orientais* (center for afro-oriental studies - CEAO) is a supplementary body linked to UFBA’s College of Philosophy and Human Sciences (FFCH). The center is home to research projects and activities open to the community involving topics on Afro-Brazilian culture and history. Available at: <http://www.ceao.ufba.br/2007/apresentacao.php>

authorization was conceded by these groups, and, likewise, no compensation was offered to them in return.

Given that I was particularly close to and involved in The Movement's functions,³¹ there was uncertainty coming from two sides –from The Movement and from the academy—in regards to possible confusion pertaining to my belonging to The Movement and my dissociation from it, which would be necessary in order to carry out research. Such uncertainty was justified by the kind of partnership I had with the groups under examination. This was indeed a personal concern, and I made it a point whenever I could to ensure my presence in those spaces strictly as a researcher.³² This challenge was present especially in the first phase of research (undergraduate), and matured at the graduate level.

Contact with the young women was vital in ensuring understanding pertaining to the hip-hop universe, its language, and the symbols used by its members. Such is especially true in comprehending slang, attire, hairstyles, and more in such a way as to identify the knowledge that rests within this domain. Throughout the course of research, contact with women in hip-hop was held steady in a wide variety of ways, such as in group meetings (when possible), public events, interactions with other movements, and in general demands and claims in which The Hip-hop Movement had a stake. The purpose of this steady contact was to really gain an understanding of how The Movement operates and how internal and external social relations play out.

Assuming a qualitative method of research under a view of feminist epistemology, I work in depth with semi-structured interviews with a single correspondent (GASKELL, 2002). To this end, the examination techniques utilized are interviews with a semi-structured script with the

31 On other occasions I participated as a speaker, in administrative support, and as a photographer and filmmaker in The Movement's events and initiatives.

32 Two important presentations which I gave on my research, by invitation, acknowledged my position pertaining to this work. The first was in reference to my undergraduate work in a roundtable discussion in the *Seminário Coisa de Menina* (girl's thing seminar, 2010) hosted by The Hip-hop Womanist Movement. The second was the opening of the welcoming events for incoming students taking up the Gender and Diversity undergraduate course (2011), FFCH/UFBA, which was organized by female university professors. In that second occasion, I was invited by female university professors of that course who are tied to NEIM --in charge of the undergraduate course in Gender and Diversity—and PPGNEIM, to which this research project is connected. The objective of my presentations, on the basis of realizing this research, was to tie together my undergraduate and graduate work. I had the opportunity to invite rappers Mara Asantewaa and Jamile Santana to exhibit their works on women. The activities were planned together with professors representing the administration of NEIM.

hip hoppers, and participatory observation stemming from my time around the group under study with the support of producing a field diary which allowed for an ethnographic origin to be present in the work. All of this is in addition to collecting audiovisual and print material about the groups and events, CDs, DVDs, newspapers, magazines, fanzines, photographic material, and others.

Participatory observation was developed by being around the hip hoppers within an intense agenda of mobilizations, which was crucial in understanding how relations between individuals in the group under examination are constructed as well as the very environment in which they operate. It is worth mentioning that the motives justifying my presence in this field were explained countless times. Initially, I would go into a lot of detail and describe the project proposal. Later on, I would just say a few words about research being undertaken on a so-called 'feminist hip-hop'. That was usually enough to grab the hip hoppers' attention and spark their curiosity. They would go on to explain to each other my book in progress on women in The Movement. Launched in fieldwork, the stance I assumed as a researcher was to be open to various individuals and groups inquiring about my work, especially to the leaders of The Movement, and that I was to seek their support as partners and subjects in carrying out this research.

Direct contact with key individuals in the group under study was vital in ensuring transparency in my work and smooth navigation through the environment in question, particularly for those who were in leadership positions or points of coordination since they could internally disseminate my objective through other avenues. Moreover, I made contact on many occasions with various key informants and collaborators for research purposes with very open and valuable dialogue surrounding delicate matters of fieldwork.

In the face of so much interaction and coordination caused by inquiries about my research, William Whyte's observations really resonated with me, which he shares in his research with the Nortons in the 'Cornerville' Italian slum in 1937. He reports that "as I sat and listened, I learned the answers to questions that I would not even have had the sense to ask if I had been getting my information solely on an interviewing basis" (2012, p. 30). Immersed in the research environment and efforts to observe the hip hoppers, they would frequently remind me about our distinct places to speak, even in the midst of sharing our interests and concerns from specific viewpoints. These are the types of observations that led to the

making of the field diary as a technique of recording various findings in the fieldwork—the city of Salvador—, in its paths, locales, encounters, shows, personalities, seminars, and/or matters involving hip-hop. Furthermore, contained within the field notes are observations from interviews carried out in informal conversations in discussing and addressing questions with the informants.

Semi-structured scripts aided the flow of interviews with the hip hoppers, some of which had to be moderated a bit more heavily to adequately address the desired topics. The pool of interviewees was determined according to the following criteria: 1) she must be an activist in The Hip-hop Movement, 2) she must be currently or have previously been engaged in a women's collective group or in mixed-gender groups, 3) she must be an independent or even a partner of The Movement, and 4) she must be involved in the elements of hip-hop, either developing its techniques to support it and/or actions to produce it.

Interviewees were selected through reviewing and identifying women in The Movement. They were either acknowledged during fieldwork and/or cited and recommended by other interviewees. The goal was to foster a network that would allow for the interviewees to come into contact with the research before carrying out the interviews in order to minimize the effect of “social desirability,” in which the interviewee responds to questions with socially desirable opinions (BARRETO, 2008). The selection process prioritized internal heterogeneity among the participants whenever possible, pertaining to level of schooling, sexual orientation, neighborhood, work (in The Movement), and *posse*, among other factors.

I had established contact with the young women previously and the interviews were initially carried out to test the instrument—the interview script—in order to improve upon it as a preliminary survey of the data. A total of eight interviews were conducted, all in the center-city area during events of The Movement. After the interviews were adequately transcribed, a data bank was created. At that point I was able to dive into the process of establishing categories followed by content analysis and possible interpretations.

Under ethical concerns, respecting each individual's decisions pertaining to how her name in this work would be disseminated, all of the interviews were duly authorized by the interviewees. For their own knowledge, each interviewee was provided a document containing information about the research and its academic and social objective.

Presentation of the Research Subjects

I provide below some data pertaining to the research subjects (interviewees), all of whom opted to assume their own identities and real names.

Carla Cristina de Jesus Santos, or Kaia na Paz (artistic name), rapper and b-girl, 23 years old, Black, native of Salvador, single, and lives with her mother, father, and sister in the neighborhood of Vila Canária. The family income fluctuates between what one to three persons would make at minimum wage.³³ She studies Pedagogy at UFBA as a beneficiary of the racial quotas policy, works with educational projects, and is a member of the rap group *Munegrade*.

Simone Gonçalves Santos, or Negramone, rapper and b-girl, 25 years old, Black, native of Salvador, lesbian, married, and lives with her partner in center city. Her family income also fluctuates between what one to three persons would make at minimum wage. Her family lives in the neighborhood of São Marcos. She studies Dance at UFBA as a beneficiary of the racial quotas policy, and works with educational projects and the rap group *Munegrade*.

Ana Paula Conceição Oliveira, or Azevixe, rapper, 24 years old, Black, native of Salvador, married, and lives with her partner in the neighborhood of Vila do Politeama. Her family is from the area of Itapuã, and earns what two to three persons would take home at a minimum wage. She studied Pedagogy at UFBA, possesses a graduate degree, and works in disseminating hip-hop culture. She was a vocalist in the group *Simples Rap'ortagem*.

Eliciana Santos Nascimento, or Lis, hip-hop activist, 23 years old, Black, native of Salvador, married, and lives with her husband in the neighborhood of Ondina. Her family resides in the neighborhood of Periperi. At the moment she does not earn an income. She studied Communications at the Private University of Salvador (UNIFACS) without financial aid. She is a videomaker and produced the film *Hip-hop em quatro vidas* (hip-hop in four lives).

Priscila da Costa Lino, or Nayala, b-girl, 18 years old, Black, native of Salvador, single, originally from the neighborhood of São Cristóvão. She is unable to provide information on income and is currently completing

33 T.N.: As of 01 January 2019, the minimum wage in most Brazilian states, including the state of Bahia, is set at R\$998 per month, which is equivalent to roughly \$244.17 (keeping in mind the push and pull of exchange rates). It is upon this minimum wage that nearly 48 million Brazilian workers sustain themselves every month. Information retrieved at: <https://g1.globo.com/economia/noticia/2019/01/04/salario-minimo-em-2019-veja-o-valor.ghtml>

high school in the public school system. She is a break-dancing instructor in the *Escola Aberta* (open school) project in the public school in her neighborhood. Her mother was against her work in breakdancing.

Vivian Quatuni, or Olhasse, hip-hop activist, 25 years old, Black, native of Salvador, single, and lives with her seven siblings (of whom she is the only female) in the neighborhood of Uruguai. She does not earn an income at the moment, and relies on that of her family, who earns what two to three persons would at minimum wage. She has a high school diploma and understands that her calling is to be an activist in The Black Movement through the *Movimento Negro Unificado* (unified black movement - MNU) and The Hip-hop Movement.

Dina Lopes, or Dina, rapper, 45 years old, Black, native of Salvador, single, and lives with her only daughter in the neighborhood of Sete de abril. She studied Theology and currently studies Social Sciences with a focus on distance education. She is a jewelry artisan without a fixed income, and one of Salvador's first female rappers in the group *Último Trem*. She is also a part of The Rastafarian Movement³⁴ and The Solidarity Economy Movement.

Mônica Reis, or Mônica, graffiti artist, 28 years old, Black, native of Salvador, married, and lives with her husband (also a graffiti artist) and two daughters in the neighborhood of São Caetano. The couple's combined income amounts to what four persons would earn at minimum wage. She possesses a high school diploma and works with the *Salvador grafita* (salvador does graffiti) project, in which she has gained international recognition.

As is apparent, among the interviewees is a diverse internal heterogeneity acknowledged through their identities as mothers, lesbians, single women, students, college graduates, professors, and more. This diversity will be fully unveiled in the richness of research data to be analyzed on the field of gender conventions in hip-hop in Salvador.

34 I understand The Rastafarian Movement as a movement following the "rasta" philosophy, reproduced through messages of reggae music and symbolized through dreadlocks as aspects of identity, religion, and a political position of Black affirmation. One of the largest figures responsible for disseminating this philosophy was Bob Marley.



Is hip-hop also a girl's thing?¹ Young women and gender conventions in The Hip-hop Movement in Salvador

The objective of this chapter is to analyze the gender conventions that inform conceptions of femininity and masculinity forged through the prism of female activists' lived experiences within The Hip-hop Movement in Salvador. Two tasks will then be accomplished: understanding how gender conventions are expressed on the basis of women's activism and comprehending how said activism transforms or reinforces those conventions in The Movement and in society.

Gender conventions are understood as:

a collection of values and ideas relative to the sexual state of mind that are available and shared in the culture, on which social beings base their actions and understanding of the world, and reproduce and recreate these same conventions and its practices (Bonett; Fontoura, 2007, p.68, our translation).²

- 1 An expression generated in the name of the women's group in The Hip-hop Movement, serving as an analytical key which I borrowed for the research's discussion on gender conventions.
- 2 T.N.: ... o conjunto de valores e ideias relativos ao imaginário sexual disponíveis na cultura e compartilhados, a partir dos quais os seres sociais pautam as suas ações e concepções de mundo, reproduzem e recriam estas mesmas convenções e suas práticas.

With that in mind, I view the Hip-hop universe as a space in which such conventions are present in the most diverse of ways, as Angela Maria de Souza demonstrates (1998). She points out in her ethnographic research that hip-hop contains regulations of verbal, gestural, and attire-related codes composing languages that can only be understood by those embedded in the arts of The Movement. Fernanda Noronha (2007) also notices these codes in her ethnographic research on hip-hop in São Paulo, stating that being part of a hip-hop group implies sharing certain characteristics such as age range, musical taste, urban paths, circle of friends, and even having roots in the *quebradas* (hood/slums) –a slang term used to refer to The Movement’s inner cities.

In my fieldwork observations and in my interest in recording the experiences of the hip hoppers in Salvador, I created channels of contact with networks from Womanist Movements and youth of The Hip-hop Movement. It can be noted from observing the discovered conventions how one understands models of femininity and masculinity along with their hip-hop repertoires. For this investigation, cases that have ties to the artistic elements of hip-hop were chosen, among them rap, graffiti, breakdancing, and activism. All of the cases feature accounts given by the interviewees.

In this vein, the interviewees’ accounts and actions are rendered into ethnographic data, which prove indispensable in facilitating an analysis of gender under the power relations aimed at aspects of masculinity and femininity in The Movement. According to Maria Naomi Castilho Brito (2001, p. 292, our translation): “From the gender perspective, priority is allotted to historical and sociological examinations that attempt to incorporate dimensions of the masculine and feminine in a relational manner in analysis”.³ I understand that this gender perspective determines power relations that are in constant negotiation and can reach distinct configurations depending on the setting and groups in question.

Yet it is worth reiterating that, under these conventions, this view on gender will have an interpretation grounded in a feminist linkage. Cecilia Sardenberg (2002, p. 90, our translation) explains that this political proposal –both feminist and scientific— possesses as its foundation “[...] a heightened awareness in a critical, feminist perspective of gender”.⁴

3 T.N.: *A partir da perspectiva de gênero, têm sido priorizadas as investigações históricas e sociológicas que procurem incorporar as dimensões do masculino e do feminino na análise de forma relacional.*

4 T.N.: *[...] um saber alavancado em uma perspectiva crítica feminista de gênero.*

Nonetheless, in order to reach this objective beyond an ethnographic examination, criteria involving the field researcher's stance and relationship with the academic community and the universe being researched will all be necessary (ZANETTI & SOUZA, 2009; ÁVILA, 2000).

A young feminist position interacts with a multifaceted reality and visualizes specific issues related to youth and young women in their diverse subjectivities. Such subjectivities are blatantly linked to sexuality and Blackness in the face of Black-Youth identity which affirms specific questions in their demands and claims as political subjects (ZANETTI & SOUZA, 2009; ÁVILA, 2000). To this end, in an attempt to comprehend gender conventions in The Hip-hop Movement in Salvador, the focus is centered on gleaning if and how *hip-hop is also a girl's thing*, as my interviewees themselves point out. This very question was posed and targeted by the hip hoppers in their seminar⁵ entitled *Lugar de mulher é também no Hip-hop* (the woman's place is also in hip-hop),⁶ held in Salvador in 2010.

The aim of this event was to bring together women who are active in hip-hop in the city to jointly put forth a proposal to foster the construction of mechanisms to legitimize, professionalize, and strengthen women in local hip-hop. Beyond that is linkage with regional coordination seeking to discuss women's participation in the *I Encontro de Gênero e Hip-Hop Norte e Nordeste*⁷ (first meeting on gender, hip-hop, and the northeast) as well as the necessity to continue holding state meetings on gender.

That is why this chapter is entitled 'Is hip-hop also a girl's thing?', which goes back to the *Núcleo Hip-hop Coisa de Menina*, a body that is in tune to our research objectives. One recurring topic in the interviewees' accounts dealt with their concern when reflecting on what is appropriate in being a male or female in society and in hip-hop. This topic was based on their critiques of these borders and new adjustments of this relation.

Consequently, posing the question 'Is Hip-hop also a girl's thing?' facilitated contact with men's and women's ideas and experiences, sharing

5 Nevertheless, this seminar gave special attention to fieldwork, especially since it was the space in which I recorded ethnographic data and conducted the final field interviews. This event was made possible by the collective efforts of the *Núcleo Hip-Hop Coisa de Menina*, with support from the *Fórum Estadual de Juventude Negra* and the *Posse de Conscientização (PCE)*.

6 A reference to the feminist slogan that reclaims space for women in politics, be it in institutionalized politics or in other diverse experiences that relate women and politics as privileged spaces of power.

7 According to Mara Asantewaa, organizing women to attend this event this was one of the seminar's goals, however, it was ultimately not possible due to a lack of coordination of this very event.

reflections on the deeply rooted conceptions of femininity and masculinity within The Hip-hop Movement in Salvador. With the hip hoppers' perspectives at the forefront, attentiveness was allotted to viewpoints and aspects that explicitly elucidate their worldviews and the challenges that women face in penetrating the hip-hop universe.

In Salvador, there is a number of women that register their presence in this sector of The Movement to demarcate their space and have an impact in its initiatives and claims. Even so, this relationship is not exactly a harmonious one in dealing with notions that identify and differentiate aspects between the femininity and masculinity forged within the movement. In other words, it is from the gender conventions experienced within The Movement that models with rules, limits, and new configurations are created. In turn, they define or identify among the hip-hop members what is appropriate to be girls and what is appropriate to be boys.

Composed solely of women with a desire to reinvigorate the debate on gender within The Hip-hop Movement in Salvador as well as on the state and regional levels, the *Núcleo Hip-hop Coisa de Menina* is the product of recent coordination. It is important to stress that the female activists in this specific group possess enormous organizing experience in The Hip-hop Womanist Movement. In fact, they belong to Salvador's first groups and are responsible for organizing the first three state meetings on women and hip-hop, in addition to numerous other women's meetings in The Movement. They are also a part of exclusively female organizations and mixed hip-hop *posses*, taking after the *Núcleo de Mulheres da Rede Aiyê Hip-Hop*⁸ and the *Núcleo de Mulheres da Posse Consciência e Expressão* (PCE).⁹

In order to contextualize The Hip-hop Womanist Movement up until the seminar cited above, a panoramic survey is presented on its initiatives in Salvador which unveils an intense political link on the part of The Movement and the hip hoppers by identifying 'women' as a claim. For knowledge's sake, records are shown which aim to configure a panoramic recollection of The Hip-hop Womanist Movement.

The Movement's experience with hip-hop and gender encounters between the years of 2003 and 2005 fostered a vital transformation in the role of feminist action in Bahian hip-hop contributing to advance

8 A specific group of women within a larger network that brings together various mixed groups (men and women) in hip-hop, known as *Rede Aiyê Hip-Hop*.

9 A specific group of women within the *Posse Consciência e Expressão* (PCE), which is a mixed *posse* and one of the member bodies of the *Rede Aiyê Hip-Hop*.

discussions such as recognition and fighting for women's space in hip-hop. These encounters highlight an identity aspect of hip-hop in Salvador and in the state of Bahia with respect to prioritizing space to discuss gender and women. No records were ever discovered of encounters bringing together such characteristics in other Brazilian states.

Between the years of 2006 and 2010, there was a downturn in initiatives specific to The Womanist Movement and The Hip-hop Movement in Salvador in general. Such was in comparison to previous years of intense excitement in the hip-hop scene which would constantly gain attention in its interventions throughout the city. In its first era, from 1996 to 2005, hip-hop was organizing state, Northeastern, and even national meetings—one such example being the *Painel de Direitos Autorais*¹⁰ (copyright panel). These meetings convened young people from Salvador and other parts of Bahia to discuss matters of organizing The Movement and bolstering its artistic elements. In reality, new ways of interacting in other spaces and action strategies in The Movement created a new state of affairs.

At first, it culminated in a lack of organization and structure for a considerable portion of The Movement in Salvador and for a specific sector that was the most active both in Salvador and in the state of Bahia—which up until that point had been keeping afloat the *Rede Aiyê Hip-Hop*. This network continues to be active, yet in a timider or even closed sense, and in virtual spaces (group email list). Such was distinct from the intense events that were held in the first years after *Posse Ori* had disbanded in center city.

With respect to holding meetings, creating spaces for debate, discussions, and constructions of claims on behalf of The Hip-hop Womanist Movement, even if done locally, there were events organized *vis-a-vis* the dearth of overall organization from women's cohorts and distinct *posses*. Such a situation is the product of a lack of organization from sectors of The Hip-hop Movement and other social movements. As for women in hip-hop, it can be said that segments of The Movement giving priority to stimulating women's engagement in hip-hop and embedding debates on gender in their initiatives were debilitated.

In some instances, the *Núcleo de Mulheres da Rede Aiyê Hip-Hop* was present and supportive. It was commonplace for the group to face difficulties

10 The Hip-hop Movement in Bahia also foresaw national organization, driving forward the formation of the *I Painel de Direitos Autorais* (copyright panel) in 2006 attended by copyright specialists and record labels who discussed these matters with the public. Gaspar, a representative of the rap group from São Paulo *Z'afrika Brasil* was present at the event.

in holding their meetings. These difficulties were justified by miscommunication (or the lack of communication), scarcity in transportation funds, and a sharp diminution in motivation due to the ever increasing desertedness in meeting spaces. Arriving late to meetings was not an uncommon occurrence, neither was the reduced number of members present at the meetings. In the final meetings, it was visible to perceive just how much steam the group had really lost.

The situation became much more complicated after the open meetings hosted by *Rede Aiyê Hip-Hop* had to be discontinued around 2006-2007. These meetings would take place at the square *Praça do Passeio Público*¹¹, bringing together members of The Movement, partners, invitees, and curious pedestrians in the center-city area. This mixed space was a place to meet people and plan specific actions that involved the cohorts making up the Network. These cohorts were: *Núcleo de Mulheres*, *Núcleo de Grafite*, and *Núcleo de Comunicação* (Field Diary, 16 August 2010).

From 2006 to 2011, The Hip-hop Womanist Movement did not back down *vis-a-vis* these barriers, and in fact went on to carry out single initiatives specific to the hip hoppers, such as the “I have a dream” English course and the b-girls breakdancing class, in 2007 and 2008 respectively. The *Núcleo de Mulheres da Rede Aiyê Hip-hop* and its partners launched both of these exclusive initiatives.

The “I have a dream” English course took place in 2007, which consisted of basic English learning and was directed at members of The Hip-hop Movement and other sectors of The Black Movement. It was also geared toward the student population, including the students of the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), composed of men and women linked to social movements and hip-hop.

The b-girls breakdancing class¹² occurred in the beginning of 2008 and lasted three months. It was the first breakdancing class for women in all of Latin America. The *Núcleo de Mulheres da Rede Aiyê Hip-Hop* in partnership with the *Fundo Angela Borba de Recursos para Mulheres*¹³ (Angela Barbosa fund for women’s resources) and the *Centro de Estudos Afro-Orientais* (center

11 In addition to The Hip-hop Movement, *Praça do Passeio Público* was the home of many cultural movements in Salvador, both musical and theatrical.

12 The link to the class blog: <http://www.cursobgirls.blogspot.com/>.

13 It was inaugurated in 2000 after the *Seminário Internacional Mulheres, responsabilidade social e recursos financeiros*, which took place in Rio de Janeiro. The purpose was to offer support to Brazilian projects and it is the first Brazilian social investment fund to direct resources exclusively to women’s organizations, identifying and allocating resources to social-investment activities to foster and

for Afro-oriental studies - CEAO/UFBA) promoted this initiative. The class comprised of 25 young women between the ages of 11 and 30, all of whom were from humble backgrounds in Salvador. From January to April, these young women were introduced to the basic styles and techniques of street dance in line with thematic workshops on gender, race, and sexualities. The objective was to encourage a larger number of women to learn breakdancing: the new b-girls.

In addition to these two courses, in 2008 there was the *III Encontro de Grafiteiras* (third meeting of female graffiti artists), which brought together women from Brazil and from other Latin American countries. Around that same time, in 2009, there was also the *I Encontro de Jovens Feministas Negras* (first meeting of young black feminists) in Salvador, in which many hip hoppers from Salvador and other Brazilian states took part to contribute to the event's activities.

Another important event that took place in Salvador was the *Vulva La Vida* Festival of Feminist Counterculture, purposely feminist and inconvenient. It was held from 19-23 January, 2011, and organized by a network of cohorts and young women who position themselves against what society deems 'feminine'. The festival gathered young people from many Brazilian states, who in their majority were adept to the rock style of feminist counterculture. The hip hoppers were also present. At that time, I was no longer collecting data for my fieldwork, but hip-hop workshops representing the rap and break-dancing elements were also embedded into the event's festivities.

Included in the festival's schedule of events were thematic film screenings about women and sexualities, conversations on the bicycle as a means of transportation, in addition to an array of workshops exclusively aimed at women featuring a myriad of themes, such as vegetarianism, veganism, fashion and aesthetics, feminism and pornography, and *wendo* (a feminist defense fight). Two specific workshops involving elements of hip-hop were also on the schedule.¹⁴

The street dance and rap workshop was the first, taking place on the afternoon of the 20th. They were instructed by rapper and b-girl Negramone

defend women's rights. More information is available at: <http://pt.wiserearth.org/organization/view/090cc8836f45c0db26e306213ad2409a>.

14 The graffiti and urban art workshop took place on the morning of the 21st, at the Vegan Kitchen headquarters located in the neighborhood of Pelourinho. This activity was resumed in the late afternoon, together with graffiti in neighborhoods around the city. Graffiti artist Kátia, also known as Sista K, led the activity.

with the presence of rapper and b-girl Carla Kaianapaz, who is also a DJ and was responsible for the beatboxing. According to my field notes:

It was in a room free of chairs that the young women participating in the rap and break-dancing workshop got together. Women of different walks of life could be identified by musical styles. There were rock enthusiasts with their ripped clothing and band t-shirts, metal lovers dressed top to bottom in black with long hair, women with short hair, *mohawks*, or even no hair –these were among the punk-style women who would flaunt a lot of makeup, piercings, and tattoos.

The idea behind the festival was to gather women of the counter-culture. These young women, many of whom did not like hip-hop, and some whom were just not familiar with it or had even heard a little bit of rap, were present at this workshop and opening themselves up to hip-hop —that instigator of voracious critiques on the initial basis of rap, and, later on, breakdancing.

Negramone opened up the workshop speaking a little bit about the history of hip-hop and its elements. Next she demonstrated how to organize the meter of a rhyme, signaling for Carla to drop a beat for her. The participants then divided themselves into groups for each to work on their own song and rap lyrics. What resulted from this was a relaxed atmosphere, producing protest messages around freedom of the female body and the opportunity for many women to allow themselves to engage in rap. This was especially true for young women who were not really into the style.

In the second part of the workshop, the young women circled up for a break-dancing freestyle, realized to the sounds of their very own songs that they had created in the first part of the workshop, delivered by the composing group of each song. The freestyle allowed for a wide array of dance moves to be shown off one by one in the center of the circle (Field Diary, Salvador, 20 January 2011).

Events such as those cited above assist in contextualizing the discussion surrounding women in The Hip-hop Movement and their understanding within it of what ‘a girl’s thing’ would be. The hip hoppers dealt with this matter directly in the *Lugar de mulher é também no Hip-hop* seminar as a special place to observe the expressions of gender conventions on the basis of the hip hoppers’ activism. This topic will receive attention in due course.

My fieldwork depended on the integral support of carrying out that seminar. It lasted two days, beginning on Saturday, 14 August 2010, and brought together approximately 40 individuals who were mostly young

Black Women, also with some children and men. The event finally came to fruition after having been rescheduled two times, the justification for which was never shared.

An air of inquisitiveness could be detected amidst the crowd at the event, especially from the young women present. Among the curious questions involving the hip-hop setting, the most pressing one was: What exactly would transpire in that space? Would it be a concert? A party? A class? A roundtable debate about some topic related to hip-hop?

It was unknown how that space, promoted by the hip hoppers, would be organized. They were interested in having a conversation, discussing an array of topics surrounding women's presence in hip-hop, presenting individuals with works encircling its four elements to share experiences in projects tied to their art forms and activism.

It ought to be noted that the men's presence —this time in the minority, in the face of fostering a meeting specific to The Womanist Movement, but open for men's participation— was given priority in the roundtable discussions. Male partners were invited to provide an account of their experience in collaborating with the women's works and initiatives in The Movement. In fact, the roundtable discussions in the *Lugar de mulher é também no Hip-hop* seminar featured the presence of both men and DJs of The Hip-hop Movement in Salvador. The first, DJ Bandido, made tangible contributions through encouraging female rap production. The second, DJ Jarrão, integrated the rap group *Audácia*, formerly *Neuróticas*, which until that point was strictly female. In general, there was a reduced presence of men in the crowd.

The seminar lifted off with a talk by rapper Cintia Neurótica, from the group *Audácia*, about the importance of the event and the *Núcleo* (center) that sponsored it. Rapper Mara Asantewaa also welcomed the participants and centered her concern on the difficulty women face in organizing themselves in hip-hop, even given the fact that they exercise pertinent engagement in certain elements. With the seminar officially underway, the rappers zealously presented the schedule of events.

The topic of the opening roundtable was centered around a brief history on women's involvement in Bahian hip-hop and the current state of affairs. Sitting in on the panel were rappers Dina Lopes (former member of *Último Trem*) and Simone Gonçalves (Negramone), of the group *Munegrade*. Their contribution was in offering accounts of their female experiences in hip-hop. They laid out a roadmap tracing a brief history of The Womanist

Movement within The Hip-hop Movement in Bahia, particularly highlighting the transformations that women underwent upon entering The Movement.

Symbols of strength, courage and power were present in each of their talks, which identified gender conventions surrounding the femininity model that was stressed in an array of expressions. Some supporting examples would be in the very attitude of going up on stage, performing one's songs, affirming one's identity as a Black woman, a Lesbian woman, and others. Among Dina and Simone, questions were brought forth as to their contact, integration in hip-hop, and engagement in its elements. These questions were raised with a critical tone supporting a masculine model of representation, such as wearing baggy clothes, speaking in a "thuggish" manner, and rapping with one hand on the microphone and the other grabbing what would be the penis.¹⁵

Hip-hop contains aspects that characterize it as a masculinist movement, given the majority male presence, exposing certain symbols, modes of behavior, language, and other aspects that are acknowledged as the "hip-hop model of being".

Dina, one of the first rappers in Salvador during her time as a member in *Último Trem* from 1996 to 2003, was asked about women's integration in The Movement and in the elements of hip-hop, and about relationships with men. She answered by saying:

It's a conflicting relationship, because it's a relationship of occupying spaces. From the moment in which men are already culturally incorporated and have more power than us women, it really is a wide-spread relationship. You have to go up to them and say, "It's not like that! This space is ours!"¹⁶

Dina, in her answer, unveils how expressions of gender conventions in hip-hop are understood. To that end, it is on the basis of what the hip hoppers have to say that women's experiences are brought out of the woodwork in their engagement with the elements of hip-hop and their dialogue with gender conventions in The Movement.

In this vein, it is possible to list some questions that can orient our comprehension around this debate. What are the gender conventions

15 The female hip hoppers satirically imitate these representations, unveiling the style in which many male rappers carry themselves. The female rappers joke saying "Are they afraid it will fall out?"

16 T.N.: *É uma relação conflituosa, porque é uma relação de ocupar espaços, porque a partir do momento em que os homens já estão culturalmente inseridos, que eles têm mais poder do que nós mulheres, é uma relação difusa mesmo, você tem que chegar e dizer para ele, "não é assim! Esse espaço é nosso!"*

identified in hip-hop, which claims to be a contestatory movement? How are models of femininity and masculinity constituted in hip-hop? How are rules and restrictions expressed to distinguish what belongs to the masculine and to the feminine? In order to address these questions as well as others that were raised for the sake of identifying gender conventions in hip-hop, the hip hoppers in Salvador were consulted. They shared experiences around their integration and retention in The Movement.

Fundamental data are highlighted from field particularities that assist in comprehending women's activism in The Hip-hop Movement in Salvador. What I have are selected cases that express discovered gender conventions and heighten perception on how women's activism shifts or reinforces the gender conventions in this field.

Among the experiences that the hip hoppers shared, four were selected, relating to the elements of rap, graffiti, breakdancing, and activism.

A female rapper: high heels vs. sneakers, mini-skirt vs. baggy pants

As a musical style of hip-hop, rap is the most famous element among its expressions. It is created from politicized lyrics that exist on top of different styles of beats, describing and engaging the cultural and political scene through which it passes. Rap is actually an acronym for 'rhythm and poetry'. Oftentimes it is improvised by DJs and MCs.

This musical style was born in New York under influences from a myriad of other styles, among them soul, jazz, blues, and funk, in addition to other new styles from Jamaica. What all of these entities have in common is that they are all expressions of Black musicality (Souza, 1998). However, Sansone (1997) stresses that they cannot be understood as homogenized or mass-produced, since each has different and specific registers of time and space. Nonetheless, Sansone identifies the styles of reggae, funk, and hip-hop—created by the media and acknowledged by social sciences—as a sketch of global youth.

The expressions of these musical styles were relevant in politicizing Black identity as well as the identity of immigrants and the impoverished. Above all, they were instrumental in problematizing living conditions of the Black population, and that of other groups throughout the world. According to Wivian Weller (2005), hip-hop emerges with a conception of organizing and fighting against racism and prejudice.

There are many types of rap, which were initially diffused throughout the United States and later on expanded to reach other parts of the world. Among them is gangster rap, linked to criminality, to which The Movement positioned itself in opposition. In Brazil, activist rap is more common, engaging in discussion, which made its way into The Hip-hop Movement.

Rappers can be both men and women, and it has been used to talk about themselves and their grievances. Yet, the rap environment has been configured and established by its masculinity, a bit intimist *vis-a-vis* eventual impulses, fights, and head-butting circles. Just as Fernanda Noronha (2007) exhibited in her research on the environment of The Hip-hop Movement in São Paulo in the first decade of the century, the scene in Salvador shares a minor female presence at rap concerts. Women in their majority were either there with someone or protected in groups.

The presence of women in the crowd at concerts when a female rapper is performing on stage can be expounded upon by digging deeper into Dina's experience as a rapper. She began in the rap scene upon joining the group *Último Trem*, at a time when she was the only female in the group. She gives an account of her experience as a woman and rapper in The Hip-hop Movement:

Rapping, you know, in order to be seen as a woman you would have to dress like a man, wear jeans and sneakers. I personally don't like wearing sneakers. I happen to not like wearing baggy pants. I don't like men's stuff. I like wearing dresses, mini-skirts, you know? That right there was already an opportunity. When I would get dressed to go on stage and come out in high heels, there were questions, there were looks.¹⁷

In her talk at the opening roundtable at the *Lugar de mulher é também no Hip-hop* seminar, Dina advocated for affirming aspects that identified women who wanted to rap as women with their accessories. Regardless of their sexual orientations, these aspects are what differentiated them from men. She positions herself against the convention that imposes a masculine representation on stage in order to recognize that women are also producers of the art form.

Dina shares that in The Movement's initial organizational stages in Salvador, during the time of *Posse Ori*, women had not yet taken on a critical

17 T.N.: *Tipo cantar rap, para você ser vista como mulher você tinha que se vestir como os homens, usar jeans, usar tênis. Eu particularmente não gosto de usar tênis, eu particularmente não gosto de usar calça folgada, coisa de homem, eu não gosto. Eu gosto de usar vestido, saíinha, entendeu, então isso já era uma oportunidade, quando eu me vestia para cantar e eu ia de um salto alto, tinha questionamentos, tinha olhares.*

view of their condition as women. They were reproducing the thought process that there was a model of being a rapper to be adhered to as a requisite for obtaining recognition of their output and artistic performances. This model was based on the masculine references to rappers in the United States, such as Tupac Shakur. We see from this example that Black male rappers would subscribe to the hip-hop lifestyle through attire trends.

Dina contested these attire trends by dialoguing with one of the gender conventions surrounding both masculinity and femininity in hip-hop. She spoke to the thought process that these attire trends, as well as rap, are boy's things, the men's domain. Souza (1998) explains this phenomenon stating that rap is a musical style associated to marginalization coming from the ghetto and the Black man. It finds inspiration in boys off the street, prison inmates, and basketball or soccer teams (in the Brazilian case) that give light to popular references.

The traditional model of being a rapper adhered to a stance of masculinity composed of critical clothing items. Among them were baggy jeans, caps, large and colorful sneakers, and long and baggy shirts. It was preferred that all of these items show off certain famous brands, such as Adidas, Nike, Mizuno, and other globally-known names. Some kind of reference to English was also encouraged, going back to hip-hop in the United States. This truly was the style that rappers were divulging in the United States, who were advertised especially on music channels such as MTV while the biggest rappers were commercialized in the media.

In hip-hop in Salvador, and in general, it is quite common to come across young people who are adept to the style and hip-hop fashion of the United States. More often than not, the impression that these young people give off is one of incoherence, due to the financial reality of the popular class in which they live with respect to expensive brands and boasting price tags, even if they are falsified versions (some are not). What accentuates this incoherence even more is Salvador's scorching weather, which is present during the vast majority of the year.

According to the activists, this happens due to a logic to follow hip-hop as a cultural industry rather than its social movement. This quite different perspective, however, is not entirely reproduced by hip hoppers in Salvador as some present a high level of criticism about this style.

Members of groups belonging to the *Rede Aiyê Hip-Hop* would hold discussions on hip-hop attire in the United States being adopted by hip hoppers in Salvador. They would advocate for leather sandals and straw

hats to be used instead, with the intention of rescuing the history of storytellers among the African griots and improvisational artists (*repentistas*) of the Brazilian Northeast. They would interweave rhythm and poetry, emitting rhymes and social critiques in a comical and satirical manner, thus sharing the formula for rap.

In response to this commercial style, the elements were adapted to the hot, local climate as well as to the verbal and body language of the Brazilian Northeast, including lyrics and rap performances. As a fashion alternative of local hip-hop, a street-dancing couple, Tina and Ananias, design clothing for b-boys and b-girls, adapting to the priority of lighter and more comfortable clothing to dance in the hip-hop style of Salvador. At one of the roundtables at the Coisa de Menina seminar, Tina described the experience of the hip-hop fashion label, which held fashion shows in Pelourinho in events of The Movement. She shared that hip-hop clothing was expensive and inaccessible to the young people, however the clothes that her label produces are packaged and delivered at accessible prices for the target audience (Field Diary, 2010).

The incorporation of women into the musical art form of hip-hop (rap) —which would even go on to be known itself as hip-hop— incited a certain shift in what would come to be established as a specific style, as they molded a kind of dialogue between masculine and feminine symbols around rapping. Skirts, mini-skirts, spaghetti-strap tops, and dresses were composing female rappers' style, who would go on stage and rhyme on top of the DJ's beat.

High heels went on to occupy spaces that were formerly exclusive to colorful high or low top-sneakers. Some rappers would not budge with their makeup, lipstick and mascara, hair and body accessories such as turbans and large earrings, bracelets and hairstyles that explored Black beauty, taking after the Black Power style and braids in the most uncustomary of ways. They go on stage proving that rap is also a girl's things, and that there is a female performance style of rapping, rhyming (composing), and interacting with the crowd.

In general, group names, artistic names, and names used in rap battles all have a connotation of empowerment, strength, and struggle. Prime examples would be the group *Audácia Feminina* (feminine audacity) and the female rapper *Refém* (hostage), a native of Rio de Janeiro and member of the group *Revolta Feminina* (feminine rage). *Refém*, as she is known in The Movement, produced a documentary called *O Rap do Batom* (lipstick rap). She came to Salvador to take part in the *Encontro Nacional de Juventude*

Negra (national meeting for black youth) and to organize the launching of the documentary together with the hip hoppers in Salvador. In any case, she left a copy of the documentary with the *Núcleo de Mulheres*, which addresses the challenges of a female rapper in Rio de Janeiro. The material is based on her own biography through giving an account of her contact with the Hip-hop Movement, her mother's impressions toward rap before and after getting to know her daughter's musical productions, and new insights that rap instilled in her life, among other matters around sexuality, friendships, and professionalism (Field diary, 2008).

Even still, the opportunities for women in rap in Salvador were extremely limited in the face of two issues. The first is the very musical scene of the city, which often discounts rap in favor of a cultural industry that above all produces styles in line with Bahian music such as *axé* and *pagode*, in addition to more commercial styles such as *farró*. In this vein, spaces for rap are already restricted in Bahia, in spite of a presence fostering an alternative scene exclusive to this style. A citation to be made in that respect would be the *Programa Evolução Hip-Hop* on public radio, with a lineup geared toward output for the rap community. This program was the product of bilateral coordination between the Institute of Educational Broadcasting Bahia (IRDEB) and various sectors of The Hip-hop Movement. Even in that line up, the presence of female rappers is timid at best.¹⁸

The second issue is tied to gender, for the sake of pondering women's space in rap, in the midst of hip-hop. There is a kind of monitoring and even authorization that seems to be necessary in order for the female rappers to present their music, as if in dispute within a predominantly masculine space. The stage and the microphone indeed comprise spaces of power. The aforementioned monitoring spans across the rappers' behavior, attire, and access. More often than not, it is implemented by men as a mechanism of protection, and even implies limits to professional employment opportunities (SILVA, 1995; MATSUNAGA, 2008; GOMES, 2008).

Linked to the importance of feminine references in rap, Vivian Quartuni talks about the rare opportunities for women to perform in this style in the city. These are spaces ever more punctual for female rappers to develop the musical art of hip-hop.

Let me think [chuckles]. I think it's still not enough. I'm not even talking about politics, but I think that even at events, if we were to count how many

18 In general, the hip hoppers' presence —regardless of any specific element— in the program's organization was crucial but temporary, especially in the project, coordination, and its first moments.

female groups perform on in one night? I only saw one performance... where was that? It was in Bairro da Paz... in São Caetano and Bairro da Paz.¹⁹ Actually there were two that had three mixed male groups and three female groups. It was like that... and all the women went on stage in skirts. The entire roundtable was women who really had it together. So, there were a few, but those few that are in there leave their mark and make history. And even later... you know... even later on when other people who didn't believe that things were up and coming, because women were behind it, right... they come back around and congratulate us. I don't think they're big in numbers, but those few leave their mark, like in the gender meeting. There's a few, but they leave their mark and they leave longing.²⁰

Given that this was an important matter for the hip hoppers, the *Lugar de mulher é também no Hip-hop* seminar prioritized this discussion and problematized the challenges that the rappers face in releasing their music. DJ Bandido was invited to take part in this thematic roundtable discussion. He is an individual who has stood out through his turntable work and encouragement for female rappers to disseminate music in Salvador.

DJ Bandido has his own studio in the neighborhood of *Nordeste de Amaralina*, and has supported female rappers' production on numerous occasions. He has negotiated with them, and has incentivized the recording of a CD exclusively featuring female rappers in Salvador. Even without reaching the desired outcome, he points out that one of the main issues in promoting this type of work is the very behavior of women. Recordings of their music are bashful.

According to Bandido, many women walk away from the initiative because their boyfriends say that they should not be rhyming, or even that they would not be good rappers with stage presence and the intonation to

19 The hip-hop event centered around the theme "Hip-hop contra a homofobia" (hip-hop against homophobia) took place in 2007, in *Bairro da Paz*. The event was led by women, who were not just at the roundtable discussions, but also on stage. Featured were three rap groups exclusively composed of women, two from the state of Bahia and one from the state of Piauí. Such an event was possible due to a rigorous scheme of negotiation with the neighborhood's local school and the group *Clã Nordestino*, an important hip-hop sector responsible for the organization of this production. It took place in the neighborhood's main plaza and brought together a large number of locals and people from other neighborhoods as well, especially young people.

20 T.N.: *Deixa eu pensar [risos]. Eu acho que ainda é pouco. Eu não falo nem na questão política, mas eu acho assim até em eventos, se a gente for contar quantos grupos femininos tocam numa noite? Eu só vi um show... onde é que foi?... que foi no Bairro da Paz... no São Caetano e no Bairro da Paz, dois, aliás, que tinham três grupos de homens mistos e três grupos femininos. Então assim... e as meninas todas foram pro palco de saia, a mesa toda do debate foram mulheres que tavam tomando conta. Então assim, são poucas, mas só que essas poucas deixam marcas e deixam história, que depois até... é... até depois as outras pessoas que não acreditaram que as coisas acontecia, porque são mulheres que estão fazendo, é... diz que a... coisa foi bem feita e parabeniza. Acho que são poucas, mas deixam marca, como o encontro de gênero, são poucas, mas deixam marcas e deixam saudade.*

face such an endeavor. In this case he refers to female rappers just starting out in the business and inexperienced in their careers. Nevertheless, the same still applies to experienced female rappers who have been in both The Movement and in rap for quite some time. There are numerous hindrances that push women away from simply recording their works in hip-hop, many of which are linked to questions of self-esteem in exposing themselves to critiques, financial complications in following through with a project, and, above all, lack of support both inside and outside The Hip-hop Movement.

To illustrate DJ Bandido's account, rapper and pedagogue Paula Azeviche unveils some important points in pondering women's plight in rap and hip-hop. She raises issues that elaborate specific questions women share in the midst of a context that binds their engagement in spaces and public activities in society and The Movement.

The first issue she raises is connected to the question of other women getting involved in the rap scene. This is a recurrent question in discussions among the hip hoppers, and shared in other sectors of The Movement and in political spaces. For example, Paula cites her own experience and reasons for starting to rap, which go back to her friend Sílvia, a rapper and the founder of *Hera Negra*, one of the first exclusively female rap groups.

And so one day Sílvia got pissed off and just started rhyming. She started showing the raps, showing them... She said she had a lot of rhymes, and the girl pulled out a bunch of lyrics. I thought I could rap myself, too, I mean, I'm quite slow for it. But Sílvia was a big inspiration. She's a woman coming after Dina D. You know when I look back, it's important for there to be a lot of other women putting out rhymes like that today.²¹

Following below is an account from one of *Hera Negra's* concerts, when the personnel consisted of rappers Negramone, Sílvia, and Lica. The group was active during hip-hop's first years in Salvador, and was later disbanded after many personnel changes. There are no records of the group's music available for access, serving as one of the examples legitimizing the concern articulated above about female rappers not leaving traces of their work.

Paula and Bandido identified the same concern with respect to the difficulty for women in The Movement to remain in the field, follow

21 T.N.: *Aí um dia Sílvia se retou e começou a rimar, e começou a mostrar os rap, começou a mostrar... dizer que tinha várias letras e a menina apareceu com um monte de letras. E eu achei que podia fazer rap também, quer dizer eu sou bem lenta pra fazer rap. Mas Sílvia foi uma grande inspiração, é uma mulher que depois de Dina D, aí quando eu olho pra trás, é importante que hoje tenha tantas outras mulheres fazendo rap.*

through with projects, and disseminate their lyrics and performances. In accordance with the accounts given about these women's experiences, it is possible to take note of how features that form gender conventions are configured around femininity. These are the gender conventions to which women are subjected.

From her own experience as the only woman in a rap group, Paula employs some examples to think about women's absence and retention in The Movement. She even goes into the type of retention and the key rationales that distance women from this environment.

[...] they're not as close to The Movement as much as I'd hoped and we know it's really hard. Retention in The Movement is really difficult because in society women have to take on everything. We're at the base of the pyramid whether men like it or not. We have to be mothers, daughters, wives, housewives, we have to work out, make sure our rights are ensured, pay the bills, we have to do just everything [...] Even in "Simples Rap'ortagem," I always had the role of makin' the group's productions, of taking care of all those guys, of finding out "where are you?" Even today it's the same concern, and today we try to slide everything we do by the producer. But even so, eight years in that group and that's how it has always been. We know that the whole reason we get into hip-hop in the first place is to get things done. But what ends up happening? We get in there to find out that The Movement has no structure. We mean to organize, get everything in order, leave the place looking spick and span, and so on. These processes are consuming us, swallowing us whole. One time someone told me that I was whining about how Dina left The Movement, that it seemed like she was out for good. She is not leaving The Movement, of course not, and anyone who knows her will tell you that she's the history of The Movement. But I was whining about her leaving, and someone said to me: "Dina's already a woman, she's got a daughter. She has to take care of her family." To that I said: "Damn, do we really get into all this without believing that we can't take care of our own hip-hop house one day?" Yeah she's got a daughter, but she is grown. I think she had her early on. Anyway, we go through all that mess. We have to be stood up, cheated on, give our husbands' what they want, all that and still produce hip-hop [giggles]. It's too hard! Husband, wife, we always have to give everyone else what they want and still be in hip-hop. Goodness gracious [giggles].²²

22 T.N.: [...] não estão próximas do movimento assim assim, quanto eu esperava e a gente sabe que é muito difícil. É muito difícil essa permanência, porque a mulher, ela exerce todas as funções na sociedade, a gente está na pirâmide na base quer o homem queria ou não. A gente tem que ser mãe, tem que ser filha, tem que ser mulher, tem que ser dona de casa, tem que trabalhar fora, tem que ter todos os direitos garantidos, tem que pagar as contas, tem que... Sei lá, fazer tudo [...] Até na Simples Rap'ortagem, eu sempre tive o papel de fazer a produção da banda, de cuidar daqueles homens todos, de saber "você tá onde?" Até hoje é a mesma preocupação e hoje a

It is interesting to note that, despite having specific administrative roles in the artistic agenda —roles linked to the producer's duties—, Paula, who up until that point was the only rapper in the band, assumed the responsibility of “*taking care of the men*” in the group. In addition to rapping, she would also handle managerial matters related to the task of “*taking care*” of her colleagues, which reinforces the traditional gender conventions linking these characteristics to the feminine. Next we will direct our attention to masculine and feminine gender conventions that are expressed in graffiti.

It's not *Maria Latinha*, it's graffiti artist!

As mentioned previously, graffiti was one hip-hop's first two elements —the other being breakdancing— and consists of visual art expressions through paintings and designs that are exhibited on city walls.

Women's experiences in graffiti does not differ much from that of rappers. Graffiti artist Mônica Reis gave a talk in one of the roundtables at the *Lugar de mulher é também no Hip-hop* seminar. Showing off shockingly bright pink nails, which could be seen from afar, hair dyed in red shades in contrast with her dark skin, she grabbed everyone's attention not just from her physical appearance, but especially from her critical talk and account about women's experiences in graffiti in Salvador.

It is worth reiterating, in hindsight of The Hip-hop Womanist Movement, that the presence of female graffiti artists in hip-hop is relatively recent, having only accessed The Movement in 2013. According to the records, they did not participate in the activities involved in the gender and hip-hop meetings, or even in the women's cohorts in the mixed *posses*. The first period of hip-hop in Salvador, known as the first generation of The Movement (FREIRE, 2010), had characteristics that

gente tenta passar todas as atividades com o produtor, mas mesmo assim. Em oito anos de Simples sempre foi assim. E a gente sabe que a gente entra no hip-hop quer fazer as coisas, mas o que acontece, a gente quer organizar, a gente quer arrumar a casa, a gente que deixa tudo limpo e aí vai. Os processos vão engolindo a gente, engolindo, engolindo, quando a gente vê... Uma vez alguém me disse assim que eu tava lamentando a saída de Dina, que Dina parece que saiu do movimento de vez assim. Lógico que ela não vai sair, porque quem conhece ela sabe que ela é a história do movimento. Mas que tava lamentando a ausência de Dina, e alguém me disse assim: “Dina já é mulher, Dina tem filha, Dina tem que sustentar a casa.” Eu digo: “Poxa, será que a gente começa tudo isso, sem acreditar que a gente possa algum dia sustentar a nossa casa do hip-hop.” Ela tem uma filha grande, eu acho que teve filho muito cedo, teve a filha muito cedo. Enfim, a gente passa por todas essas barras, tem que ser abandonada, tem que ser a traída, tem que ser a que realiza os desejos do marido, tem que ser tudo e ainda fazer hip-hop [risos]. Difícil! Do marido, da mulher, né, sempre realizando o desejo de todo mundo e ainda ser do hip-hop. E aí [risos].

were extremely connected to diverse sectors of The Black Movement, including the *Movimento Negro Unificado* (unified black movement - MNU) and other social movements, taking after The Feminist Movement and The Womanist Movement among others.

This connection can justify the very title of the ‘*Encontros de gênero e Hip-Hop*’ (hip-hop and gender meetings), which occurred between 2003 and 2005. During this time, discussion surrounding the term ‘gender’ was not very widespread in the city, but it was already embedded in the activist language of The Hip-hop Womanist Movement in Salvador and in Bahia. The hip-hop and gender meetings were both state and regional events, which distinguished them from The Movement in other states in the Brazilian Northeast and the country in general.

The first period of The Womanist Movement was already pointing to a feminist stance as its claims were linked to concern with human rights and public policies for women, which encompassed much more than just an interest in the hip-hop culture and its elements. Mônica’s story, who integrates into hip-hop in The Movement’s second phase, is a fascinating one as she sheds light on matters that involve incorporating female graffiti artists in The Movement’s visual arts. The art form of creating graffiti features the spray can as its main tool, along with significant disposition to deal with the sun, rain, and long walks and negotiations in search of spaces and opportunities to create art —not to mention an overarching inspiration to work. Even still, as Mônica herself affirms, the challenges are even more numerous for female graffiti artists:

Ever since I started doing graffiti and going to the meetings, things like that, I hear the guys say about women that wanna be graffiti artists, they call them ‘Maria Latinha’. They call women in hip-hop ‘Maria Microfone’.²³ They’re all nicknames for women. So they think we’re not capable, and that we do it because we always need to have a man, or that we do it because they think we like somebody or wanna get at somebody. So women are undervalued and extremely disrespected just for being women, you understand? For me that’s the hardest part that we deal with in hip-hop: we end up with these nicknames, we get cussed out, they think we’re not capable. It’s about doing what they do, it’s about wanting to do something that we don’t wanna do. This here is for men, and not for women, just like it was back in the old days, making up their own rules. We know today that a

23 T.N.: *Maria Latinha* may be literally translated as Maria Spray Can, *Maria Microfone* as Maria Microphone.

*woman's place is also in hip-hop, it's also in graffiti, it's a woman's place too. That's what it is for me.*²⁴

It is intriguing to observe that women are generally given nicknames with the formula of “Maria plus an object,” relating their interest to some kind of object of value that is foreign to their gender universe. These nicknames given in hip-hop are reminders of others that were also assigned to women, such as *Maria Gasolina*, connected to women’s interest in men with cars, and *Maria Chuteira*,²⁵ for women seeking relationships with successful soccer players.

What can be taken away from this process of disqualifying the female hip hoppers activities is the way in which they serve the social conventions of gender that define distinct repertoires, values, and symbols for the feminine and masculine. In this vein, when female graffiti artists appropriate masculine attributes—in this case, the spray can—, tacitly transgressing established gender norms, they suffer repercussions from the group by being disqualified and undervalued. Such repercussions institute processes of producing inequalities and hierarchies that collapse heavily on top of the feminine.

The spray can, microphone, car, and football boots are all objects to which women presently have access, given that they symbolically represent objects of the masculine universe. In this sense, it is curious to note that there is no such thing as a male version for the type of nomenclature imposed on women. There are no reports of a common Brazilian male name such as ‘*João*’ or ‘*José*’ plus an object. Such would render explicit the existence of delineated gender universes, in which objects such as vehicles, football boots, microphones, and also spray cans are considered to be masculine objects.

Is graffiti a girl’s thing? As one of the few women involved in this art form in hip-hip, Mônica has worked in conjunction with the project

24 T.N.: *Desde que eu comecei a grafitar e participar de encontros, essas coisas assim, o que eu ouço falar de meninos falando sobre mulheres, fala de mulheres que quer ser grafiteira, chama de “Maria Latina,” mulher no hip-hop “Maria Microfone,” cada um, eles são apelidos para as mulheres, então acha que não é capaz, e faz porque sempre tem que ter um homem, ou tá fazendo porque acha que gosta de alguém, ou quer pegar alguém, então a mulher é muito desvalorizada, muito desrespeitada por ser mulher em si entendeu? Então para mim essa é a principal dificuldade que nós temos no meio do hip-hop: apelidadas, esculhambadas, acham que somos incapazes, é copiar, é querer fazer uma coisa que a gente não quer, que isso é para homem, e isso não é para mulher, como antigamente, sabe inventa onda, e hoje a gente sabe que lugar de mulher também é no hip-hop, lugar de mulher também é no grafite, é lugar de mulher é lugar de mulher, então para mim é isso*

25 T.N. *Maria Gasolina* may be literally translated as *Maria Gasoline* and *Maria Chuteira* as *Maria Football Boots*.

*Salvador grafita*²⁶ (Salvador does graffiti) for five years, which is linked to the mayor's office of Salvador. She is dedicated to developing female images—personalized dolls—in her graffiti and has already unveiled her works in other countries such as Italy, in addition to registrations in European magazines specialized in the area. In the midst of this long resume that was constructed over the years, the interest here is in her experience particularly when she entered into the space of graffiti as a graffiti artist in Salvador.

MÔNICA: *Of course, I felt a lot of prejudice.*

RESEARCHER: *From the graffiti artists themselves?*

MÔNICA: *From graffiti artists, my partner, a lot of prejudice in saying that my work did not qualify me in graffiti. I've already been in situations where I had to paint on terrible walls. You just can't get anything done on a wall like that. I was given a little corner of a wall with a piece of cement plaster, you know? You need to see that immense garden from an outer view, that beautiful piece of art. Instead of being encouraging and uplifting, no, they just set that person up to paint and that's all. To be honest, if they had it their way I wouldn't even paint 'cause I am a woman, 'cause they think the space is only theirs, you know what I mean'? They think that only they have to paint, only they have to do it, and they are the only ones capable of doing it. Only they create the best art, you know? They don't think that we as women are capable. So up until today I've been trying to show that whoever likes graffiti is capable of having their space, where they can paint and we don't need them, do you understand? Yeah I've suffered a lot of prejudice.²⁷*

Mônica recalls something she went through together with her husband, who is also a graffiti artist with whom she has two children. This experience shows how male graffiti artists behave in relation to female graffiti artists. In her account, we can observe how some of the male artists treated her in an opportunity for collective graffiti work:

26 The *Salvador grafita* (Salvador does graffiti) project, proposed and established through discussion among sectors of The Bahian Hip-hop Movement and the mayor's office of Salvador, is managed by the *Secretaria Municipal de Educação e Cultura* (municipal department of education and culture - *Secult*). It consists of producing graffiti artists that operate in graffiti workshops in public schools, in addition to using the art form to intervene in urban aesthetics.

27 T.N.: *Claro, senti, senti muito preconceito. / Dos próprios grafiteiros? / Grafiteiro, companheiro, muito preconceito de dizer que meu trabalho não me qualificava no grafite, já fui colocada para pintar um muro pimenta, você não consegue pintar; me dá um cantinho de muro, pequenininho, com uma parte de reboco sabe, você precisa ver aquele imenso jardim visto de fora, aquela coisa linda, em vez de incentivar, não, coloca aquela pessoa para pintar, mas se pudesse nem pintava no muro, assim como mulher, porque eles acham que o espaço é só deles entendeu, acham que só ele que tem que pintar, que só eles tem que fazer, e só ele que são capazes, e só eles que fazem as coisas mais bonitas, sabe? Acham que nós mulheres não somos capazes, então até hoje venho tentando mostrar que quem gosta é capaz de ter o seu espaço, sem precisar deles e fazer entendeu? Sofri muito preconceito, sim.*

A little bit ago my husband went to do some graffiti work. He was invited to take part in a job that was gonna be a really big wall. They hit him up, then he hit up some other guys. So I went up and asked him: "Why you didn't hit me up for the job? Why couldn't I participate?" "Eh, I don't know, they said the wall was already settled." That's not true, it's discrimination, it's discrimination. You know I paint too, that I'm at the crib, that I paint too. Whenever something's in the mix I hit you up. To me that's discrimination, you heard? I think that it's because graffiti is more for men and that's all there is to it, you know what I mean? But if I paint a wall, and everyone else is able to take part in it, then fine. The wall could be small, even if there's only enough space for each person to paint one small letter, or an eye, everyone's able to get in on it. There's a bit of discrimination and I don't like that, but I have to fight. I'm always fighting to break that down.²⁸

Monica is then asked about what it is like to be in graffiti *vis-a-vis* her experiences with different aspects in hip-hop. Reaffirming the extremely modest number of women in graffiti and having taken a poll on her social media page (Orkut²⁹) with the so-called "Who said that graffiti is not a woman's thing?", she responds with the following:

Being a female graffiti artist is about knowing that a woman's place is not just in the kitchen, that it's not just with pots and pans and washing the dishes. It's not just about taking care of the kids. A woman's place is also in graffiti, you understand? It's in graffiti, it's in painting, and being a woman is above everything. It's about existing, doing things, showing up and elbowing your way in.³⁰

Mônica's case points to a search for transformation in gender conventions surrounding the work of female graffiti artists. However, she reports that she has met with a lot of resistance in organizing these women. She

28 T.N.: *Tem pouco tempo que meu marido foi para um grafite, foi convidado para um grafite, que ia ser um muro imenso. Chamaram ele, que chamou uns meninos, e aí eu perguntei pro meu marido: "Por que não me chamou. Por que eu não pude participar?" "Ah, eu não sei, porque disse que o muro já tava certo." Isso não existe, é discriminação pô, é discriminação, sabe que eu também pinto, que eu tô dentro de casa, que eu também pinto, e sempre quando rola alguma coisa eu te chamo, para mim isso é discriminação entendeu? Eu acho assim, porque o grafite é mais para homem e pronto, entendeu? Mas se eu fizer o muro, e dá para todo mundo, pronto, o muro é pequeno, mesmo que dê para cada um colocar uma letrinha, um olho, mas dá para todo mundo fazer, tem um pouco de discriminação e essa parte eu não gosto, mas eu vou ter que lutar, eu estou sempre lutando para quebrar isso.*

29 T.N.: Orkut is an extinct Google-affiliated social network (2004-2014). Most of its users were from Brazil and India.

30 T.N.: *É saber que lugar de mulher não é só na cozinha, não é só na panela, não lavando, não é cuidando de criança, que o lugar de mulher é também no meio do grafite, entendeu? Lugar de mulher também é no grafite, lugar de mulher também é pintando, e ser mulher é além de tudo é ser, é fazer, é chegar lá e meter a mão.*

unveils her own crew's experience, which is composed of two other female graffiti artists from different states. They remain in contact via the internet and eventually meet in person, but each member represents the crew in her respective city and state, as well as in events and travel opportunities. Mônica still reports that she is not able to mobilize female graffiti artists for combined projects in Salvador, because, besides the fact that these women are few in numbers, they have expressed no real desire to collective graffiti works. She also cites names of some female graffiti artists who have recognized works in the area, such as Rebeca, Kátia, and Lica—all of with whom she affirms having painted very little.³¹

One of the opportunities in which there was a project of collective graffiti work among women, featuring male graffiti artists as well, occurred at the *III Encontro de Grafiteiras* (third meeting of female graffiti artists) (FREIRE, 2010) in Salvador, 2008. This event especially marked the second generation of female hip hoppers in Salvador, for differentiating themselves from the characteristics present in the first generation.

This encounter was of international scope, since, beyond simply bringing together graffiti representatives from Bahia and other states, it also featured female graffiti artists from other countries in South America. The event was organized through virtual communication on the internet, which, in fact, made holding such an event of this dimension possible. The objective was a give-and-take experience among women in the area of graffiti through creating virtual action networks.

The event marked the outset of new hip-hop sectors with new frameworks and claims that were distinct from the events organized by female hip hoppers of the first generation in Bahia. The first generation was active in previous years, and beyond their intrinsic contact and engagement in other social movements (especially Black and feminist ones), they delineated a deep connection among demands tied to issues of gender, race, class, and the very form of activist identity in hip-hop. The event in question assumed its greatest bond among young women, without presenting strong tensions in regards to class and positions of feminist affirmation.

31 Some female graffiti artists assume the name Sista—a reference that was adapted through hip-hop— together with the first letter of their actual names (e.g., Sista K for Kátia). It is worth noting here that Sista K, together with other female graffiti artists in Salvador, was one of those responsible for organizing the *III Encontro de Grafiteiras* (third meeting of female graffiti artists) in 2008 and the *Marcha das Vadias* (Slut Walk, a worldwide feminist protest targeting silent complicity of sexual violence against women), which took place in Salvador on July 02, 2011.

Perhaps the run-down of this state of affairs can make allowance for comprehending the context of organizing female graffiti artists. Such would be the case because, according to Mônica, resistance is met in bringing women together in this art form. Her account is basically a rant session in which she identifies a possible rationale for the current situation: the lack of unity among women, with principal interest in intimate relationships —both sexual and affectionate— with male graffiti artists:

A lot of what I see today are women for whom a male graffiti artist is a trophy. They don't come together. I think there's a lot of that going on, a lack of coming together, of showing' up. There are female graffiti artists on my Orkut, but none of them even say "Hey girl what's going' on? You've been painting a lot these days?" They don't even answer. That's alright, there is no really need for all that. I'm a female graffiti artist, and so are they. I think that out of politeness I should open my mouth and say hello. Sometimes I'll hit them up to go paint and some of them don't go. I'm not sure if it's because somebody got beef with my husband, my crew, or with some of my people. I get real worked up about that, it seems like they don't wanna paint. Why when the guys wanna paint, they are able to get together for it? And the girls can't do the same? I've been in graffiti for five years now, and if I painted here with any women from my city, it's been extremely rare. I do everything I can to make sure we paint, 'cause we get to link up, we have to put an end to this thing. The crew's the crew, right? Graffiti's graffiti. Let's link up, let's go paint.³²

Mônica's rationale behind the resistance to organize or even behind specific initiatives among female graffiti artists, the 'trophy male graffiti artist', reproduces tacit gender norms that there is indeed a necessity for the male to authorize and legitimize the female's appropriation of features native to the universe of the former. In this ambivalent process of reinforcing conventions and transgressing norms, female graffiti artists challenge these very conventions by appropriating attributes and elements of the masculine universe.

32 T.N.: Muito o que eu vejo hoje são mulheres para quem grafiteiro é troféu, elas não procuram se unir, eu acho também muita falta de união, de chegar. Tem grafiteira que tá no meu Orkut, mas sequer ela fala "Oi, tudo bem, tá pintando, tá pintando muito por aí?" Tudo bem, não tem necessidade disso, eu sou grafiteira, ela também é, eu acho que é por educação que eu tenho que falar dar um oi para pessoa. Às vezes eu chamo para pintar, tem gente que não vai, eu não sei que é porque tem gente que tem intriga com meu marido, intriga com minha crew, ou um pessoal meu, eu fico besta, muita má vontade para pintar, porque os meninos querem, conseguem se reunir para pintar? As meninas não podem fazer isso? Eu tenho cinco anos de grafite, e se eu pintei com as meninas de Salvador aqui foi pouco, pouquíssimo, e faço a maior questão da gente pintar, porque a gente tem que se unir, a gente tem que acabar com isso, o crew, crew, beleza, grafite é grafite, vamos se juntar, vamos pintar.

FEMINIST HIP-HOP?

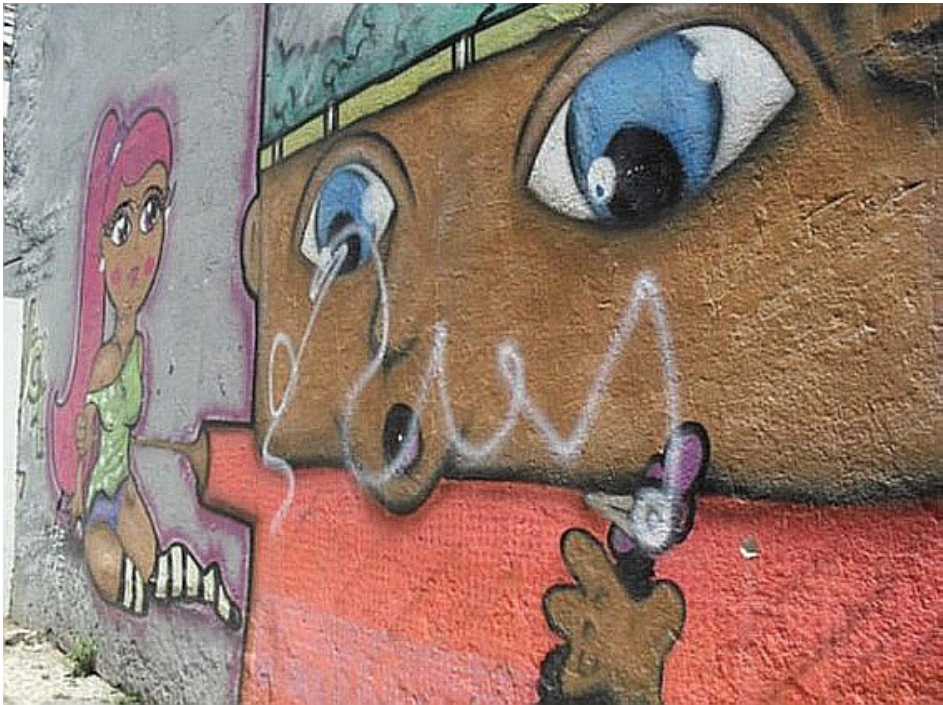
What is of interest here is returning to how this ambivalent and challenging relationship appears in the female graffiti artist's artistic output. Mônica's graffiti, on display on Carlos Gomes Avenue in center city, translates this concern of hers with respect to the world of graffiti. Her work has been the target of an array of critiques from many sectors in The Movement based off of how she represents women in graffiti under conditions of minimalism and subjugation, as is apparent in the images.

Figure 02 - Graffiti of Mônica Reis on Carlos Gomes Avenue - Center city



Source: Provided by the author (2010)

Figures 03 and 04 - Graffiti details of Mônica Reis on Carlos Gomes Avenue - Center city



Source: Provided by the author (2010)

Mônica's work displays a little girl seated on the ground, trapped in the hand of a big boy greater than her in both size and force. In the boy's other hand, designed by a male graffiti artist —there are two signatures on the wall, which seems to have been a paired project completed by a male artist and a female artist—, is a bird that is also trapped. This depiction transmits and reinforces the idea of force and fragility of the designs' dimensions.

The next section will present how gender conventions of the masculine and feminine are expressed in breakdancing.

Break-dancing class with a woman? An account from the only b-girl in the community

Breakdancing emerged as one of hip-hop's first languages. Also known as street dance, this art form is expressed in an array of styles, namely

popping and breaking. Breaking is responsible for the movement's body language, bringing steps and gestures taken in a connotation of irreverence and protest, as in the other elements of hip-hop.

Even though breakdancing is the dance side of hip-hop, it is not executed by rappers, graffiti artists, or even by DJs. Those who practice breakdancing are known as b-boys and b-girls, with the letter 'b' serving as an abbreviation for break. According to those involved in The Movement, break symbolizes soldiers' broken and mutilated bodies in protest against the war in Vietnam³³ (Souza, 1998). Protests were furthermore directed at the status of marginalization and negligence experience by the Black and immigrant populations in the United States, especially in relation to health and housing.

In order to execute moves in this dance, b-girls and b-boys need a considerable amount of physical strength, ability, and courage to follow through with their steps. This was especially true because these steps combine different dances and martial arts, and are composed of leaps on diverse levels, choreographies, and improvisation. An example would be the windmill and circular motions of capoeira, which can be recognized in breakdancing's adaptation in Brazil³⁴ and in Bahia. Such can be explained by the fact that while breakdancing is comprised of a series of steps and motions, it also allows for inclusion of the local culture, taking after capoeira, Afro beat, and even samba.

Breakdancing shows can be found in public spaces such as in city plazas and also in front of stages at rap concerts and turn tabling in Black dances. The young people in the city typically acknowledge these occurrences as break-dancing circles. They pull pedestrians off the street who then applaud like fans to the sequences of individual and even collective exhibitions, performed to the contagious vibrations of extremely danceable rap beats and diverse mixes.

For the majority of b-boys, the greater the degree of difficulty and daring in executing a move, the greater the expectations of physical effort that would be required. Furthermore, the greater the dancer's interpretation and interaction with the public, the greater the crowd's reaction would

33 In accounts given by soldiers about the war in Vietnam, young Black Men were placed on the front lines of battle against the Vietnamese.

34 The aspect of engaging capoeira with breakdancing was also found in research on hip-hop in Florianópolis (SOUZA, 1998), which points out inclusion or even dialogue between breakdancing's classical steps and an aspect of Brazilian culture, in this case capoeira, which brings together dancing and fighting in its composition.

be. Breakdancing involves body work that is practically or very near to an athletic regiment. Such is what would take place in the break-dancing circles that occurred regularly on Tuesdays in Pelourinho.³⁵

For the sake of gaining familiarity with experiences containing symbolic features examined in gender conventions within the break-dancing arena, specific events were attended and interviews were conducted with b-girls who are developing their art form in The Hip-hop Movement. Yet, if a comparison is to be made between the number of b-boys and b-girls, one will quickly find that b-boys outweigh the representation of breakdancers. Once again, this scenario brought me back to Fernanda Noronha's (2007) article *Onde estão as b-girls?* (where are the b-girls?), in which she brings forth a shift in course in her research *vis-a-vis* the dearth of female representations in this element of hip-hop. Such was not the case for b-girls in Salvador. Despite their lower numbers, they prove to dominate the styles of breakdancing by executing exercises of immense difficulty, such as juggling and contortions. They show up and show out not only in breakdancing circles in Pelourinho—where they train together with b-boys—, but are also incorporated in street-dance groups. In addition, they compete in championships and head educational activities such as break-dancing classes and sessions for the youth (i.e., the aforementioned b-girls breakdancing class).

Figure 05 - A session from the b-girls break-dancing class (CEAO, 2008)
Source: Provided by the author

Priscila Nayala's experience as a b-girl and instructor of street dance—through conducting break-dancing sessions in her community—affords us some insight to glean the gender conventions and production of inequalities in hip-hop from the standpoint of breakdancing. The main hindrance blocking her initiatives was the notion that hip-hop was not a girl's thing, and that the people with whom she associates herself (friends and family) would not understand her engagement in The Movement:

PRISCILA: *Especially because of prejudice, a lot of women think breakdancing and hip-hop is for guys and not for girls. That thought still exists, and prejudice still exists and I wrestle with it a lot, even at home. My mom who should be lifting me*

35 Pelourinho Historic Center is located in the upper part of Salvador, a point that is well frequented by the population of Salvador and tourists alike.

up, she's the first one to open up her mouth. [...] You know, she doesn't talk about it anymore. I mean, sometimes she'll start complaining and say: "Ugh Priscila look at you getting all tone and husky, you look ridiculous." She really weighs me down, you know what I mean? But it's not because [...] it's a mom thing, they wanna protect their kids. That's what it is.

RESEARCHER: *How old were you?*

PRISCILA: *I was about 16 years old. So I went and did it, right, I instructed the class... I mean I was going on 16, I was 15 about to turn 16. So I went and started instructing the classes. My mom got home and I would have to lie to her, 'cause I knew she would not accept it. I lied to my mom. I said I was taking an IT class, which I never took. I was teaching breakdancing to those kids.*³⁶

With a daily routine of physical exercise, the most immediate physical result is muscular strengthening, and, consequently, the toppling of a model of femininity involving defined gender conventions for females: fragility (in the sense of delicate) and weakness (as in little strength). This model includes aspects such as submission and invisibility. The b-girls' bodily musculature and contour—one of the visible aspects due to their routine of physical exercise, exhibited in their choreographies—visibly transforms this model of femininity.

Prejudice on the part of men toward women who wish to be incorporated in The Movement has also gained traction within the home place through family members when the idea surges that hip-hop's spaces, such as breakdancing, would not be for women. Priscila shares more of her experience in practicing street dance:

Me being a woman and talking about my relationship with the guys in hip-hop, even more so around the way where I live, sometimes it's a little, eh, it's a bit touchy because you know how guys in hip-hop act. They're not about seeing females in breakdancing. And then when we show them up on the scene they don't like it. They think we're trying to clown them, that we're getting too curious and they're better. They are the pretty boys

36 T.N.: *Muitas, principalmente do preconceito, que acham que a dança de break, acham que o hip-hop é pra menino e não pra menina, ainda existe isso, ainda existe este preconceito e eu souro bastante com isso, inclusive dentro de casa. A minha mãe que deveria me apoiar é a primeira, minha mãe é a primeira a falar. [...] Sabe, ela não conversa mais sobre isso, não, aliás, quando, às vezes ela reclama, ela fala assim: "ah, Priscila, ô como você está ficando toda musculosa, você está ridícula, você está quadrada," ela me bota pra baixo mesmo, entendeu, assim, mas, não porque [...] é coisa de mãe, quer proteger, é, assim mesmo [...] / Você tinha quantos anos? / Tava com... tava com dezesseis, dezesseis anos. Ai... eu fui, né, dá aula... quer dizer eu ia fazer dezesseis, eu tava com quinze ia fazer dezesseis, aí fui comecei a dar aula, chegou em casa, eu peguei menti pra minha mãe, porque eu sabia que ela não aceitava, menti pra ela, disse que eu estava fazendo um curso de informática, eu nunca fiz esse curso de informática, eu estava dando aula pra esses meninos.*

*on the block, 'cause when they get down the women go ape, so they really feel themselves; you know? Then when we go up there and throw down our moves, they think it's whack, right? Every now and again I would go out with one of them, but like it was hard to find one who would say, "Hey, you get down heavy, come and dance with me. Join my group". 'Cause most are told to get the stepping. Girl has to be out, don't even think about it, you heard? That's normally how it is.*³⁷

Once again, in Priscila's account we observe the presence of this idea of women invading an exclusively male space. It is an idea that recognizes their presence as transgressing gender conventions in hip-hop, challenging the notion that breakdancing is not a space for women. Among the b-girls who have distinguished themselves the most in The Hip-hop Movement in Salvador in recent years are Negramone, Josy, and Tina. Tina is responsible for the break-dancing circles in Pelourinho, and, together with her boyfriend, b-boy Ananias, produces the fashion label 'Hip-hop'.

Another distinguishing aspect in what the hip hoppers have to share, even in breakdancing, has to do with references to other women in hip-hop and recognizing their own work as references for other women.

PRISCILA: Uh-huh (*affirmative*). *Especialmente onde eu vivo, não tem nenhuma b-girl. Eu sou a única aqui em São Cristóvão, então eu acho que eu sou importante para a cultura não morrer e assim as outras girls podem olhar pra mim e se tornar b-girls também. 'Cause eu acho que... desde que eu sou a única aqui lutando, eu estou lutando, certo? Só porque eu sou a única. Então se outras girls me virem lá fora na luta, elas podem olhar pra mim como um modelo e não desistir. Elas vão continuar perseguindo o objetivo só porque alguém tem algo a dizer. Eu acho que na vida a gente enfrenta muitas barreiras, muitos testes, e a gente tem que superar. A gente tem que superar essas barreiras e essas barreiras. [...] Como agora a Fabiana veio de Brasília. Ela é uma b-girl, e veio aqui com grandes expectativas pra gente, você sabe? Eu fiquei um pouco triste, mas depois eu voltei. Ela realmente desce! Eu quero ser como ela. Eu quero dançar assim como ela, ou, quem sabe, melhor do que ela, você sabe o que eu estou dizendo? Em São Cristóvão eu não tenho muitas pessoas influentes por aqui, 'cause elas não estão realmente na mix. Eu quero, honestamente, elas estão um pouco na mix, mas elas não valorizam. Nem todo mundo valoriza. A maioria das pessoas aqui valoriza o pagode,*

37 T.N.: Eu sendo mulher e falando da minha relação com os rapazes do hip-hop, ainda mais na localidade onde eu moro, às vezes, é um pouco assim, de transar, porque os meninos do hip-hop, você sabe como é, não gosta de ver menina nenhuma no break. Ainda assim, quando a gente dança melhor que eles, eles já não gostam, acham que a gente tá tirando onda, acham que a gente fica querendo saber demais e eles são melhores, os gostosões da parada, porque eles dançam, as meninas gritam, então, eles se sentem mesmo, né. Aí, quando a gente vai dançar, eles acham ruim, né? Então, de vez em quando eu encontrava um, era difícil, eu encontrar um que falasse, assim 'não, você dança legal, dance aqui comigo, venha, entre em meu grupo', porque a maioria é sai daqui, menina sai, nem venha, entendeu? Geralmente, é assim.

arrocha,³⁸ things like that you know? Not breakdancing. So I think that just weighs me down, you understand? When I'm dancing or doing something in general no one takes it seriously, they joke about it. They say that it is not for me, that I should fall in line, stuff like that. Even my own mom complains about it a lot.³⁹

The b-girls break-dancing class had the opportunity to receive b-girl Fabi Girl from Brasília. Known for participating in international street-dance championships and a break-dancing group strictly comprised of women in the nation's capital, Fabi Girl shared her experiences with the fresh, young b-girls. She brought forth possibilities for projects and initiatives tied to the art form of dance as a professional alternative.

To this end, as a backing for pondering the ways in which the art forms of hip-hop are used, one of the recurring questions raised on the part of The Movement was the very concern with studies in hip-hop. This relation is common around texts, film indications, and reading material on the topic.

PRISCILA: It's a contact point that really lifts you up, because other girls will see it, and they'll realize they can't do it. So it would mean everything, for other girls it would mean everything. Sometimes they feel alone, even me in São Cristóvão, I'd feel so lonely sometimes. I'd be wondering, "Damn, Robson... Robson's dipping bruh. David too. Damn guys, don't just peace out on me like that, 'cause without you all here I feel lonely." I would mess around with them. Damn Robinho, stop by more often homeboy. Talk to me about the history of hip-hop. He even left a book for me to read. I would tell him that whatever he got to bring it here. Don't just be out like that, take a seat. Talk to me. I was pressed to find the hip-hop peeps for me to feel good. 'Cause when I was alone I was discriminated against a lot, always. And being that I got depression, it's easy for me to have a breakdown, to cry, you feel

38 T.N.: Bahian rhythms (*pagode* may be considered less regional than *arrocha* because *pagode* has reached musicians from a national level).

39 T.N.: *Humhum [afirmativo]. É realmente lá, onde eu moro, como não existe nenhuma B-girl e eu sou, assim a única lá em São Cristóvão, então eu acho que realmente eu sou importante pra que não deixe essa cultura morrer e pra que, também outras meninas possam se espelhar em mim, e tentarem ser B-girls também. Porque eu acho que... como eu sou a única e tô lutando, tô sofrendo muito, né? Pelo fato de ser a única, então se as meninas me verem lá, lutando, elas podem se espelhar em mim, e nunca desistir, nunca desistir de correr atrás, só pelo fato de que tem alguém criticando. Eu acho que na vida a gente tem vários degraus, vários testes e a gente tem que subir estes degraus, tem que pular essas barreiras, subir essas paredes. [...] Quando, tipo isso aí, agora veio Fabiana, de Brasília, a B-girl e deu uma expectativa enorme pra gente, entendeu, eu tava meio pra baixo, já fiquei mais pra cima. Pôxa, velho, ela dança pra caramba! Quero ficar, assim exatamente como ela, quero dançar completamente como ela ou quem sabe, melhor que ela, entendeu? Muito bem. Lá em São Cristóvão não tenho muitas influências, não. Porque a galera lá não tem muito contato, assim, quer dizer na verdade, contato até tem, só que eles não dão valor. Nem todo mundo dá valor. A maioria lá, na rua onde eu moro, assim, a galera dá valor a pagode, arrocha, essas coisas, assim e não a dança do break. Então, eu acho que isso, aí, que me bota pra baixo, entendeu? Quando tô dançando, (fazendo alguma coisa) e a galera não leva a sério, dá risada, vai falar que isso não é pra mim, que eu deveria me comportar, coisa e tal, além do mais, até minha mãe, mesmo, ela reclama muito.*

*what know? I feel lonely, bruh. So I would talk straight to Robinho: "Bruh, Robinho don't dip on me. Stay here and talk to me", stuff like that. I'd stop by David's, and we'd talk about hip-hop. We'd talk about Munegrade, about the Rede Aiyê, and I always wanted to meet the group. "Tell me about the group man, how's all that go down and such", you know? So, you know, keeping busy I finally had the chance to meet them. I met the folks in Munegrade and Rede Aiyê and I loved it. I think that's very important for the girls to see and take as a framework and be uplifted.*⁴⁰

Priscila's case is quite illustrative in thinking about the gender conventions surrounding femininity and masculinity in society, as well as in the scope of The Hip-hop Movement on the basis of its break-dancing classes. She lives in the community of São Cristóvão, an inner-city neighborhood situated on the city limits between Salvador and Lauro de Freitas. Her community has a large population, is located quite far from the city center, and is known for high levels of social problems. This is where the break-dancing classes take place. Priscila talks about her experience with the *Escola Aberta* (open school) project⁴¹, which was developed in the neighborhood's public school as an extracurricular activity. It is open to the public, and she was the only b-girl in the community as well as the break-dancing instructor in this initiative.

RESEARCHER: *Who were the participants?*

PRISCILA: *There was a 10-year-old, a 16-year-old, 17 to 20 years old. There was even an older gentleman, he was 50 years old.*

RESEARCHER: *What was the sex of the participants?*

40 T.N.: *É um contato assim, que, pôxa, fortalece bastante, porque outras meninas vão ver isso, e elas vão perceber que elas não conseguem. Então vai ser tudo, pra outras meninas vai ser tudo. Que às vezes elas se sentem só, eu lá em São Cristóvão, eu me sentia muito só, às vezes. Eu ficava perguntando -- Pôxa, Robson... -- Robson sumia, velho. David sumia, -- Pô gente, não se afaste de mim, não. Porque sem vocês aqui eu me sinto só -- Ficava brincando com ele -- pô, Robinho, passe mais lá em casa, nego. Converse comigo sobre a história do hip-hop. Até um livro de hip-hop que ele deixou para mim ler, coisas. Eu falava -- toda informação que tiver traga para mim, pô. Não suma, não, sente aqui, converse comigo, eu ficava caçando a galera do hip-hop, pra mim me sentir bem. Porque quando eu tava sozinha, era bastante discriminada, e eu, sempre, e eu como tenho depressão, então é fácil d'eu entrar em uma crise, eu chorar, entendeu? Eu me sinto só, pô. Então eu ficava falando direto com Robinho -- Pô, Robinho não suma, não, fica aí, conversa comigo, e coisa e tal. Passava direto na casa de David, a gente conversava sobre hip-hop. A gente falava de Munegrade, falava da Rede Aiyê, e eu sempre querendo conhecer a banda -- Rapaz, me fale dessa banda, rapaz, como é que é isso e coisa e tal -- entendeu? Aí, pôxa, na correria, aí, até que finalmente, eu conheci a galera do Munegrade, conheci esse grupo aí, a galera da Rede Aiyê, adorei. Eu acho muito importante mesmo pra que as meninas possam ver e tomar isso como base e ficar fortalecida.*

41 Developed in public schools in many states in Brazil, from coordination between the Ministry of Education, *Secretaria da Educação do Estado da Bahia* (secretariat of education of the state of Bahia - SEC), and UNESCO. The project consisted of extracurricular activities outside of normal school hours, which was open to the community. Link available at: <http://www.educacao.escolas.ba.gov.br/node/361>.

PRISCILA: *Male and female. At the beginning there were a lot of guys, and then later on more girls started coming, so it mellowed out to a good proportion of guys to girls. As time went on the guys disappeared, so there were more girls than guys. Now the project's concluded, so we started up again, you know? It went from 16 to 17. Now more guys came than girls. So this year I decided to do some advertising in the schools, even in the schools around São Cristóvão. I started to spread the word: "Hey, there'll be a free b-boy and b-girl class at the Parque de São Cristóvão School". So, I put the word out there, going from school to school in the mornings and afternoons, from classroom to classroom communicating that and demonstrating what breakdancing is. I talked about what hip-hop is, how many elements make it up, all of that to get people interested. I passed around a sign-up sheet, [...] "all who are interested sign here", and they did... so today I'm gonna meet up with all of them from the schools [...] later on, in a little bit I'll be at the São Cristóvão School teaching those folks. So, they got the project there and I'm out here doing my thing alone.⁴²*

Priscila goes on to unmask how her students reacted to their first exposure in the class, and makes observations on the hip-hop lifestyle:

It's something I find interesting. Look, the guys in the beginning did not take any of it, right? When they heard that there'd be a break-dancing class, they all were like: "Yeah, that's cool, let's go check it out". And then when they show up: "Damn, the teacher is a girl?" Real talk everyone wanted to leave at that point, and then they were like: "Hey, hold up a minute, let's go see what this is about, ok? Let's see how it's gonna be". So they went. As time went on they started feeling it more and more, realizing that nonsense about being a man or a woman was completely irrelevant, you understand? They went, liked it, and kept on going. In the beginning it was just guys. Later on, a student's mom came. She looked at what was going on and was like: "Aw hell no, no way I'll let my daughter be here in the mix with these thugs and delinquents in the classroom, tricked out with all these earrings, chains, and baggy clothes. Naw. I won't let my daughter stick around here". That's what she said, for real. In that moment I got a bit scared. I looked over and didn't say anything, right? I just kept to myself. Then, I went over and said something to the others, you know? The secretary was over there

42 T.N.: *Quem é esse público? / Tinha criança de dez anos, tinha adolescente de dezessete, dezesseis até vinte anos, tinha até senhor de idade, lá, de cinquenta anos, tinha [...]; / E qual o sexo? / Homens e mulheres. De começo tinha bastante homem, depois começaram a vir as meninas e aí ficou uma concentração legal de meninos e meninas. Com o passar do tempo os meninos foram sumindo ficou mais meninas que meninos, aí agora o projeto encerrou, aí voltou de novo, entendeu? Mudou de dezesseis pra dezessete, agora entrou mais meninos que meninas. Então esse ano eu resolvi fazer divulgação nas escolas, até nas escolas de São Cristóvão comecei a divulgar: "Gente tá tendo um curso de graça de formação de B-boy e B-girl na Escola Parque de São Cristóvão," e aí, chamei, fui de escola em escola pelas manhãs, pelas tardes, fui de sala em sala comunicando isso e ainda fazendo demonstração do que era o break, falando o que era o hip-hop, quantos elementos que compõe o hip-hop, tudo isso, pra galera se interessar, peguei uma lista passei, [...] interessado assinou... e, aí hoje que eu vou me encontrar com essa galera toda, aí, das escolas [...] mais tarde, daqui a pouco eu tô lá na Escola São Cristóvão pra dar aula pra esses meninos. Então, o projeto lá eu tô numa correria sozinha.*

*talking to the student's mom. After a little bit, she was able to convince the mom to let her daughter stay for the classes, 'cause that clearly wasn't what the mom wanted for her daughter.*⁴³

Priscila had already been working in the project for two years, and she already had female students in her dance classes. Both of these factors point to her work's effect and acknowledgement of opening a leisure and cultural space for the young people in her neighborhood. When asked about the differences in behavior between men and women in her break-dancing classes, she responds with the following:

Women and women... Check it out, I think that in hip-hop women with other women is one thing. It's something better, way cooler because they get together. They always get together, talk, give and take ideas, information, you know? They exchange activities. They're so many relationships. I think they help each other. That kind of behavior is amazing. In the school I see this up close and personal. When I say something or give some kind of assignment ("hey, go look up something up and stuff") the girls are the first ones on it. They get together and form their own groups. And then the guys are just completely lost, you know? I have to make the groups for them, I have to step in [...] So, generally whenever I put something out there, you know, the girls go after it the most, and they really pull themselves together, whereas the guys end up fighting with one another. "Nah, I won't do nothing with that guy. Nah man, with that fool over there?" But the girls are more like: "C'mon girl, come and do this with me", you know what I'm saying? They are more united than the guys.

It is interesting to note the conception of the b-girls' female unity in conjunction with the disunity pointed out by female graffiti artists. A hypothesis for this disparity of perceptions is due to the fact of a larger presence and timeline of women in practicing the elements being referred to here. The fact that b-girls have been facing gender conventions in breakdancing for a longer period of time could be what enables them to

43 T.N.: *É uma coisa que eu acho interessante. Veja bem, é, os meninos de começo, não aceitava muito isso, não, entendeu? Quando ouviu falar "tá tendo aula de break", aí os meninos "nossa, vamos lá, que massa", quando chegam lá, "ah, é uma mulher?" Pelo amor de Deus, todo mundo queria sair, aí, falaram assim: "não, péra, aí, péra aí, bóra ver, né?", "bóra ver como é isso aí", e aí foram. Passado um tempo eles foram gostando, vendo que não tinha nada a ver, negócio [...] de ser homem, de ser mulher, entendeu? Foram, gostaram e continuaram e de começo só tinha menino, chegou a mãe de uma aluna, lá, olhou assim, aí falou: "Que nada, vou botar minha filha aí, não. No meio desses marginais, tanto vagabundo na sala, cheio de brinco, de correntes, de roupa folgada. Não vou, não vou deixar minha, aí, não". Falou, bem assim. Eu fiquei assustada com a situação. Olhei, assim, é... também não falei nada, né? Fiquei na minha. Depois eu cheguei comentei com os meninos e coisa e tal. Aí, a secretária conversando com a mãe da menina, né? Passado um tempo, aí, sim, consegui deixar com que a mãe liberasse a menina pras aulas, porque ela não queria deixar a filha dela lá.*

bask in some victories, even while suffering the repercussions of sanctions originating from transgressions that they impose on hip-hop.

Still, it needs to be stressed that this conception of female unity imposes the relevance of its practice on the challenge that is most densely related to current models of femininity. By transforming their bodies, bestowing upon them senses and attributes commonly associated to the masculine, strength and aggressivity, b-girls are introducing new possibilities for the gender conventions that have already been normalized and naturalized in society. Such challenges and novelties can also give new meaning to standards of conjugality and conventions of sexuality. The analysis to be examined next presents data for reflection in this sense.

Activist sexual object - “A piece of meat in front of the lion”

In the activist element of The Hip-hop Movement, there is no need to latch onto a specific element. There is even the possibility of creating a new element. I present Vivian and Eliciana as representatives of the activist element of hip-hop in Salvador. Both of these women have a long trajectory in The Movement, yet neither one of them assumes the practice of any of the four classic elements of hip-hop.

In Vivian’s case, she was the playmaker behind many of The Movement’s activities in the city, and went on to represent the hip-hop of Salvador in meetings in other states. Even so, she never specialized in the most cherished art form among hip-hop’s four classic elements. Vivian is an admirer of art that mixes diverse beats that electrify Black dances. As for the work of female DJs, she is tied to the creation and exhibition of dance beats by first dealing with technological equipment —not exactly with musical instruments, but with sound equipment and other materials—, although there are DJs that work strictly with computers, archives, and music programs.

Even so, it is rare to see female DJs at events in Salvador, given that there are difficulties in acquiring a DJ kit with pickup, speakers, vinyl collections, etc. The rationale behind this situation is legitimized by its excessive monetary value in the market, even when referring to a second-hand equipment. This reality then distances the possibility for inner-city youth,

men, and women to have the means to afford such a kit⁴⁴ and become DJs. These criteria render the expansion of this art form unfeasible, resulting in the near inexistence of female DJs in Salvador.⁴⁵

On the basis of this context, hip-hop brings forth new configurations of activism and incubates new elements in its interaction between politics and culture. Such is Eliciana's case, who introduces a new element embedded in hip-hop in Salvador. She refers to herself as a *Vjeia*, the female version in Portuguese of the term VJ⁴⁶, which could have reference in *Djeias* and DJs. While a *Djeia* carries out his or her work with disks, generally with vinyl or pickup, a *Vjeia* works with film clips and creates images of The Movement with video cameras and photographic instruments. Noronha (2007, p. 189) explains this in the midst of

[...] the possibility of understanding the circuits and logic of rappers (and hip hoppers) in the city. They have made evident the idea the hip-hop was not something homogenous, but rather something constituted by young people who were presenting different rhetoric, artistic languages, and ways of organizing (our translation).⁴⁷

It is worth reiterating that the element of activism is indeed legitimized beyond the need of creating a new element, which is true in Vivian's case. She is present in The Movement's organizational endeavors both inside and out, and her name is attached to events, projects, and documents on behalf of The Movement—which is not to leave out that she is indeed recognized as a hip hopper. Eliciana elaborates on this point:

ELICIANA: *Only activism.*

RESEARCHER: *Only?*

44 In addition to the DJ kit with pickup (special disk players for samples), vinyl disks (the older and rarer the disk, the more expensive it would be), and cases for transportation, there is also the cost of transportation itself, whether it be through renting a pickup truck, paying a taxi, or even spotting a friend gas money for a ride. All of these factors distance many hip hoppers from investing in the development of this art form.

45 It is possible to find female DJs in Salvador, spinning in electronic and/or techno styles of music, which is not a part of the hip-hop culture.

46 A VJ is a music-video maker, a master of ceremonies that presents video clips about songs and artists. The term can also be used for a person who produces this same type of audiovisual material. However, such comprises no part of hip-hop's four elements.

47 T.N.: [...] *possibilidade de entender os circuitos e a lógica dos rappers (e hip hoppers) na cidade tornaram evidente a ideia de que o hip-hop não era algo homogêneo, mas constituído por jovens que apresentavam diferentes discursos linguagens artísticas e formas de organização.*

FEMINIST HIP-HOP?

ELICIANA: *Yeah, that's only that [chuckles].*

RESEARCHER: *May you please go in a little more on this element, speak a little more on it?*

ELICIANA: *I think that..., as the... as the old gatekeeper says, that hip-hop only has four elements, the way I see it, these four elements don't stand without activism. 'Cause most of the people I know, like Simone, Paula, everyone's a part of an element but they don't forget about activism. If we don't practice this element, where will hip-hop end up? It'll just end up... in dancing and music and that's it. There has to be the part of pursuit, of going after something, and that's where activism comes from. There are always people within hip-hop that just practice activism, folks that... that don't identify with the four elements, but they like the ideology and activism.⁴⁸*

Activism is responsible for constituting hip-hop as a social movement, as it surpasses the limits of a hip-hop culture which holds itself up on the production of its art forms. It is the element that permeates all others in The Movement. We can observe a case from Eliciana's activist experience that took place during the realization of one of her video projects, which was geared toward her activist work as a representative of The Hip-hop Movement. This case was called '*A carne da frente do leão*' (A piece of meat in front of the lion), for questioning sexuality and gender conventions and women's legitimacy as activists in hip-hop.

Eliciana liked rap and funk as a child, and during my fieldwork I caught her messing around with some rhymes and 'spitting' some good freestyle. As a street dancer at ten years of age, she even went on to dance in a funk group known as *Funk Cobra Girls*, in which she danced in one of the first Black dances in the city⁴⁹.

Throughout her engagement in the social or political element of hip-hop, she participated in many productions of The Movement's projects and events. Yet, her main work was in producing documentaries, among them the *III Encontro de Gênero e Hip-Hop* (third meeting on gender and hip-hop), *A saga da casas do Hip-hop* (the hip-hop house saga), and *Hip-Hop em sete vidas* (hip-hop in seven lives). Eliciana tells us more about this case:

48 T.N.: *Só a militância. / Só? / Hum, hum só. [risos] / Tu pode assim pensar um pouco esse elemento, falar um pouco sobre esse elemento? / Eu acho que..., por a... a velha guarda como diz, que o hip-hop tem quatro elementos, mas assim no meu ver que... esses quatro elementos não andam sem a militância, porque, assim a maioria das pessoas que eu conheço, como Simone, Paula, todo mundo faz parte de um elemento e não esquece a militância. E se não militar pra onde vai o hip-hop? Vai ficar só... na dança na música e mais nada. E tem que ter a parte do correr atrás, é aí de onde vem a militância. Sempre tem pessoas dentro do hip-hop que só faz a militância, que não se... que não se identifica com os quatro elementos, mas gosta da ideologia e da militância.*

49 An episode that will concern us in the next chapter.

I mean, for example, I'm producing this documentary. It's really hard for us women not to be seen as a sexual symbol. There's no way out it's just wild, in the workplace or wherever. In the hip-hop scene for example, in the process of producing the documentary, I'm out there talking to the guys, but I can't just have an activist-to-activist conversation. How's The Movement working out, such and such, we're doing this and that. People see you in the hip-hop scene like you are there for the men, you know what I'm saying? That's how they see you. Recently I had an incident with a famous figure, I was contacting him for an interview. He's not from here, but I knew him, and he knew me from some other events that I was involved in. He asked me if I would go on tour with him in Salvador. Then I asked him if that would be the condition for the interview that I needed, because that's what he understood, that's what he wanted. He wanted us to trade. I was conducting the interview that I wanted for the documentary while selling myself to him, although we'd talked a lot about The Movement, about activism and so on. Anyway, although he's an activist, after I asked him about it and he was like: "Naw, I don't want you to take it like that, my bad. I know you're a fighter. You're gonna do the interview!" During the day I spent with him, and I was in on the whole process, he wouldn't stop trying get at me. Anyhow, I did the interview [...] but I was a woman. That makes everything about activism, about professionals, about being a strong woman, about anything really to crash down and you're just a person who he's gonna get at, have sex and then leave. Anyway, it's really not about us trying day in and day out, it's about being a piece of meat in front of the lion and trying to dialogue with him at the same time that he wants to eat you. 'Cause he doesn't see you as nothing more than a piece of meat that he wants to eat. It's a fuckin' shit.⁵⁰

This sense of objectification and sexual availability of the female body as a woman who is "there for the men" is brought into question by

50 T.N.: Assim, eu, por exemplo, que estou produzindo esse documentário, assim, é muito difícil a gente não ser vista como símbolo sexual, a gente mulher, não tem jeito, é foda, lugar de trabalho, onde for. No meio do hip-hop, por exemplo, nesse processo de produzir o documentário, eu estou conversando com os caras, não dá pra eu ter uma conversa só de militante pra militante. Como é que tá o movimento aí, num sei que, a gente tá fazendo isso, fazendo aquilo. O cara vê você como, no meio do hip-hop como uma "uma mulher pros caras" sabe? Vê assim. E recentemente passei por uma situação com uma figura famosa, que eu tava entrando em contato pra entrevista; ele que não é daqui, eu já conhecia ele, ele já me conhecia de outros eventos de que eu participei e ele perguntou se eu ia fazer um Tour com ele em Salvador e eu perguntei pra ele se essa era a condição pra fazer a entrevista de que eu precisava. Porque era isso que ele tinha entendido, o que ele queria, que a gente fizesse uma troca. Eu fazia a entrevista que eu queria pra o documentário e me vendia pra ele, embora a gente tivesse falado tanto de movimento social, de militância e tal, enfim [...] embora fosse militante e eu, depois que eu fiz essa pergunta ele: "não, não quero que você entenda assim, me desculpe, me perdoe, eu reconheço como você é guerreira, num sei que, num sei que, num sei que, você vai fazer a entrevista!" E durante o dia que eu passei com ele, que eu acompanhei o processo todo, ele não parou de me cantar! Então, aconteceu a entrevista [...] mas eu era mulher e isso faz com que tudo que exista de militância, de pessoal profissional, de qualquer coisa, de mulher forte, caia pra ser simplesmente uma pessoa que ele vai cantar você, fazer sexo e pronto. Enfim, é a gente tentar todo dia não, é você ser a carne na frente do leão e tentar dialogar com ela ao mesmo tempo e o leão quer te comer, porque não enxerga você como nada além do que uma carne que ele quer comer. É foda.

female hip hoppers, who transgress this convention by entering into The Movement with objectives that are more directed at their own activism and professional training. Eliciana demonstrated in her experience that she cannot “*just have an activist-to-activist conversation*”. Such is confirmed in how the feminine is objectified, especially Black Women. These are significations of sexuality and gender conventions.

Upon considering a “*famous*” man, and, even at that, a “*tourist*” in Salvador, Eliciana’s activist representation took on the form of “*a piece of meat in front of the lion*”. Even this famous male hip hopper in question — who embodies the name of The Hip-hop Movement in the media claiming social transformation and combat against discrimination— reinforces gender conventions that give meaning to the gallant, powerful, slaying, and relentless model of masculinity. Such occurs even with a work contact, that is, an individual in the very space of activism in The Movement.

Eliciana’s activism, minimized to the element of a pleasure-filled exchange instead of information for and about the movement, lost importance to the male hip hopper who “*doesn’t see you as nothing more than a piece of meat that he wants to eat*”. By questioning her interviewee’s behavior, she contested the model of masculinity and femininity put in place by a logic of gender through reformulating the stance given to her activism.

In the face of these issues and others involving the activism of young women in The Hip-hop Movement, the provided accounts unveil motivations and opportunities for women to engage in the art forms and activism of The Movement. In each instance they dialogue with gender conventions in hip-hop. At times, these conventions are reinforced, and in other occasions they are reformulated in the midst of what the hip hoppers were experiencing.

As one may notice in the analysis of the situations presented here, the first step towards contesting gender conventions is found in the very presence of women. This concept can be understood through Anne Phillips’s (1995) key analysis, who addresses the distinction between the politics of ideas and the politics of presence. According to Phillips, there is a growing democratic demand for “*political presence*” on the part of groups who have been historically marginalized or excluded from political participation (women and Black People). With regards to the issues of political equality, Phillips contends:

[...] the separation between *who* and *what* is to be represented, and the subordination of the first to the second is very much up for question. The politics of ideas is being challenged by an alternative politics of presence (Phillips, 1995, p. 159).

The hip hoppers assume the clash to ensure women's engagement in The Movement. Such is what Dina affirms below:

*I think that's what all of us women are up against, you know? It's about occupying spaces. It's about showing the guys that those spaces that they say are ours, are really ours. And not because they said so, but because it was already ours to begin with. So our greatest difficulty is getting them to understand that the space was already established, the woman's space in hip-hop. 'Cause the guys have already been giving us crumbs, saying that we should do this and do that. We have to occupy those spaces. We have to discuss gender relations in those spaces. It's ours!*⁵¹

In that case, The Movement capitalizes on a myriad of ways to analyze gender conventions through its own languages. Grasping Dina's thoughts about the "crumbs" given by the guys, now would be an opportune time to reflect on the following question in hip-hop: Is it a space to contest gender conventions?

51 T.N.: *Eu acho que é o que todas as meninas enfrentam entendeu? É de você ocupar os espaços, é de mostrar para os caras que aqueles espaços que eles dizem que são nossos, é nosso, não é porque eles estão dizendo, é porque já era nosso, então a maior dificuldade fazer com que eles percebam que aquele espaço já era estabelecido, aquele espaço de mulher no Hip Hop, porque os meninos já vêm dando migalhas, faça isso, faça aquilo, nós temos que ocupar aqueles espaços, nós temos que discutir relação de gênero naquele espaço, é nosso!*



Hip-hop: a space to contest gender conventions?

This chapter deals with interpretations of hip-hop as a space to contest gender conventions. In *The Movement* —of both masculinist¹ and masculine² character—, the hip hoppers discover a loophole allowing for women and their political demands to be made known via forms of protest. Could hip-hop be a place to contest gender conventions? Could this movement indeed be an instrument capable of contesting established gender norms?

Given that gender is an analytic category which acts in the dimensions of the symbolic (culture definitions) and the political, as contended previously by Alinne Bonetti (2003), gender conventions dialogue with these two fields while orienting models of masculinity and femininity. As was stated before, these conventions are not linked to the definition of man and woman, but rather are configured in the format provided by the cultural repertoire which assigns values to individual and/or group behaviors.

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- 1 By masculinist, I understand three aspects: a majority comprised of men, a model with masculine reference, and a representation of asymmetry between the masculine and feminine (and not between men and women).
 - 2 By masculine, I understand attributes that are assigned significance, such as strength, aggressivity, astuteness, cleverness, and potency.

In seeking further understanding of this issue, I briefly reflect on the character of social contestation in hip-hop by attempting to grasp its concepts more generally before going on to analyze its capacity to contest gender conventions. It is worth taking note of the connotation given to hip-hop as a counterculture movement, that is, a movement contrary to the order of the current political culture. Sônia Alvarez, Evelina Dagnino, and Arturo Escobar (2003) elaborate on this matter by introducing the relationship between culture and politics that social movements have assumed due to the creation of cultural politics which confront hegemonic politics in society.

What justifies this affirmation, in the case of hip-hop, is The Movement's social, political, and historical context in its initial phase and the way in which it has currently been configured in different places under the character of social contestation. According to Wivian Weller (2000, p. 214), hip-hop is identified as a movement that emerges in the ghettos of New York in the 1970s:

[...] it expanded globally, becoming a fundamental reference principally for ethnic minorities in Europe³ and Black Youth, inner-city residents of the great metropolises in Latin America and Africa (our translation).⁴

Weller, who studies racial identification by comparing Turkish rappers in Germany and Black rappers in São Paulo, upholds that the identification of Turkish youth with hip-hop is connected to their identity as ethnic minorities. In the case of Brazil, Black Youth in São Paulo identifies with hip-hop as a result of racial segregation as Black individuals and social segregation as inhabitants of inner-city neighborhoods.

The characteristics of hip-hop's international expansion transforms discrimination experienced by certain social groups into something positive with respect to constructing racial and social identity. In Brazil discrimination becomes self-affirmation and identity valorization for inner-city Black Youth. Even with the youth sharing US American model of hip-hop, foreign

3 Weller cites groups that maintain this identification with hip-hop in Europe. Highlighted among these groups are children of Algerian immigrants and Afro-descendants in France, children of Turkish and Arab immigrants in Germany, Afro-descendants in Portugal and the United Kingdom, and children of Pakistani immigrants in the United Kingdom (Weller, 2000, p. 214).

4 T.N.: [...] *se expandiu mundialmente, tornando-se uma referência fundamental principalmente para as minorias étnicas na Europa e para jovens negros, residentes em bairros periféricos das grandes metrópoles da América Latina e África.*

and *gringo*,⁵ this ‘imported’ hip-hop is resignified and updated, combining local elements from each specific region.

The positive spin of discriminated identities has been formulated as one of the operation strategies of social movements, especially in identity movements such as The Black, Womanist, LGBTQ+, and Youth Movements among others. Evelina Dagnino (1994) defended this idea when she stressed earlier on that the democratic strategies developed by all movements act in ways dictated by the political and cultural dimensions and each movement is localized with regards to time, space, and social context.

With these brief considerations in mind to understand ‘contesting gender conventions in hip-hop’, this analysis focuses on the research subjects’ observations around three questions: How did these women come into contact with hip-hop? What sparked an interest inside of them to identify with The Movement? What is hip-hop for them and their definitions of being a female hip hopper?

The way in which contact transpires with the youth’s hip-hop, especially that of young female hip hoppers in Salvador, will be the target of interest in the next section.

The discovery of hip-hop

At 33 years of age, Dina was introduced to the sound of hip-hop upon listening to a song called *Um homem na estrada* (a man on the road) from the famous rap group of São Paulo *Racionais Mc*. What ultimately grabbed her attention was the message embedded in the lyrics, with a flow resting on top of a Black-music beat by Tim Maia (a Brazilian musician) while giving an account about the reality of a young man in his community in a *favela* surrounded by countless social issues.

In the voice of Mano Brown, the song was denouncing the trajectory of a man marked by crime, dangerous situations, difficult choices, and consequences of his *estrada* (road)⁶ —*Esse é o palco da história que por mim será contada... um homem na estrada* (This is the stage of a story to be told... a man on the road). Topics such as these are commonplace in rap lyrics that

5 *Gringo* is a derogatory expression that Brazilians use for foreign things, that which is imported or comes from outside of Brazil. It is a term used to critique the colonizing notion that prescribes that whatever comes from outside of Brazil is better than that which is native to Brazil —generally associated to European or ‘American’ origin, delineating a hierarchical relationship between the colonizer and the colonized.

6 *Estrada* with the connotation of life path.

men produce and they expose issues that afflict their daily lives, sharing the inner-city reality *vis-a-vis* the backdrop of criminality and the fight for survival against police brutality and other challenges that they face.

The cassette tape containing the group's recordings was purchased from a street vendor although Dina had already heard them before on the radio in a circle of young men on the street. In the mid-1990s in Salvador, this type of music was not a part of the style that would normally be played on the radio.

Paula, who already enjoyed rapping, also discovered hip-hop through rap on cassette tapes presented to her by a friend, which were initially the sounds of artist Gabriel, o Pensador. She would ask herself if that style was really rap, until she was introduced to MV Bill⁷ and his music.

Gabriel, o Pensador is a target of many critiques. The national hip-hop community calls into question his legitimacy as a rapper since he has no type of involvement in The Hip-hop Movement and sells his musical work to the cultural industry. His lyrics discuss topics such as urban violence, police brutality, drugs, racism, women, school, and friendships among others. MV Bill, however, is characterized by a direct link to The Movement (and also to the cultural industry) through his accounts given on experiences in his own community and neighborhood based on his class belonging and social reality. In his lyrics and shows, he spills forth detailed descriptions of situations that he deals with in his daily life, which are akin to other urban inner cities.

Another criterion for coming into contact with rap is the ability to gain access to it, which would not happen through commercial radio, but rather through contact with other people in an informal network that circulated rap. At the turn of the century, hip-hop was still not widely disseminated, nor even on radio stations' playlists. According to Carla's memory, also known as Kaia na Paz, she would listen to rap in school when it was brought by classmates on CD and cassette, not on the radio or on vinyl.

It is fascinating to note in these three hip hoppers' accounts that all of them came into contact with rap via cassette tapes on music devices

7 In hip-hop circles, sometimes different members would stress a distinction between the style of rap, questioning the recognition of the rapper's output in the face of his relationship with the media —cultural industry—, and, above all, with The Movement. Especially with that second item, according to informants in conversations and discussions in The Movement groups, a relationship with social movements is more explicit with regards to MV Bill with *Central Única das Favelas (CUFA)*, an initiative in which he participates.

that belonged to a friend. The songs were always from male-comprised groups or one male rapper. Despite the fact that they share issues of the reality faced by the Black and inner-city population, they would speak from their places as men, which carried masculinist language directed in its majority to other men.

These considerations justify the masculinist and masculine character that I stated above. Hip-hop bolsters this character, given that the contestations proclaimed by rap circulate around values and questions of interest that adhere to a model whose reference points are centered on the 'man' and attributes of masculinity, thus demonstrating and reinforcing established gender conventions. Yet, it was not exactly through rap that Carla came into contact with hip-hop; instead it was through one of hip-hop's first and oldest elements: graffiti. It was an expression unraveled on city walls with spray cans. It was not graffiti *per se*, but it would appear on the streets. As Carla notes:

Understanding hip-hop, I mean, for me, among the elements I already got; graffiti and rap. I've been seeing' those two elements on the street for a while. There's that, and when I was in high school I was in the mix with the guys that were getting' into 'pichação'.⁸ Some of those same guys went on to become graffiti artists later. I even tried my hand at it a little bit, but it was just 'pichação'. The sensation of takin' your spray can and tagging up a spot was great.⁹

According to Carla's account, the seduction of hip-hop's diverse art forms began to develop and be put on display in the city streets, resulting in young girls gaining consciousness of the hip-hop around them. Sounds, colors, movements, and styles all emerged from these artistic elements and went beyond city-street limits to gain entry in institutions¹⁰ who dealt

8 *Pichação* differs from *grafite*. It is seen as visual pollution and urban violence in relation to public property. While *pichação* is considered trash, *grafite* is considered art.

9 T.N.: *Perceber o hip-hop, assim, na minha volta já tenho... aí dentre os elementos; o grafite e o rap. Então esses dois elementos do hip-hop eu já tenho um tempo que eu percebo na rua! Na rua, e na minha época quando eu fazia ensino médio, eu tive muito contato com a galera que pichava. E essa galera, uma parte dela, virou grafiteiro e tal. Cheguei até a riscar no piche, coisa bem pouca. Mas era pichação também e era muito massa a sensação de pegar a sua latinha e riscar uma parede, é muito melhor.*

10 Such as *Fundação Cidade Mãe* (mother city foundation) and the *Centro de Referência Integral de Adolescentes* (center for adolescent integral reference - *CRIA*). Both of these institutions hosted workshops, classes, and art-education groups that used the languages of hip-hop in their work and didactic tasks. This was the case for at least three of the interviewees: Negramone, Vivian, and Eliciana. During the field-work phase, I was in contact with many young men and women who were a part of these projects and institutions.

exclusively with inner-city youth and used hip-hop's art forms to address education. In Carla's case, the art form of painting city walls was also introduced to her by men, and some of them went on to be graffiti artists, as she mentions. In this sense, some artists who were involved in *pichação* put themselves in line with graffiti later on, thus broadening their repertoire of artwork. Carla, in turn, also got involved in other elements of hip-hop such as rap and breakdancing when those opportunities presented themselves.

In the case of Priscila, she acknowledged people who would carry themselves differently, referencing hip-hop with baggy clothes and books in their hands. As was revealed previously, hip-hop activists share a unique style of attire that commonly sets them apart or identifies them amidst other youth groups. Priscila would talk to her neighbor, Robson, a rap poet. Contact with members of The Movement was also an aspect that the majority of interviewees pointed out, such as friends—who already belonged to hip-hop—extending invites. She tells us that Robson owned a fanzine¹¹ of The Hip-hop Movement and suggested that she make a copy of the section containing information on the city's hip-hop network and meetings that were being held at that time. Interest in producing one's own media and telling one's own version of history is one of the characteristics fostered by the message 'Do it yourself!' which translates the notion of independence and attitude that was passed down by the hip-hop generations.

An example in circulation at that time would be the second edition of the fanzine *Zine Hip Hop em movimento*, which was released in 2002 by The *Posse Ori* Movement, under the title *Fracasso é desistir de continuar lutando* (failure is giving up on continuing the fight). This fanzine had the support of the State University of Bahia's (UNEB) *Diretório Central de Estudantes* (central student board - DCE). It was printed double-sided on 8.5x11 paper and divided in four parts, with a series of information talking about the elements of hip-hop, in addition to a section for skateboarding¹² as a sport and art form. Also featured in the material are The Movement's agenda of activities and information about *posses* and groups in the city, interviews with activists, and questions that hover around hip-hop's masculine universe.

11 Fanzine is a non-professional mini-newspaper to be circulated throughout an alternative public. Enthusiasts of punk music, for example, used this informal communication strategy widely in their groups. This type of magazine or informal alternative newspaper is produced by hip-hop groups and then printed independently and autonomously by The Movement. Some examples include: *ZINE Origens. Posse Ori Movimento Hip-Hop*. Salvador, n. 4, 2004.

12 Skateboarding on many occasions is connected to hip-hop's art forms and activism.

The notion of autonomy practically became The Movement's slogan, which would affirm group identity while the same would produce media material. Later on, communication in The Movement disseminated information in virtual and technological dimensions —through blogs, websites, discussion lists, emails, virtual communities, social media, etc.—, thus making their way into the internet and creating a new language and forms of dialogue among movements. As Santos and Sunega (2009) point out, these dimensions bolster new forms of contact.

Activists spreading the word about information regarding The Movement through word-of-mouth and informal contact remained firm. Dagnino, Alvarez, and Escobar (2000) identify all of these practices —constructed by The Hip-hop Movement and shared by other movements— as a challenge to the subjects and to hegemonic practices capable of resignifying dominating cultural interpretations of politics. In this case, we have the example of the fanzines, produced by hip-hop, which can be seen as mere byproducts by the members of the dominant system. Yet they are produced on the part of The Movement as cultural products of contestation.

These cultural products are the result of active efforts in the political struggle and redefine directions and limits to the local political culture. Edér Sader (1988) upholds the same idea upon analyzing that even small acts, such as circulating a fanzine, demarcate a certain group's involvement and contribution concerning the matters in discussion in the society that they live. These actions reaffirm a position of resistance and creativity in the political subjects, regardless of their state or institutional reach.

Many political sectors acknowledge hip-hop as a movement that contests social inequalities. The position of protest and denouncement was already made clear, especially on the part of the rap element, more precisely the activist rap that looked to social critiques to bolster questions of self-defense and render visible the public debate on important social matters. Angela Souza (1998, p. 45) cites the rapper Chuck-D from the United States, who in 1980 called rap the 'CNN of the streets',¹³ since, according to Souza, "it informs, educates, makes one laugh, and is sometimes scary".¹⁴

13 A mention to the US TV news station.

14 T.N.: [...] *informa, educa, faz rir, às vezes amedronta.*

As one of the examples in Salvador of this type of rap, I would like to offer a passage¹⁵ of lyrics from a song by *Simples Rap'ortagem* entitled *Quadro Negro* (blackboard), which was written by rapper Jorge Hilton. The lyrics touch on the debate concerning affirmative action policies through a quota system in public higher education, which is indeed one of The Hip-hop Movement's demands in Salvador.

[...]

*If your memory goes blank on the test
Our history will blacken your mind best
The sunlight your vision obscures
And only in the darkness the moon
Lures*

*The fight for quotas don't stop the fight for ameliorations
You ignore the quality of public education
On the contrary, the more Black People studying
More force tells me that a new day's coming
Racism, that's what most terrifies us
Not white men's problem to discuss
But among them, there are some that fight for its demise
"Ah if only every white person was that wise"
Whiteness, little do you hear about it
What explains the privilege that your color can permit?
It's hard to learn, for anyone born in a golden crib,
That it's not only 'cause your folks could earn it
Years of exploitation in the past so that one day
For a minority society could be structured in a way
Some folks deem quotas to be unjust, unacceptable
Scary, others deem them even to be charitable
I ask, how much does this privilege cost for the white?
How much does it cost to ignore human rights?
A lot of pretty things are in the constitution
If forgotten or ignored, they need affirmation, a solution
Blacks and whites are equal, and then? If the norm states
That even in cemeteries they are treated in different rates
Get it through your head the meaning of affirmative actions
Punctual measures, alternative reactions
Telling society of measures that come to affirm
That there's inequality to mend for a short term*

15 T.N.: In order to keep the rhythm of the song, we needed to manipulate the lyrics a little in our translation. However, we made sure the message of protest is kept. The same happened for the other lyrics further on in this chapter.

[...] ¹⁶

The subject matter addressed in these lyrics was the target of intense debate in Salvador and points to one of the most crucial aspects in hip-hop's relationship with the youth. It prioritizes concern with education and the quest for knowledge as fundamental building blocks of The Movement.

Carla was a part of the first class of quota beneficiaries, representing a victory in human rights bearing fruit from hip-hop's and Black Youth's demands in Salvador. She then recaptures her speech: "So I started to read, and that's when a curiosity started to awake inside of me, an interest in the history of hip-hop. Since then I've been getting more interested in it and going deeper into the subject matter".¹⁷ It is important to stress the relevance of stimulating knowledge which The Hip-hop Movement stated and reaffirmed through one of its sectors, *Posse Ori*, which was registered in a fanzine cited with the message "Information is power"¹⁸ (*Posse Ori*, 2012).

Carla then began to research more about hip-hop, its elements, and reference figures in its art forms in Brazil. She cites b-boy Nelson Triunfo¹⁹ and her curiosity to know more about his story in breakdancing, as well as other elements. It is worthy of note that the hip hoppers' cited references of iconic figures in hip-hop are connected to men that had the greatest amount of national visibility in developing the respective elements of hip-hop, such as Nelson (breakdancing) and Mano Brown (rap). Beyond the

16 T.N.: [...] / *Se na prova der branco na memória / Vamos denegrir a sua mente com a nossa história / A luz do sol ofusca a visão / E a beleza da lua só possível com a / Escuridão / A luta pelas cotas não anula a luta pela melhora / Da qualidade de ensino público, tu ignora / Pelo contrário, quanto mais negros na academia / Muito mais força pra se lutar por um novo dia / Racismo, o que mais me causa espanto / Não se encara como problema do branco / Mas entre esses, há os que lutam pelo seu fim / 'Ah se todo branco fosse assim' / Branquitude, pouco se ouve falar / O que explica o privilégio que sua etnia pode conquistar? / Pra quem nasceu em berço de ouro é difícil entender / Que não é só porque seus pais fizeram por merecer / Foram anos de exploração no passado pra que um dia / A sociedade fosse estruturada a favor de uma minoria / Há os que não admitem cotas, julgando ser injusta / Outros julgando ser esmola, tudo isso me assusta / Pergunto quanto custa superar o engano? / Quanto custa ignorar os direitos humanos? / Muita coisa bonita garante a constituição / Se esquecida ou ignorada precisa de afirmação / Pretos e brancos são iguais, e daí? Se a norma / É que nem no cemitério são tratados da mesma forma / Entenda agora o que são ações afirmativas / Medidas pontuais, alternativas / Medidas passageiras que vem afirmar / Pra sociedade, que há, desigualdade, a reparar / [...]*

17 T.N.: *Aí, comecei a ler, e foi daí que começou a despertar uma curiosidade, um interesse da história do Hip-Hop. Daí pra cá eu fui me interessando, me aprofundando mais no assunto.*

18 T.N.: *Informação é poder*

19 Nelson Gonçalves Campos Filho, born on 28 October 1954 in Sítio Caldeirão, in the city of Triunfo, Pernambuco, is a break-dancing icon and is considered to be the most important b-boy in the history of hip-hop in Brazil.

local hip hoppers themselves, feminine references are not made in relation to the elements of hip-hop.

Some young women, already in contact with initiatives in The Hip-hop Movement, had the opportunity to participate in encounters, meetings, and events. Many times they were invited by friends. Such was Mônica's case, who was involved in the *Encontro de grafite e Hip-hop* (hip-hop and graffiti encounter) in 2005, and decided to do graffiti and open a space for women in that area. She contends that:

It's about knowing, because after I started doing graffiti I didn't try to learn about when graffiti came on the scene or where it came from. I didn't even know that it was the fourth element of hip-hop. I went on to learn about all that with graffiti, so that made me realize I was a part of the element of hip-hop.²⁰

This example highlights a distinction between developing one of hip-hop's art forms, regardless of which one, and being a part of a movement, engaging oneself in a way to positively intervene in its discussions and activities. This affirmation draws back to the consideration that one mere isolated element does not constitute hip-hop, but rather it is the sum of all of the elements that comprises what is known as hip-hop.

When Mônica was only dedicating herself to doing graffiti with zero knowledge or awareness of the element that she was developing, she did not know hip-hop, "I didn't even know that graffiti was the fourth element of hip-hop". On the basis of her more in-depth knowledge about hip-hop, she understood that she indeed "was a part of the element of hip-hop", and, consequently, that there was a demand of actions linked to hip-hop as a social movement, which she could discover and to which she could contribute.

Yet, the case of Eliciana's contact with hip-hop presented her with a chance to explore a brief, historical panorama. Not only did it allow her to show a path of Black musical culture that was being developed in the alternative scene in Salvador preceding hip-hop, but also to expose a truly contestatory connotation that hip-hop had assumed in relation to other cultural expressions. This was especially true of expressions stemming from Black musical culture.

20 T.N.: *É saber que assim, até porque depois que eu comecei a grafitar eu não procurei saber quando surgiu o grafite, de onde o grafite vem, eu nem sabia que o grafite era o quarto elemento do hip-hop. Com o grafite é que eu passei a conhecer isso, então isso me fez perceber que eu era parte do elemento do hip-hop.*

Brazilian funk was the ultimate identifier of Black alternative and musical culture in the 1980s. Preceding hip-hop, funk paved the way for future Black cultures to remain in step with modern and technological styles inspired in blues and jazz.

ELICIANA: *I don't remember how old I was; I must've been 10 or 11. I was part of a group we called Funk Cobra Girls. At that time, it was the first women's funk group in Salvador, there weren't any others. Generally we'd go to 'baile funk'²¹ in Black Bahia, which had already been around since the 80s. Before they would have it at Esporte Clube in Periperi, but that club was bought out by a church and now they have it at Clube Flamenguinho right next door.²²*

According to Osmundo Pinho's (2005), Brazilian funk landed in Salvador in 1979 from the Black Bahia *bailes*. These parties, which live on to this day, remain stationed at the Esporte Clube Periperi, which is located in one of the poorest areas of the city, in the neighborhood of Subúrbio Ferroviário Homônimo. The parties were organized by Mauro Xavier and Petrúcio, from Rio de Janeiro with experience in soul music in their city, where the funk culture had already expanded.

Among the groups that Eliciana cites, the one that stands out particularly is the female group *Cobra Funk Girls*—the only group referred to with an all-female composition—, in contrast to the group *Cobra Funk Boys* which was comprised solely of boys. Eliciana was one of the group's members when she was 11 years old.

There were only boy groups, it was Funk Boys, it was Funk Cobra. It was from there that our group came to be, 'cause one of the guys from Funk Cobra decided to teach us, MC Maxixe. He decided to teach us some funk. In the beginning it was me, my sister Eliana, three neighbors, Daiana, Rebeca, and Flávia. We started training, and we'd do the same steps that Funk Cobra did until we started to evolve, because we were going to the 'baile funk' and there were only guys. There was a point where they would do choreographed steps, everyone would follow, the so-called 'passo de galera'—that everyone would do going from one side to the other, you know—and then they would open up the circle, the famous break-dancing

21 T.N.: Baile funk is a Brazilian term to designate the parties where Brazilian funk is played. It comes originally from Rio de Janeiro's inner city communities (*favelas*).

22 T.N.: *Já, eu não me lembro a idade que eu tinha, acho que eu tinha de 10 a 11 anos de idade. Eu fazia parte de um grupo que a gente chamava de Funk Cobra Girls. Na época era o primeiro grupo de funk de mulheres que existia aqui em Salvador, não existiam outros. E a gente ia geralmente pro baile funk do Black Bahia, que já existia lá desde a década de 80 lá. Antes acontecia no Esporte Clube de Periperi e agora esse clube foi comprado por uma igreja e acontece no Clube Flamenguinho, que é do lado.*

circle that they'd already been having there and the funk guys would dance. Generally, it was just men. So, when our group came on the scene, we started rehearsing, and we would rehearse for real. We didn't even realize we had a culture, a culture that was from the origins of hip-hop which is about bringing' the sound to the streets, right in the middle of the street in Periperi where we lived and rehearsed. Suddenly we had some folks getting together from around the way to watch us rehearse. We were putting serious work in at the rehearsals in a friend's garage, and when we had some nice steps together we'd take it to the streets.

Eliciana shares that, as the group matured the ladies started exhibiting their choreographies and opening more spaces for women on the dance floor. In that moment, elements that would later on configure artistic elements comprising hip-hop were already being presented, although it could not yet be called as such. One of the main attractions of the *baile funk*, *per se*, was the dance groups, which, according to Pinho (2005), generally carrying the names of *cobra*, *dragão*, and *fera*, would dance a certain style of breakdancing. Rap was also acknowledged in that space as a musical style, but dance was the most largely highlighted element.

As Pinho (2005) and Eliciana (2005) have contended, the masculine universe of hip-hop was already being constituted in the predominance of funk at that time, with references to the attributes of masculinity. These attributes are demonstrated, for example, in the connection through names of wild and imaginary animals that, together with questioning the practices of these exercises, would connote aspects of force, violence, and aggressivity, affirming once again the reinforcement of gender asymmetry in this context.

According to Pinho, there were dance groups initially being trained by Mauro Xavier from 1982 on, yet, only in 1987 did *baile funk* really 'catch on fire'. The groups would prepare themselves physically and diligently study steps timed with an intense rhythm and sensuality, and some would prepare for shows and competitions. For Eliciana, funk served as a bridge for her to become involved with artistic movements in contact with dance, music (rap), and critical ideas concerning social issues. During my fieldwork in the hip-hop arena, it was possible to hear some memories about the outset of Black, alternative culture in the Black *baile*.

The *baile* carries the name 'Black' because it assumes a Black identity under political and cultural aspects that are expressed in the party in a myriad of ways: visual aesthetics (hair and clothes), dance styles, and the

ambience of the setting, with decorations inspired from the disco-music style (music on vinyl discs) to which youth culture of that time would adhere. In addition, the greatest hits of the day were from James Brown and the Brazilian musicians Jorge Ben Jor and Tim Maia.

Yet, there was a difference between funk and hip-hop. Eliciana explains it as a road traveled by the hip-hop generation, that would be established in Salvador, which differentiates or describes funk's transition to hip-hop:

Through that I went on to learn about other things, theater, poetry, hip-hop. And then I started to become aware that the funk I was a part of in Periperi wasn't launching a revolution, it didn't make a lot of social impact. 'Cause no matter the fact that there were women dancing, which was different among the men, it had no political core. It was more something about happiness. [...] in general it was a culture much more about happiness. On the weekend we'd wear different clothes, the girls would do something different with their outfits, and go the 'baile' and turn heads. But there never was anything political about it. And then after I became tuned into the MIACC,²³ theater, and those movements, I saw there was a much stronger movement boiling in the city that funk just didn't have.²⁴

The culture of happiness and dance parties went on to illustrate another reality that is disconnected to the issues young people were facing at that time, especially for those who were Black and inner-city residents. However, funk served as a stepping stone for the proliferation of another Black culture that was arriving within the same global movement that funk had arrived, yet with a more critical core in the youth's everyday lives.

That new culture was rap, an element known as the outcry of the ghetto and the downtrodden. Such is the example that Eliciana uses when talking about funk's transition to hip-hop.

23 The *Movimento de Intercâmbio Artístico Cultural pela Cidadania* (the artistic and cultural exchange movement for citizenship - MIACC) is active in Salvador, working with young people in art-education projects for citizenship. Some young people came to know hip-hop and its elements in theater, dance, and musical activities through this movement.

24 T.N.: *Aí através disso eu fui conhecendo outras coisas, o teatro, a poesia, o hip-hop e aí comecei a tomar consciência de que esse funk de que eu fazia parte em Periperi, não fazia revolução, não fazia muito impacto social. Porque por mais que eram mulheres dançando, que era um diferencial entre homens, não tinha uma questão política, era uma coisa muito mais da felicidade. [...] no geral era uma cultura muito mais da felicidade, que a gente, no final de semana, colocava uma roupa diferente, as meninas faziam uma coisa de figurinos diferentes, iam pro baile e tal chamar a atenção, mas não tinha uma coisa política mesmo. E aí depois que eu conheci o MIACC, teatro, esses movimentos, eu vi que tinha um movimento muito mais forte efervescendo na cidade que o funk não tinha.*

I remember a single instance. One of the only strong political moments I ever had in funk was when we'd always go to the 'baile funk' in Paripe and Plataforma. Sometimes we'd go but we had no bread. So we'd walk, all of us together, all the way to Periperi and back. And there was one of our homeboys, Maxixe, who was the precursor of our group and founded it with us. He lost a brother who was shot. When his brother arrived to the hospital, they wouldn't take him in because they thought he was the criminal. The police pulled up in front of the hospital thinking he was the criminal and he ended up dying because of that. Maxixe made a rap song about that story. Then there was us, as we were walking home from the dance partying it up and singing in the streets and shit. One time we stopped in the wee hours of the morning, all of us that were singing and coming home from the dance, we stopped in front of that hospital and started singing Maxixe's rap, in protest of the discrimination that led to his brother's death. And that was it, that was the only strong political moment I ever had in funk [...].²⁵

In this account, funk was used as a weapon of vindication, acknowledged as a tool of protest. For Weller (2000), rap is an instrument of information and mobilization for inner-city Black Youth which creates a way to confront exclusion based on valorizing the history and culture of the Black population. According to Weller's informants, they identify rap through its characteristic of being direct by producing music that denounces and protests against cultural and social exclusion, police brutality, and discrimination.

With a distinction between funk and hip-hop, the youth questions politics and culture in search of tools and weapons to be used in their favor. As Evelina Dagnino, Sonia Alvarez, and Antonio Escobar (2000) have shown, the bond uniting politics to culture allows for acknowledgment of defining power relations established in expressions and social practices. Both politics and culture interfere and constitute one another, and are capable of resignifying alternative conceptions to dominant cultural definitions. Hip-hop was being constituted with the objective of bringing

25 T.N.: *Eu me lembro de um único momento, um dos únicos momentos políticos e fortes que eu vivi dentro do funk foi quando a gente sempre ia pros bailes funk de Paripe, Plataforma, onde tinha baile funk, a gente ia e a gente às vezes não tinha grana para ir, ia andando e voltava andando até Periperi, com uma galera. E tem um colega nosso, Maxixe, que foi precursor do nosso grupo, que fundou o nosso grupo com a gente. Ele perdeu um irmão que foi baleado e quando chegou na frente do hospital, não deixaram atender ele, porque acharam que ele era o bandido, a polícia parou na frente do hospital achando que ele era o bandido e ele acabou morrendo por causa disso. E ele fez uma rap sobre essa história. E a gente, como vinha andando do baile, fazendo festa, cantando pela rua e tal, a gente parou um dia de madrugada todo mundo cantando que voltou do baile funk e parou na frente do hospital, todo mundo e começou a cantar esse rap lá, fazendo protesto sobre a forma de discriminação que aconteceu lá no hospital e que levou a morte do irmão dele. E aí assim, foi o único momento forte e político que eu vi dentro do funk [...].*

these two aspects together to give voice to possible social transformations from the ground up, honoring strategies to face inequality. Yet, as these presented experiences make clear, The Movement is challenged before its own behaviors when it comes to dealing with gender.

Among the fieldwork findings, brief but considerable observations came up among another Black, musical-cultural style pertinent to the artistic scene in Bahia which influenced young people's contact with hip-hop: *pagode*. *Pagode* originates from *samba*, and while it is famous for its flavorful rhythms, it is controversial at the same time in that its lyrics defame women and satirize their bodies.

Dina spoke about the background music playing at the seminar's opening roundtable, which was a loud-sounding *pagode* tune coming from the vicinity of the seminar's location. Dina, the first guest to speak, opened her talk with hand gestures signaling to the audience to pay attention to the music that the neighbors of the occupying *Movimento dos Sem-Teto da Bahia* (homeless movement in Bahia - *MSTB*) were loudly playing from an abandoned building in center city next to where the seminar was being held.

People in the audience focused in on the music while the majority made gestures of disapproval. She began her talk by affirming just how much hip-hop had on its plate in Salvador. The discussion took on the focal point of constructing an opposition between *pagode* and hip-hop, but soon after settled in on a more critical and concerned direction with the relationship between these two styles in hip-hop and society on the basis of women in rap.

Dina affirms that many women in hip-hop today used to belong to the *pagode* community, citing the example of rapper Negramone, who was also a part of the roundtable in question. Dina continues by pointing out distinctions in relation to Negramone's appearance and behavior in different stages of her life, stressing a visual transformation from her hair, formerly straightened by chemical hair products, and excessive concern about the sexuality expressed in its dance —when she attended and lived a culture linked to *samba* and *pagode*—, to her transformation following her involvement in hip-hop. Dina stated that she was happy to see that her colleague took ownership of her identity as a Black woman and she went on to give a sketch her reality in rap lyrics, becoming ever more engaged in The Movement. She pointed out that from this example she was able to witness the force of transformation in hip-hop, how it can interfere in people's lives (Field Diary, 14 August 2010).

The central question of concern that the hip hoppers presented in the seminar was associated to the woman's image produced by both musical styles, rap and *pagode*. For the most part, both musical styles reproduce a stereotype that subjects women's bodies to being treated as sexual and reproductive objects. Above all the bodies, the most underprivileged is of the Black Women, with whom racial discrimination becomes active.

Mônica, in an interview, owns up to the fact that she likes *pagode*, that she likes to go out and dance, and that even after getting into hip-hop she never stopped being a *pagodeira* (T.N.: pagode fan). The notion that hip-hop relates to everything, even to distinct musical styles, is expressed in this example, proving that today there is a complex diversity within The Movement.

When asked about what she understood as hip-hop, she laughed and joked saying that it belonged more to the *pagode* culture, that she liked to go out and dance *pagode* and *axé*. For the majority of The Movement's followers, a relationship with hip-hop and *pagode* would at minimum be contradictory. This information about Mônica was not discussed at the roundtable. It was only shared during an individual interview, yet with no request to withhold the information. According to Mônica, it was only recently that she came to understand the idea of unity and friendship in The Movement. Since then, she has been making efforts to learn more about hip-hop and its history, becoming enticed to contribute in its activities. In this case, she said that she is discovering hip-hop, or another form of hip-hop, in the seminar together with other women.

In search of new spaces for youth initiatives, women discover a "loophole" to engage in The Hip-hop Movement. Even so, the claims and ideologies that orient their priorities and forms of action both individually and collectively are constituted on the basis of their interventions. Claims are constructed on the part of female members of The Movement, who, more often than not, bring together their interests in common issues. Nevertheless, is there room for these women's questions in The Movement? Is there a "loophole" for the transformation of gender conventions?

Women's 'loophole' entry into the Hip-hop Movement

For the sake of problematizing the notion of a 'loophole' for women's entrance into The Hip-hop Movement, the question is if this "loophole" was given to women or they took it themselves.

In the *Coisa de Menina* seminar, Dina's words highlighted a concern directed at the reality that impoverished Black Women experience on the margins of society. Yet, as Dina explains, some women undergo a transformation process of conscience and behavior upon having the opportunity to come in contact with other movements, without the women necessarily being connected to a particular political party to question their place in society.

Even so, female activists have been exploring the relationship between women and hip-hop as a new space of female political initiative. Although hip-hop retains a masculinist character, it has been presented as a space interested in including new demands, including demands specific to women and their interests. Dina sheds light on this notion when asked about her choosing The Hip-hop Movement as the space for her—as well as other women's— involvement:

At the same time that we were having difficulty getting work done, it was The Movement that gave us that loophole, that gave us the opportunity. 'Cause The Hip-hop Movement is in dialogue with everything, everything outside the context, you understand what I'm saying? Now we just need to see the opening that it's giving us. And I came to understand that us women, we always understand things a bit more than men, right? I understood that The Movement was giving us mechanisms to really question and say things all the way through. So it's that opening that The Movement gives you.²⁶

The interest in hip-hop is incited by the Movement's openness to discuss current topics, “‘cause *The Hip-hop Movement is in dialogue with everything*”, as Dina affirms above. Above all, The Movement acts in such a way as to share vindications concerning fundamental shifts in the privileges and rights of different political groups. As a result, hip-hop was acknowledged by women as “*a movement that gave us that loophole*”, as another possible space of social mobilization since “*it was giving you mechanisms to really question and say things all the way through*”.

In that case, based on Dina's words, one can deduce that The Hip-hop Movement, interested in aggregating and discussing an array of current topics in society, allowed for women to enter in a ‘godsend-like fashion’ in

26 T.N.: Ao mesmo tempo em que a gente tinha dificuldade de atuar, foi o movimento que deu essa brecha, que dá essa oportunidade. Porque o movimento hip-hop dialoga com tudo, tudo que não está dentro do contexto, entende? Agora, só precisa perceber a abertura que nos dão. E eu percebi, nós mulheres sempre percebemos as coisas um pouco mais que os homens, né? E eu percebi que o movimento ele te dava, mecanismos para você realmente questionar e dizer as coisas até o fim. Então é essa abertura que o movimento dá mesmo.

order to extend their plurality of representations ever further. ‘Loophole’ can be understood as an authorized opening or passageway to remain in a political space. It also sounds as if it was a concession granted by men, as they comprise The Movement’s overwhelming majority. They gave women the opportunity to be present but they do not necessarily exercise particular influence or are not recognized as suitable for decision-making not just in regards to the women’s collective, but to The Movement as a whole.

Dina reinforces in her talk the idea that hip-hop belongs to men, and reaffirms The Movement’s masculine and masculinist character which is endowed with gender and power attributes that place the feminine in an inferior position. The demands made on the part of young women in Salvador to have space for political discussion and education in The Movement proliferated around diverse issues on race, gender, youth, sexualities, employment, education, the environment, and others. The Hip-hop movement was brought forth as a loophole for the youth to elbow their way in, especially young women. Negramone expounds on that point:

I got into hip-hop because I understood myself within that universe. I understood that I was able to pose my questions about the society that I live in, based on and connected to other forms of protest. It was directed with the goal of understanding an open movement, a movement in which I could discuss my relationships.²⁷

The Movement, formed by people and urban places, proved itself to be present in city spaces and in frequent events. According to Negramone, “I was able to learn more about the dimension of what The Hip-hop Movement is and get interested in it, a lot because of the social and political issue of engaging in society, which goes beyond displaying art”.²⁸ It is from the connection between “displaying art” and a space to pose questions about the society in which one lives that made hip-hop a privileged and ever-more fascinating space for young women. This character of engagement identifies the connotation of contesting the order established by the local political culture.

Dagnino, Alvarez, and Escobar (2000) uphold this affirmation when they contend that the political culture produced by The Movement interferes

27 T.N.: *Eu entrei no hip-hop porque eu me percebi dentro daquele universo, percebi que eu poderia tá colocando as minhas questões sobre a sociedade em que vivo baseada e conectada com outras maneiras de manifestação. Foi direcionado com esse objetivo de perceber um movimento aberto, movimento que eu poderia discutir as minhas relações.*

28 T.N.: *Eu pude conhecer mais a dimensão do que é o movimento Hip-Hop e me interessar por ele, muito por essa questão social e política de engajamento na sociedade, que é além da manifestação das artes.*

in what is considered as hegemonically established social power. Demands for change in social structures take voice in their artistic expressions, ‘poking at the wound’. According to Eliciana, by participating in the *II Encontro Estadual de Hip Hop* (second state meeting on hip-hop) in 2004 in the city of Vitória da Conquista, the hip hoppers realized the need to organize or to create a specific space for women to deal directly with their issues, concerns, and demands. The result was further strengthening of The Womanist Movement within The Hip-hop Movement, the creation of female cohorts within mixed *posses*, and the realization of the *III Encontro Estadual de Gênero e Hip-Hop* (third state meeting on gender and hip-hop) the following year. Above all, experiences such as these strengthened the hip hoppers’ own ideas concerning hip-hop as a space to contest gender conventions.

A space for contestation?

RESEARCHER: *What is hip-hop for you?*

DINA: *Hip-hop is attitude, determination, self-management, autonomy. It’s life, hip-hop is life!*

RESEARCHER: *And being a woman in hip-hop?*

DINA: *It’s about breaking paradigms, being a woman in hip-hop is about breaking structural paradigms.*²⁹

According to Dina, hip-hop is a space for the female youth to take a stand and for positivity, for strengthening in order to confront situations and challenges of discrimination and struggles for citizenship. This positivity runs through multiple life themes in their everyday lives, especially in regards to their worldviews on models of masculinity and femininity. When asked about the meaning of hip-hop, rappers Paula and Carla shared the word choice of ‘resistance’: a form of resistance and struggle for freedom going back to the life experiences of the Black population. Carla contends: “*I think freedom is within the resistance when you fight against a whole system that places you, that wants to place you in a certain way, that oppresses you as a woman, as a Black woman*”.³⁰ For Paula, “*it’s a way that we have, that we continue to have,*

29 T.N.: *É quebrar paradigmas, ser mulher no hip-hop é quebrar paradigmas da estrutura mesmo.*

30 T.N.: *Acho que a liberdade está dentro da resistência quando você luta contra todo um sistema que te coloca, que quer te colocar de uma forma, te oprime enquanto mulher, enquanto negra.*

*us Black People, Black Women, Black Men. We keep resisting, culturally, ancestrally, and ideologically”.*³¹

To be especially noted about what hip-hop is, is the unity of art and politics, which connotes a shift in the political culture itself and in mediums of engagement. Eliciana points out that for her, hip-hop “*is a strong, political movement of social transformation, that is first of all an artistic movement, because they’re artists*”.³² Therefore, as seen previously, art is viewed as a means of transforming reality in an involved manner. Vivian identifies the feeling and sensation of transformation by thinking about what a woman was before and after hip-hop, and points to a question to be posed concerning her own posture on gender conventions in *The Movement*.

*I’m sure that the woman I was... that I used to be, even in being a part of CAMA,³³ which already deals with race, gender, and women’s issues, in 2003, is completely different from the woman I am now in 2008. I think I’m a woman with self-esteem, although sometimes I drop the ball, but hip-hop is there to make sure I don’t drop it —self-esteem and the female being. I think this is where I feel the most comfortable to express myself without being afraid of saying something problematic, or of making a mistake. If I say something off, it doesn’t matter. We also learn from our mistakes.*³⁴

Concern with self-esteem³⁵ is a central issue for women, especially when the racial aspect is considered, in the case of Black Women. It is a frequently discussed issue in hip-hop and can be interpreted by the reinforcement of gender conventions that reaffirm attributes of beauty and vanity as necessary attributes for women. The discussion does not question, for example, these attributes in relation to men.

31 T.N.: *É uma maneira que a gente tem, que a gente continua tendo, nós povo negro, mulheres negras, homens negros, continuamos tendo de resistir, culturalmente, ancestralmente, ideologicamente.*

32 T.N.: *... é um movimento forte, político, de transformação social, um movimento artístico primeiramente, porque são artistas.*

33 *Centro de Arte e Meio Ambiente* (center for art and the environment - CAMA), based in the neighborhood of Uruguai, in Salvador.

34 T.N.: *Eu tenho certeza que a mulher que eu fui... que eu era até mesmo sendo do CAMA, que já trabalha a questão racial a questão de gênero, e a mulher, em 2003, a mulher que eu sou hoje em 2008 é totalmente diferente. Acho que uma mulher com autoestima, apesar de que às vezes a peteca cai mas está ali o hip-hop pra não me deixar cair; a questão da autoestima, do ser mulher. Acho que onde eu me sinto a vontade em me expressar sem medo de errar, nem mesmo de estar falando errado. Se eu tiver falando errado, não importa. É com os erros que a gente aprende também.*

35 By self-esteem I understand the style, self-confidence, acceptance, and valorization of oneself.

To this end, shining a positive light on the female identity, as Weller (2000) shows in relation to Turkish and Black young men, aims to boost its female status, while men do not exactly touch on this subject as a concern of masculinity. Such points to the perpetuation—and not the contestation—of this gender convention. Yet, hip-hop possesses massive potential for social transformation that can be opportunistically directed. Negramone makes this clear when she talks about the power of The Movement’s social transformation:

*We don’t just change overnight, but it’s about creating strategies so we can survive in this society. [...] but I think the importance is more about me being hopeful that other women can experience other things.*³⁶

It is from this feeling of transforming the centerpiece in which gender conventions are manifested that The Womanist Hip-hop Movement reformulates new paths for models of femininity and masculinity to be reoriented. For Carla, the issues that young women experience are problematized within The Movement and through hip-hop:

*I think that beyond the music there’s something else, my drive to talk. I think it’s a different worldview once I make contact with hip-hop and understand what hip-hop is. So it’s a lot in that direction, in the direction of a group and collectivity. [...] I never think of hip-hop as something individual, always collective. I believe that... Right... Once I start understanding myself and know I’m a part o’ The Hip-hop Movement, I think my worldview changes completely. I think it’s a space... a space of power and it reflects in all aspects of my life. It’s everything. Family. The conflicts we have at home, at school, so I think The Hip-hop Movement has influence in this sense and it actually empowers me. It’s a give and take. I don’t know, it’s everything all at the same time. I empower The Movement, and The Movement empowers me, so it’s a constant give and take.*³⁷

36 T.N.: *Porque a gente não modifica de um dia a outro, mas é criar estratégias pra que a gente possa sobreviver dentro dessa sociedade. [...] mas acho que a importância mais é de eu ter esperança que várias mulheres possam viver outras coisas.*

37 T.N.: *Eu acho que para além da música tem uma coisa que é minha movimentação de conversar, eu acho que é uma visão de mundo diferente a partir do momento que eu tenho contato com o hip-hop e entendo o que é hip-hop. Então é muito nesse sentido de grupo, de grupo, de coletividade. Nunca penso o hip-hop como coisa individual, sempre penso como coletividade. [...] Eu acredito que... É... A partir do momento que eu começo a me perceber e saber que eu faço parte do movimento hip-hop eu acho que muda completamente a minha visão de mundo. Não sei, eu acho que é um espaço, de poder, um espaço de poder e que isso reflete em todos os aspectos de minha vida. É... Tudo. A família. Os conflitos que a gente tem na família, na faculdade, então eu acho que o, o movimento hip-hop influencia nesse sentido de me fortalecer mesmo. É uma troca. Não sei, é tudo ao mesmo tempo. Eu fortaleço o movimento, o movimento me fortalece, então é uma troca constante.*

Aspects that involve paving the way for new learning experiences in a collective body, discovering a new worldview, the feeling of give and take between the individual and The Movement, are fundamental in understanding the power of intervention in hip-hop. Yet, they are not exactly matters that ensure contestations of gender asymmetries in those spaces. In order for these asymmetries to indeed be contested, there must be a view geared towards the power relations established among current models, a view aimed at The Movement itself.

As a cultural product produced by the hip hoppers, their creations, linked to the elements of hip-hop, have propagated their unrest concerning previously established models for their gender experiences. In the case of rap, the voice of hip-hop, the lyrics have served as the mouthpiece for denouncing the discrimination that the hip hoppers live through. They rap about their own experiences, which are based on their reflections and proposals of alternatives that both they and The Womanist Movement created. Carla shares that the rap experience is a mobilizer of her goals in activism.

I think the goal is, through art, to be able to bring up all these issues we talk about, issues about gender, sexual orientation, race, and so on. Through art we're able to do that. Art is a bridge that makes it a whole lot easier to reach another person, that's what I believe. It's so much easier to touch someone's sensitivity and make that person understand all these issues through art [...], also the importance of hip-hop being a bridge that makes it easier for you to get through to someone, by seduction. Hip-hop's job is to seduce people so they can be cognizant about the discussion. So, the goal is to transmit that message to the people.³⁸

At this time, the rappers' claims were bringing topics to the debate which are oftentimes blanketed in society and that directly afflict women and their bodies. As an example of the hip hoppers' musical voice, I present the lyrics to two songs produced by *Munegrade*, a rap group comprised solely of young women in Salvador. The two songs are compositions by the members who were in the group at the time research was carried out: Simone Gonçalves Santos, Elísia Maria de Jesus Santos, and Carla Cristina

38 T.N.: O objetivo que eu acho que é assim, através da arte né, conseguir levar todas as questões que a gente discute de gênero, de orientação sexual, de raça; através da arte a gente consegue, a arte é uma ponte muito fácil de chegar ao outro, assim eu acredito, é muito mais fácil de você sensibilizar a pessoa e fazer com que a pessoa perceba todas essas questões através da arte (...) a importância também do hip-hop ser uma ponte que é mais fácil você chegar a outra pessoa, seduzindo, o hip-hop serve para seduzir a pessoa, pra que as pessoas tenham noção daquela discussão. Então objetivo é a gente passar essa mensagem mesmo para as pessoas.

dos Santos Jesus.³⁹ The songs were translated for a better understanding. The first song is entitled *Levante a cabeça* (hold your head up - NEIM, 2015), which talks about violence against women.

*Damn girl, you who's violated
 Who is here to have your life lacerated?
 By no man, no woman, no to this crap
 Shut that noise down ASAP
 Win your rights to citizenship
 Don't push off for tomorrow, it's a bad trip
 Don't let the bodily injuries become a curse
 And the mental threats get worse
 Even if they surge from within your own family
 Don't take it passively
 Move, look forward, stick your chest out
 Go to the police station, girl, bring the problem about
 For other women to come and appear
 It's in search of respect that we crush our fear
 'Cause thousands of women are trapped in this cage
 And it's time to turn the page
 This thing that takes the freedom from women away
 Makes them even believe that's the natural way
 They think the burden is for them to carry
 But, in fact, it's a cultural corollary*

*Here, I'm in search of respect
 And my fear I reject
 Here, I go on with my head held high
 Here, the power is yours don't forget why
 There are many motives that cause you to keep quiet
 Financial dependence, fear, shame, nah can't go by it
 In order to have a man and a house to shelter
 Find your independence, you can be better
 If you let yourself live in a love-hate relationship
 Sorry, I'd rather be in a cruise ship
 Mmm the rage when we deal with this subject
 But we can't ignore such disrespect
 There are forms and types of violence
 Personal, interpersonal, collective, that have causes and consequences,
 That are different between women and men
 While men suffer in the streets, women at home suffer at their hand
 With unequal payment, amassment*

39 Munegrals is still active, however with different personnel.

*Of verbal looks, sexual harassment*⁴⁰

It is common for the lyrics to be a bit extensive, descriptive, and critical of the true reality. According to Carla, one of the rappers of the group, the dialogue that rap passes on to its listeners is important because it offers an alternative of information, a social critique, and a proposal of an alternative for women to transform their reality. Rap is delivered verbally as a conversation between people who are close to each other and who share similar situations and issues in life.

In comparison with the output of male rappers, one can observe that the subject chosen by female rappers contains indications of gender sanctions as a way to contest its tacit norms and asymmetries. While the majority of rap lyrics from male rappers tackles police violence and criminality, among other topics as was shown before, female rappers come with social issues that women experience. An example would be gender violence (GREGORI, 1993; SAFFIOTI, 2001), a topic that made its way into the order of the day in an array of manifestations in feminist and womanist mobilizations.

In the case of the song *Levante a cabeça*, which deals with violence against women, the principal message aims to stimulate victims to do away with these life conditions. The rappers point out alternatives to break the cycle and identify various cases and forms of violence against women. Because it is close and in-tune with this reality, the song places itself in the shoes of a person who has suffered discrimination. Carla explains further:

So, the importance of my participation, I think it's about me talking sister-to-sister, you know what I'm saying? Yeah... like I have the merit to be in a space and talk from one sister to another who also knows my reality, right? Yeah... That's what it is, another sister that also needs... you know, like

40 T.N.: *Aí mulher você que é violentada / E quem aqui nasceu pra levar porrada, de nenhum homem ou de qualquer mulher / Interfira nessa ideia mais rápido que puder / Conquiste seu direito de cidadã / Não deixa o que você pode fazer hoje para amanhã / Não deixe as lesões corporais te atormentarem / E as ameaças mentais se agravarem / Mesmo que surja de dentro do seu seio familiar / O importante para sua vida é denunciar / Ande, estufe o peito, olhe para frente. Vá a delegacia mulheres, faça diferente / Para que outras mulheres possam fazer o mesmo / É em busca de respeito que rompemos o medo / Pois milhares de mulheres estão nessa prisão / E não podemos mais esconder essa situação / Que arranca a liberdade dessas mulheres de viver / E ainda se auto culpa por nascer / Que pensam que os problemas são delas e na verdade / É um sistema cultural de sequelas. Aqui eu vou em busca de respeito. Aqui rompendo o meu medo. Aqui vou levantando minha cabeça bis / Aqui o poder é seu não se esqueça / São vários os motivos que fazem vocês se calar. Dependência financeira, medo, vergonha não dá / Pra se escorar no homem e numa casa. Criem sua independência criem suas asas / Se permitir viver entre tapas e beijos / Antes de você como muito queijos / Humm da raiva quando tratamos desse assunto / Mas não podemos colocar o pano incolor de fundo / Que existem tipos e formas violência / Pessoal, interpessoais, coletiva que tem causas e consequências / Que entre homens e mulheres são diferenciadas / Enquanto o homem sofre na rua a mulher sofre pelo homem em casa / Com as desigualdades salarial / Dos assédios, olhares verbais.*

*a ‘get up, wake up’, you know? So I think it has a bigger impact when it comes from someone who actually lives and breathes the situation, someone who has already gone through a lot of things that the other person is going through. I think the impact is stronger.*⁴¹

The affirmation of speaking “*sister-to-sister*” allows for intimacy with the experienced reality and the story’s protagonist, which could vary. The character could be the rapper that composed and presented the song, or it could be an account known closely among friends, acquaintances and relatives, or even from a news piece published in a newspaper, magazine, or shown on television. In Carla’s case, “*from sister to sister*” draws back to one’s speaking point, to one who truly knows that reality and who could be experiencing that very situation. This act can go back to a process of identification and even solidarity among women, since they share a reality that reinforces the convention of fragility and a subordinate position molded to the conventions of femininity being contested while demanding another gender reference.

The second song that I present here by *Munegrade* is entitled *Eu gosto dela* (I’m feeling her). The main themes in the song are diversity and sexual orientation within the context of combating homophobia. The song served as a soundtrack and inspired a five-minute, short-film script that carried the same title.⁴²

*Red and orange is our flag
Yellow, green, blue, and violet
Of all secrets, one is fatal
It’s your girl look that makes you sexual
Nobody can stop me from loving you
And dictate what I oughta do*

*I’m feeling her, she’s feeling me
It is a never-ending secret, we agree
I’m feeling her, she’s feeling me*

41 T.N.: *Então, a importância da minha participação eu acredito que seja é, eu acho que é tipo tá falando de igual para igual, sabe? É... tipo de eu ter mérito de estar num lugar e falar de igual pra igual com uma outra pessoa que também é da minha realidade né. É... Que... É isso, que também precisa de uma, tipo um “levanta aí, acorda né!” Então acho que tem um maior impacto quando vem de uma pessoa que vivencia tudo aquilo, que vivenciou várias coisas também que aquela pessoa tá passando, então eu acho que o impacto é mais forte.*

42 A video clip that encompasses a daughter’s childhood and adolescent memories from her mother’s viewpoint, affected by the dominant gender representations in Brazilian society. The work tackles, in an ironic manner, homosexual orientation and hegemonic, heterosexual representations (Barros, 2007).

It is a never-ending secret, we agree

*We live in disguise in a heterosexual society
Misogyny and racism, and on top of that, patriarchy
But our love is too strong to set us apart
Breaking the barrier that homophobizes my heart⁴³*

Eu gosto dela is about the freedom of experiencing homosexuality between two women who are not ashamed of their sexuality, yet recognize the precautions that must be taken vis-a-vis a homophobic society. Acknowledging the struggle's ideologies is exposed via the colors of the rainbow, which vibrantly affirm that one woman being attracted to another is indeed possible and ought to be free of discrimination.

Autonomy of the female body has been a claim of The Womanist Hip-hop Movement, which has progressively been asserting itself and reclaiming recognition as a Womanist and/or Feminist Movement. Would hip-hop then be feminist? On the basis of this contextualization and analysis concerning this sample from the hip-hop universe, we are able to pose two additional questions: Is hip-hop a space for contesting gender conventions? Is there a loophole for women?

In the context under examination, there is no direct contestation of models of femininity and masculinity in hip-hop. In other words, as a social movement, hip-hop does not question the constitutive asymmetry of gender. Instead there is an affirmation—or reaffirmation—of masculine references and attributes of masculinity incorporated in constitutive, masculinist viewpoints, which as a matter of fact can be exemplified through the idea of a 'loophole' for women's inclusion, as if it were a concession granted by men.

What we have witnessed is that, in The Movement, separation was retained throughout. Such retention is present, for example, by deeming distinct concerns toward certain social issues as exclusively belonging to the male universe and others to the female universe, without necessarily reaching any questions concerning the models of femininity and masculinity in hip-hop. Nonetheless, in this text, one becomes aware issues

43 T.N.: *A nossa bandeira é vermelha e cor de abóbora / Amarelo, verde, azul e violeta / De todos os segredos existe um que é fatal / É seu olhar de menina que faz de você mulher sexual / Ninguém venha me impedir de amar você / E impor o que eu devo, olha só, fazer / Eu gosto dela, Ela gosta de mim / A gente tem um segredo que não tem fim / Eu gosto dela, Ela gosta de mim / A gente tem um segredo que não tem fim / Vivemos disfarçadas no mundo heterossexual / Machista e racista, e ainda por cima, patriarcal / Mas nosso amor é mais forte que tufão / Quebrando essa barreira que homofóbica meu coração*

representing a motto of reclaiming involvement (PHILLIPS, 1995) for marginalized groups with collective and specific demands. Such occurs ever more through the active presence of women, who open 'loopholes' not just due to an interest in visibility, but due to a commitment in interfering in the demands that line The Movement's agenda as well. They resignify the elements of hip-hop by incorporating their issues, taking after the topics addressed in the songs *Levante a cabeça*, *Eu gosto dela*, among others.

Therefore, from the experiences collected in this study, hip-hop can be viewed with ambivalence with regards to contesting gender conventions as there is an attempt to obtain social transformations and exercise impact on gender asymmetry. The hip hoppers resignify values and attributes given to femininity and masculinity vis-a-vis the creation of new experiences for women, men, and The Movement as a whole. Such then allows us to enter into the debate with respect to the dialogue on hip-hop and feminism, or even 'feminist hip-hop', leading us to our final chapter.



It's about time for boys to know that a girl's thing is also a boy's thing! Feminist hip-hop?

I introduced previously a quest for understanding and analyzing the context in which young women entered into hip-hop as well as impulses and opportunities for their incorporation in The Movement. The elements and attributes that qualify hip-hop as a contestatory social movement were examined, thus providing a reflection on whether The Movement is indeed capable of contesting gender conventions, in addition to identifying these conventions within The Movement itself.

This reflection requires us to ponder the possible existence of feminist hip-hop¹ in all of its possible conceptions; with the vision of advancing how feminism in its plurality as a social movement and the concepts of feminism (re)produced in the political practice of young female activists are understood. Based on daily experiences of young female activists confronted with issues of race, activism, and sexuality within The Movement, I now seek to understand the possible dialogues between feminism and hip-hop.

With that in mind, we first establish the premise that, as a social movement, hip-hop simultaneously dialogues with and challenges local

1 The term “feminist hip-hop” emerged from conversations in advisor meetings with Dr. Katrine Gines (Vanderbilt University).

political culture by affirming demands and political strategies to reclaim rights and combat against inequality. The accounts presented in previous chapters have reignited the concept of political culture offered by Dagnino, Alvarez and Escobar. It is from The Movement's practices of political culture that it dialogues with the hegemonic model of political culture, confronting and redefining power relations configured between the culture and politics.

From these particularities, the aim of this chapter is to glean how activism challenges and, especially, (re)signifies the feminist movements with which it is in dialogue. We go about this on the basis of three political grammars.² The Feminist Movement, Black Movement, and Youth Movement.

Many relationships resulting from dialogue between feminism and hip-hop in the perspective of female hip hoppers are to be observed. In this study, hip-hop has presented itself as a 'potential' space for contesting gender conventions for young women, which draws back to the possible dialogue between The Movement and feminism. Some considerations on this debate then become apparent when these two entities are placed side by side. Both share origins and trajectories linked to 'foreign commodities', dating back to relations of appropriation from youth in The Black and Feminist movements, which both partake in a reference from outside of Brazil —more specifically from the United States and Europe.

The question must therefore be posed if these two entities —hip-hop and feminism—, given that they are not originally from Brazil, were received in a similar fashion by the youth in Salvador when they arrived in Brazil and in the state of Bahia? How were these movements and their ideologies appropriated by the youth in The Movement in Salvador? These are some of the questions that involve the context studied and can illustrate how the hip hoppers in Salvador understand the relationship between hip-hop and feminism. Negramone explains:

'Cause the word 'feminism' already exists. If we just take the construction of that word, it comes from another place, from another universe, another

2 The term "political grammar" (gramática política) refers to the distinct models of political mobilization that influenced what I aim to designate as "feminist hip-hop" and was inspired by the analysis of Edson Nunes (1997) on political conduits in Brazil. According to Nunes, the notion of political grammars is "the existence of different cultural combinations and elements within the same structure" (Nunes, 1997, p. 44, our translation). It therefore has to do with a "collection of rules more or less tacit and consensual of conceptions and political practices that was historically constituted as such" (Bonetti; Fontoura; Marins, 2009, p. 20, our translation).

reality. So it's not just 'feminism', but let's say it's local feminism, one that's in dialogue like national and international feminism, you know what I'm saying'? This local feminism, we can say that, as young women, it exists, but it exists in a way that we think about feminism, understanding its diversities, understanding its purposes and squeezing in our suggestions, our objectives, how we want feminism to be. The Hip-hop Movement isn't universal within the politics of social justice, racial justice. It exists in its diverse forms, it has its own philosophical aspects just like feminism, you get me? That's why we're going more in the direction of a local feminism, a local movement, but always remaining in dialogue with its national and international diversity, and understanding that diversity. 'Cause every place is different, no matter if it's also the inner city, it's still different. Each inner city has its own problems, issues, and violence. Each one has its own way of living.³

Negramone points out numerous relevant issues that illustrate her understanding of these two movements. The first refers to the acknowledgement of a localized form of feminism that has specific demands tied to the reality of youth who live and experience real problems in their city and neighborhood, while simultaneously sharing women's issues in other localities. The same connection was made to hip-hop, since it also can come from abroad and incorporate issues from other places. In spite of that, both have adapted to the local reality of the communities in which they insert themselves with interest and impulse in fighting for social justice even in the face of the different intricacies that they may present.

One important aspect to be considered is the discussion around the origin or even the emergence and trajectory of hip-hop which, as is apparent from the hip hoppers' accounts, has been making its presence felt in an array of sectors in The Movement in Salvador. Some activists evaluate the history of hip-hop, be it in Brazil or the United States, as criteria to distinguish between activists and artists affiliated to some detached element of The Movement.

3 T.N.: *Porque existe a palavra feminista, e se a gente pega só a construção dessa palavra, ela vem de uma outra localidade, de um outro universo de uma outra realidade. Então não é um "feminista", vamos dizer que é um feminista local, que dialoga como o nacional, o internacional, entende? Esse feminista local a gente pode se dizer que a gente, enquanto juventude, enquanto mulheres, ele existe, mas de uma forma de que como a gente pensa o feminismo, entendendo as suas diversidades, entendendo os seus propósitos e encaixando as nossas sugestões, os nossos objetivos, como a gente quer o feminismo. Não é universal, é como o Hip Hop. O movimento Hip Hop não é universal dentro de uma política de justiça social, racial. Ele existe em suas diversidades, ele tem as suas outras vertentes de filosofia assim como o feminismo, entende? Por isso que a gente vai direcionando pra aquele feminismo local, mas dialogando com essa diversidade nacional e internacional e entendendo essa diversidade. Porque cada lugar é diferente, por mais que seja a mesma periferia, mas a periferia é diferente, cada um tem os seus problemas, cada um tem as suas questões, violências, cada uma tem o seu jeito de viver.*

Interest in the history of hip-hop calls for two further issues to be raised: bolstering knowledge about experiences of the Black population from Africa in the Diaspora, including Black movements and their leadership figures especially in the United States and Brazil; and stimulating political education and activism grounded in this social history and in current times, which points out the need for more information about other closely related movements. Eliciana upholds this view when she says, “*this is the history we know here about hip-hop, the history we accept. Hip-hop came as a political element to resolve social conflicts*”.⁴

According to Eliciana, in the United States hip-hop is no longer acknowledged in this politicized manner. She states that it currently carries a very commercial connotation, which is distinct from the fight for citizenship to which social movements are bound.⁵ In her eyes, the version of hip-hop that The Movement in Salvador advocates for is that of receiving something foreign; however, it also carries a connotation bound to black inheritance:

*We believe in a hip-hop philosophy that's from here, and we feed into that all the time. 'Cause we acknowledge the history of The Hip-hop Movement from Africa, from the birth of the griots, from its transition to the United States through wars that were being fought in Africa, from the coming together of the four elements there, and from its spreading around the world to its arrival here in Brazil.*⁶

Eliciana's interpretation translates the version of hip-hop upheld by The Movement in Salvador. The Movement understands hip-hop as an African inheritance rooted in the griot culture which acted with artistic elements to address education among young people and adults. Through the process of the Diaspora of Black peoples, their elements and knowledge of African culture dissipate throughout the world. Rapper Paula wrote about the relationship of hip-hop and its elements in young people's education

4 T.N.: *A história que a gente conhece aqui do Hip-hop, que a gente aceita é essa, que o Hip-hop, ele surge como um elemento político, de resolver os conflitos sociais.*

5 During my exchange experience in the United States, I was able to feel the discomfort that hip-hop, more specifically rap, caused in people, which immediately made me think back to the sensation felt in Brazil with respect to pagode, with its controversial songs and dances.

6 T.N.: *A gente acredita em uma filosofia de hip-hop daqui a gente alimenta isso o tempo todo, porque a gente reconhece a história do movimento Hip-hop desde a África, do nascimento do Griôs, da transição pros Estados Unidos por conta das guerras que aconteciam na África, da união dos quatro elementos lá e da propagação dele no mundo até a chegada dele aqui no Brasil.*

in her undergraduate degree in Pedagogy. She sums up her —and The Movement's— concern with respect to the history of hip-hop:

I know, because as a member of The Movement, first and foremost, I know it's necessary for us to have this information. We're not gonna just fight for a movement, be in a movement if we don't even know how it began, its origins, where it is today, and where it's headed.⁷

It is in this critical fashion that The Movement is erected by the young female hip hoppers, and through it they foster a re-reading of their own reality. In the same fashion they transform and construct their own feminism with the language of hip-hop. It is fascinating to note the instances that brought these movements together, as if in a social process or a fertile field for creating spaces to exchange knowledge. This dialogue between feminism and hip-hop has helped pave the way for women in their movements, as Carla shows us in her experience with the elements of hip-hop:

Music and breakdancing, I think it's mostly spoken word and body. Through rap, especially since I was in the mix and had friends, you know, to bring me into the world of rap, of music and... me as a subject in this case. Not as a person that stays seated listening to rap and all like that, but you know, friendships come in a way I can express myself through music too, you get me? I can make music too; I can rap too. And through breakdancing, 'cause in the activist space in The Hip-hop Movement, you know, we get on the discussion about gender and we realize that women, even being a space of struggle against oppression, a space of resistance, like I said, but it's a space that reproduces a lot of stuff. And so we... you know, it weighs a lot on the issue of the body, how the body moves and also how it speaks. I had contact with breakdancing in a b-girls breakdancing class... yeah, that was it.⁸

Carla's case, while developing the elements of hip-hop (rap and breakdancing), shows The Hip-hop Movement as open to dealing with

7 T.N.: Sei, porque como integrante do movimento, primeiramente, eu sempre, eu sei que é necessário que a gente tenha essas informações, a gente não vai lutar por um movimento, está em um movimento sem saber como é que ele começou, as origens, onde ele está hoje, pra onde ele está se encaminhando.

8 T.N.: A música e o break: eu acho que é muito palavra e corpo. Através do rap, justamente por conta de eu estar inserida no meio e de amizades mesmo, né, pra me apresentar esse mundo do rap, da música é... eu enquanto sujeita, no caso. Não enquanto uma pessoa que fica sentada ouvindo rap e tal; mas aí as amizades vêm no sentido de é... de eu poder me expressar também através da música, né. Eu também posso fazer música, eu também posso cantar né. E através do break, porque dentro dessa, desse espaço de militância do movimento Hip-hop né, e aí vem a discussão de gênero que a gente percebe que as mulheres, mesmo sendo um espaço de lutar contra a opressão, um espaço de resistência, como eu já falei, mas é um espaço também que reproduz muita coisa e aí a gente é, é... pesa muito sobre essa questão do corpo, como esse corpo se movimenta, como esse corpo fala também e o break eu tive contato a partir do, de um curso de formação né, formação de b-girl.

various issues, yet situated and incorporated in a political space (“*even being a space of struggle against oppression, a space of resistance*”). She states that although this space protests against inequality and discrimination “*it’s a space that reproduces a lot of stuff*”. It is in this very same space that this violence happens. Such insight exposes the challenge placed before The Movement and is a point of constant critique by the hip hoppers.

However, when such claims concern the body, the dialogue between hip-hop and feminism is found in the forms of walking, dressing, speaking, painting, and dancing. Hip-hop and feminism are capable of tackling multiple issues on women’s body movement and conventions around the body. Carla affirms that “*it weighs a lot on the issue of the body, how the body moves and also how it speaks*”. The hip hoppers read the body through another language, one that is influenced by interferences from hip-hop and feminist/womanist activism. When asked how a hip hopper understands The Movement’s interference in her life, be it hip-hop or feminism, Negramone responds with the following:

They interfere because people’s bodies change, people’s style changes, it changes and that ends up showing them who they are, where they came from, their stories that were never told. It has an influence because it ends up being a very... mmm, what’s the word I’m looking for... a very combined concept, and from people’s experiences they end up being references. I don’t really like the word ‘influence’, coming from influenced. I like words that can, let’s say, create references. Because when children watch TV and always see white cartoon characters, they wanna be like those characters. Their reference is to be white. So I’m going on a concept of reference. People sit in their homes and they look at themselves. They see themselves as political individuals, as dynamic individuals, as people that can build a new society, transform where they live, and speak out because that’s what society needs. To be honest, young people need that and hip-hop gives rise to the logic of you speaking out about things that were never put in place for you to protest, you understand? So, it’s really a lot more in that direction, about the essence of the woman, the Black woman, the White man, in the sense of the White man affirming himself as well within that connection, for him to know how racism functions, how sexism and misogyny function. Did the movement contribute? It contributed through our being. I think it still contributes, not just for some things, but to the person I am today by knowing the context of my reality, the state of conditions I live in, what

*kind of country this is, and it has contributed to my understanding that not everything is what it seems.*⁹

The interference of knowledge acquired in activist experiences in The Movement is responsible for transformations in these young women's worldviews, because "*people's style changes, it changes and that ends up showing them who they are*". These ideas of one's self-awareness, of assuming one's identity, of acknowledging oneself or of feeling represented by someone, and acknowledging one's own power to transform society where one lives are the results of a process of politicization and empowerment for these young women, who "*see themselves as political individuals, as dynamic individuals, as people that can build a new society.*"

According to Negramone, "*hip-hop gives rise to the logic of you speaking out about things that were never put in place for you to protest*". In other words, The Movement presents itself as a stimulus for reflection, inciting women to think about themselves, where they live, the status of transportation in their cities, the logic of beauty in the media, or any other subject concerning the world around them. They are invited to take a position, to have an opinion, and to learn a little bit more about themselves at the same time in which this knowledge interferes in acknowledging its references: "*It contributed to the person that I am today by knowing the context of my reality*". In the face of contextualizing possible dialogue between hip-hop and feminism, Negramone offers means to think about a new sector of hip-hop and feminist social movements.

9 T.N.: *Interferem porque muda o corpo dessa pessoa, muda o estilo dessa pessoa, muda e acaba identificando pra essa pessoa quem ela é, de onde ela veio, a história dela que nunca foi contada. Influencia porque acaba sendo um conceito muito, como vou dizer, conceito conjunto e partindo dessas experiências que essa pessoa é, ela acaba sendo referência. Eu não gosto muito da palavra influenciar, de influenciado. Gosto de palavras que possam suscitar, vamos dizer, referências. Porque quando uma criança vê sempre a televisão e vê sempre personagens de desenho brancos, elas vão querer ser, a referência é pra ela ser branca. Então, eu vou num conceito de referência, então as pessoas se sentem dentro das suas casas, elas se vêem, se vêem como pessoas políticas, como pessoas dinâmicas, como pessoas que podem construir uma nova sociedade, podem transformar onde vive, e podem falar porque a sociedade precisa disso, os jovens, na verdade, precisam disso e o hip-hop suscita essa lógica de você falar, de você falar das coisas que nunca foram colocadas pra vocês se manifestar, entendeu? Então, vai muito, muito mais direcionado pra isso. Pra essa essência mesmo da mulher, da mulher negra, do homem branco, do homem branco no sentido dele até se auto afirmar também, dentro dessa própria articulação, e pra saber de como racismo funciona, de como sexismo, de como o machismo funcionam. Contribuiu? Contribui pelo ser, acho que, contribui não... Acho que ainda contribui... Não só contribuiu pra algumas coisas, e contribui pra... Contribuiu pra eu ser a pessoa que sou hoje, por saber o contexto da minha realidade, de que estado eu vivo, de que país é esse e contribuiu pra eu entender que nem tudo que a gente vê é o que é.*

Feminist hip-hop

When responding to the question: “Do you think that such a thing as feminist hip-hop is possible?”, the interviewees were taken aback by this expression, which received an unusual reaction. It should be considered that I, as a researcher, had never come across to the use of such an expression in my fieldwork or in the literature. Posing this question, all except one of the interviewees believe that feminist hip-hop is possible or that it already exists.

According to Negramone, the power of transformation is translated into creation when she explains that she thinks feminist hip-hop is possible, as well as masculinist hip-hop and indigenous hip-hop; that humans have unlimited creative possibilities. In order to justify the construction of this type of hip-hop and of feminism, Carla draws from her racial identity and questions if this feminism is only possible and of interest to and for women.

Yes, feminist hip-hop, how beautiful is that? I think feminist hip-hop is possible and I think that's what we do, right? I think the group I'm a part of has that, carries a bit of that idea of feminist hip-hop. We question gender roles a lot, you know? Also in our music and going off of what I said, the issues of race and gender, and our very survival as women, Black Women, right? I think that it is, I already live in feminist hip-hop, right? We hope it wouldn't just be practiced by women, but by men as well. Feminist hip-hop, I think that's a bit far off, but it's possible. It's what we believe in.¹⁰

As Carla states, feminist hip-hop is identified as a reference to the group in which she participates, the rap group *Munegrade*. It is Dina who not only responds to the question at hand, but also justifies and exemplifies possible expressions of feminist hip-hop in female activist initiatives within the artistic elements of *The Movement*.

RESEARCHER: *Do you think that feminist hip-hop is possible?*

DINA: *It's not just possible, it already exists.*

10 T.N.: *Sim. Hip-hop feminista, que bonito. Eu acho que é possível sim um hip-hop feminista e eu acho que a gente faz isso né, acho que o grupo que faço parte tem essa, leva um pouco essa ideia do hip-hop feminista, que a gente questiona muito esses papéis da questão de gênero, né? Também dentro da nossa música e aí pegando o que eu falei, questão de gênero e de raça muito e a nossa sobrevivência mesmo enquanto mulheres né, mulheres negras. Eu acho que é, eu já vivo num hip-hop feminista né? A gente espera que não seja só praticado por mulheres, mas que também seja praticado pelos homens, o hip-hop feminista, que eu acho que isso aí tá longe, mas é possível, a gente acredita nisso.*

RESEARCHER: *Please talk a bit about this feminist hip-hop.*

DINA: *It's when females grab the mic, they're feminists. It's when a female goes to do graffiti, when a female says that a guy's thing is also a girl's thing. It's about time for guys to know that a girl's thing is also a guy's thing. Now we know that a guy's thing is a girl's thing too, so that's why we do what we do. That's why some women have been doing what they're doing. I'm not talking so much about myself now, I already did my part and now other women are carrying the torch.*¹¹

In regards to the relationship of male hip hoppers with this type of hip-hop, that will be given its due attention shortly, not only due to the fact of it being a recurring topic in the female hip hoppers' conversations, but also for being a part of a classification and of questions concerning male hip hoppers —according to their postures with respect to women and feminism. Only one interviewee, Vivian, responded negatively to the possibility of feminist hip-hop. She explains the reasons for her skepticism based on experiences in another movement:

*I don't believe so. Because, I mean, The Black Movement has it's... A lot of holes were left behind unfilled, even in the MNU¹², where I came from also. Where I come from, there are feminist women who ended up creating a movement within The Black Movement, and today they're no longer affiliated with the MNU, for that exact reason. [...] From a generation that came from the MNU, they created The Feminist Movement from within and ended up with this result. That's something that hip-hop really doesn't want, women starting another movement from within. I believe women need to be fighting for one and the same. [...] I want more women to show up and I want us to have more autonomy to be one and the same, to throw down, take hold, and do a rap concert, [...] and I want it to be one and the same without... like calling me 'man'. I gotta lift up my hand and say I'm not a man, I'm a female, needing to create another... they need to re-educate themselves you know what I mean! I really believe that.*¹³

11 T.N.: E tu achas que é possível um feminismo, um hip-hop feminista? / Não é só possível, como já existe, já existe. / Fala um pouquinho desse hip-hop feminista. / É quando as meninas pegam o microfone, são feministas, é quando a menina vai pro grafite, quando a menina diz que coisas de menino também são coisas de menina. Agora os meninos precisam saber que coisa de menina também é coisa de menino, agora nós já sabemos que coisa de menino é coisa de menina também, então é por isso que a gente faz, que algumas meninas têm feito, eu não digo tanto eu agora, mas já fiz minha parte e as meninas estão dando continuidade.

12 T.N.: MNU: Movimento Negro Unificado (Unified Black Movement).

13 T.N.: *Eu acredito que não. Porque assim é... o movimento negro tá aí com suas... vários buracos que aconteceram e dentro do movimento do MNU mesmo, de onde eu vim também, de onde eu venho, tem as mulheres feministas que acabaram criando um movimento dentro do movimento negro, hoje em dia elas não são mais do MNU, por essa conta. [...] De uma geração que vem do MNU, que elas criaram o movimento feminista lá*

There is concern that feminism separates groups comprised of men and women, as was shared in the account above in another group in The Black Movement, identifying some issues to be discussed. However, to better understand ‘feminist hip-hop’, we made an effort to dig deeper into the knowledge around conceptions of feminism constructed by young female activists, which guide them and are (re)produced in their political practices.

Feminist hip-hop and conceptions of feminisms

Notions around feminism in my fieldwork in Salvador indicated a politicization beyond behavior or how the hip hoppers dress. With the same critical fashion that they exercise in hip-hop, these young women view feminism as an assembly of discussions concerning class, race, and sexuality—all of which map out the history of both women and feminism.

What do female hip hoppers in Salvador define as feminism? Within that definition, do they assert themselves as feminists? What types of feminism can be identified in their discourse? What are the central issues that motivate them, or cause them to reject or even resignify feminism? In searching to discover the conceptions of feminism that ground feminist hip-hop, three relevant issues were identified in what the hip hoppers had to say: women’s sexuality and autonomy, race and class, and (de)substantiating feminism, in relation to women.

Women’s Sexuality¹⁴ and Body

Feminism carries the history of women’s strife all over the world, and it is understood as a movement that advocates for women’s rights. In addition to being seen as a lifestyle that orients different possible world-views, feminism is also dedicated to women’s relationships with their own bodies. Negramone explains her position concerning these matters:

dentro e que acabou com esse resultado, e uma coisa que o Hip-hop mesmo não quer, que são mulheres fazerem outro movimento ali dentro. Eu acredito que seja mulheres pra estar lutando do igual a igual. [...] Eu quero que cheguem mais mulheres e que a gente tenha autonomia de ficar igual a igual, de botar, pegar, fazer um show de rap, [...] e eu quero que seja igual pra igual sem... como me chamar de “cara”, levantar a mão e dizer eu sou “cara” não, eu sou moça, mas que precisa criar outro... E que eles se reeduquem né! Eu acredito muito nisso.

14 According to Jeffrey Weeks (2000), sexuality concerns more beliefs, ideologies and imaginations than the physical body itself, which has no intrinsic meaning but a historic construct. In this sense, sexuality goes beyond the body, being positioned in each individual’s historical and cultural context, taking after the hip hoppers in Salvador who carry their social baggage expressed in their bodies.

I understand feminism as transversal politics, politics that discuss the plight of women, issues of race, the State, and sexuality as a whole. So I understand it as a life philosophy, very much so, especially for these women [...]. The difficulties are very universal, particularly when we get into the issues of being a woman, young, Black, and having a sexual orientation outside the norm. They're huge. So, it's just the fact that you have that difficulty from the, let me say, from the partners of The Movement, that those same partners don't let you do something that could be good for The Movement in discussing gender, masculinity within The Movement, and constructing a less sexist, misogynist, and homophobic society.¹⁵

For Negramone, feminism is “transversal politics” and “a life philosophy” that prioritizes women and dialogues with the categories that represent them in their racial and sexual identities, among other identities. Carla also contributes to the debate when she states the smaller number of women involved in The Movement in comparison to the number of men. To the disadvantage of this context, women are approved by men in The Movement and questioned on the basis of their bodies. As Carla contends: “the first look of suspicion, suspicion of that woman's potential, and the other look that's like seducing that same woman, they think that woman that's there in The Movement is on their side”.¹⁶

B-girl Priscila stresses self-esteem and confidence when affirming that she believes feminism to be “when we take care of ourselves, when we go after our goals, when we fight for what we want”.¹⁷ It is as if feminism was able to boost the strength inside of every woman to reach their personal and professional objectives. For Paula, feminism is synonymous with fighting against misogyny and she provides debate-worthy evidence about who can be misogynistic. Can both men and women be misogynistic? This subject will be revisited in the ‘(de)substantializing feminism’ section.

15 T.N.: *Eu entendo feminismo como uma política transversal, uma política em que discute a questão da mulher, a questão racial, a questão, vamos dizer, de estado também e da questão da sexualidade como um todo. Então eu entendo como uma filosofia de vida, como uma filosofia de vida e de vida mesmo dessas mulheres [...]. As dificuldades são muito universal, principalmente, quando se toca na questão de ser mulher, jovem, negra e por ter orientação sexual afetiva diferente da norma, são vastas, então, só o fato você ter essa dificuldade dos próprios, vamos dizer, companheiros de movimento, os próprios companheiros de movimento não deixar que você possa realizar uma coisa que vai ser interessante para o próprio movimento nessas discussões de gênero, nas questões da masculinidade dos homens dentro do movimento, na construção de uma sociedade menos sexista, machista, homofóbica.*

16 T.N.: *O primeiro olhar da dúvida, duvidar do potencial da menina e o outro olhar que é tipo de seduzir mesmo aquela menina, acham que aquela menina é pra do lado deles que tá lá no movimento.*

17 T.N.: *É quando a gente cuida da gente, é quando a gente corre atrás de nossos objetivos, quando a gente luta por aquilo que a gente quer.*

Feminism is the system we created for self-defense, not just from men, but also from misogyny. The way I see it, it's not just about the relationship between a man and a woman, misogyny is something that's already so grossly entrenched in society that even a woman can be misogynistic [...]. As a battle mechanism, in search of us women, each with her own realities; Black Women have theirs, White Women have theirs, Indigenous Women have theirs, each woman has her own view, her own way of carrying on in the struggle.¹⁸

Dina agrees with Paula that misogyny targets all women regardless of their ethnic-racial identity. It is for that reason that she defends feminism as a women's struggle for the right to choose. For Paula, feminism is a search for women's autonomy, be they White, Black, or Indigenous. Dina was asked if she considers herself to be a feminist, to which she responded with a resounding affirmation as a Black feminist. Her affirmation transitions us to the next issue concerning the dialogue of feminism with matters of race and class.

Race¹⁹ and class²⁰

"Black feminism" being placed as a reference for the hip hoppers was a recurring feat in The Womanist Hip-hop Movement's activities and discussions. Going against the grain of a white, middle-class women's movement, Black feminism presents itself as controversial, given that its foundations rest upon the plurality of feminisms and women's experiences.

Social movements and the origins from which hip hoppers speak must be understood in order to explain the frameworks that guide their thoughts on Black feminism. To this end, Paula uses class to distinguish between feminism as it relates to white and Black women. She points to a case having to do with the possibility of a couple sharing household responsibilities.

18 T.N.: *Feminismo é o sistema que a gente criou pra se autodefender, não só dos homens, mas do sistema do machismo. Que a meu ver não tá somente integrado na relação homem-mulher, o machismo é uma coisa que já tá tão arraigada na sociedade que até uma mulher pode ser machista [...]. Como uma forma de luta, de busca de nós mulheres, cada uma com as suas realidade, a mulher negra com a sua, a mulher branca com a sua, a mulher indígena com a sua, cada uma com seu olhar, do seu ângulo continuando a luta.*

19 Here, race is understood as political, which draws back to an identity constructed on the basis of aspects linked to belonging to a historical group not just because of skin color and phenotype, but also because of self-affirmation and rescuing ancestry.

20 Class encompasses a social extract based on the average economic income shared amongst a group, which also spans other aspects such as lifestyle and worldview.

Because we have a feminist vision on white optics in exercising feminism. "Ah! I'm a feminist 'cause I don't cook, 'cause I don't wash anybody's draws, 'cause I don't sweep anything, 'cause I gotta go to work." It isn't about that. I think that as a woman, I don't do those things just because I'm a woman, I do it because I actually like to do those things. I think it's cool to take care of my husband, sweep up, wash the dishes, decorate the house. And he does the same thing.²¹

A distinction is already brought forth in a view that domestic work would group together necessary chores that a couple would share and do together. Paula's idea seeks to disassociate a sexual division of work—one that is questioned considerably by feminism—from a separation of chores in that women are overwhelmed with the exclusive responsibility of household chores, such as washing, ironing clothes, cleaning the house, etc. Yet, she negatively interprets feminism's demands on the basis of Manichaeism, the conflict between white and Black, and rich and poor, by treating White Women as excluded from the reality of being overwhelmed with household chores. In her mind, 'white feminism', if it may be called as such, denies carrying out the functions of household dynamics, especially by understanding feminism through the vein of representing a dominant class, which in society is not exactly pre-established in this fashion.

Carla also contributes to the debate when she highlights the distinction of her understanding of the history of feminism by pondering the trajectory and experiences of white European women and Black Brazilian women since the period of slavery.

What I understand as feminism is a collective way of fighting for equal rights between men and women. I also understand it as not just the history of feminism in Europe, but also the history of feminism in how it was established here in Brazil among Black Women. And so we get into the discussion on whether it's a Womanist movement or feminism. I believe that, for example, when the sisterhoods that were here would fight and get money together to purchase an enslaved person's freedom, I understand

21 T.N.: *Porque a gente tem uma visão do feminismo sobre a ótica branca de fazer feminismo. "Ah! Eu sou feminista porque eu não cozinho, porque eu não vou lavar cueca de ninguém, porque eu não vou varrer a casa, porque eu tenho que ir pro trabalho", não é isso. Eu acho que enquanto mulher, eu não faço isso porque eu sou mulher, faço isso porque eu acho legal, cuidar do meu marido eu acho legal, varrer a casa eu acho legal, eu acho legal lavar os pratos, eu acho legal enfeitar a casa. E ele também faz a mesma coisa.*

*that as feminism. Women organized together like that for a cause, that's what I understand as feminism.*²²

One can be certain that the racial and class critique of a white, European feminism is strongly presented among the hip hoppers in Salvador. In the midst of these references to white women and classes that had wider access to education, this feminism is recognized as something white and 'intellectual'. Such is one of the aspects that differentiate the experiences of Black Women, who historically have had less access to education, and, consequently, less opportunities to engage intellectually with their experiences.

When the hip hoppers were asked about their understanding of feminism, they immediately jumped to the idea of studies, writings, or something from academia, as both registered knowledge and a way to engage with this line of thought. Feminism's connection to reading connotes a link to a class that did indeed have access to education, and therefore more refined intellectual depth. This class would be the women who produced written material about their experiences with a critical perspective of power relations, the feminists. However, in the face of The Hip-hop Movement's demands, these matters are presented as ambivalent with respect to concern for access to education and knowledge. These are ideologies that can be exemplified in the fight for affirmative action policies in higher education and implementing the history of African and Afro-Brazilian cultures in school curricula. Once again, the issue of class can be identified *vis-a-vis* the hip hoppers' critiques of feminism:

RESEARCHER: *What is feminism to you?*

ELICIANA: *I mean, I think it's the rebellion of being a female and fighting for the right to be a female, to be a woman and not let misogyny rule over you. Something I remember from the history of feminism is that, talking about women's revolutions that happened, something I always hear is that, while white women were burning bras, black women were setting entire farms ablaze! I don't know if you ever heard that before, have you? That's the strongest, most beautiful thing I hear, because within the idea of feminism, from the little bit I've read and heard about it, 'cause we know how it's different being a black woman. Being a woman is crazy, but being*

22 T.N.: *Entendo por feminismo uma forma coletiva de se lutar por direitos iguais entre homens e mulheres. Entendo feminismo também não só a história do feminismo da Europa, mas a história do feminismo de como se configurou aqui entre as mulheres negras também, no Brasil. E aí vem a discussão de que se é movimento de mulher ou feminismo? Acredito, por exemplo, que as irmandades que existiam aqui, que lutavam e juntavam dinheiro pra comprar alforria do escravo, eu entendo isso como feminismo. Essas mulheres organizadas em prol de uma causa assim, eu entendo isso como feminismo.*

IT'S ABOUT TIME FOR BOYS TO KNOW THAT A GIRL'S THING IS ALSO A BOY'S THING!

a black woman?! That right there's on a whole other level! For real though we gotta have a bigger feminist rebellion, much bigger.

In the 1970s, there was an explosive outbreak of movements all over the world operating under the slogan of reclaiming rights. According to Matilde Ribeiro (1995), it was in the face of the military dictatorship in Brazil that The Feminist Movement gained a second wind in this country, with demands that prioritized private life involving topics such as sexuality, the right for children of working-class parents to attend daycare, sexual freedom, equal wages, political representation, and public policies for women. Yet, the questions of race and Black Women were sidestepped altogether. At the same time various Black movements were erupting in the fight for citizenship at the core of international anti-racist struggles, an era that the United Nations would mark as the 'decade for women'. Black Women in Brazil only began to effectively organize in the 1980s, prioritizing issues around a threefold type of activism which pointed to combating discrimination against poor and Black Women.

The claims of this movement spanned across points such as: combating stereotypes that stigmatize Black Women, insertion into the job market questioning the different treatment of opportunities and wages between Black Women and White Women, and regulating domestic work, among others. This argument fuels Vivian's convictions:

I mean, I'm not... Let me put it this way: I never really got into reading a lot about what feminism is. I'd resist a lot since it was apparently a white women's movement. I'm not a feminist, I say that a lot. I'm feminine. 'Cause ever since I was young I saw that The Feminist Movement was for white women and I didn't identify myself there. But I think it's a movement for women who fight for their freedom, women who fight for their rights in society which they originally didn't have just because they're women.²³

Here Vivian revives the discussion on separation between The Feminist Movement and The Women's Movement.²⁴ This discussion

23 T.N.: O que é feminismo para você? / Assim eu não [pausa] eu posso dizer assim: eu nunca me adaptei muito em ler sobre o que é feminismo, porque eu tinha muita resistência por dizer que é um movimento de mulheres brancas, eu não sou feminista, eu digo muito isso, eu sou feminista, porque desde adolescente vi que o movimento Feminista é um movimento de mulheres brancas, e aí então não me identifico, mas eu acho que é um movimento de mulheres que luta pela sua liberdade, pela... pelos direitos que ela têm na sociedade que por causa delas serem mulheres elas não têm.

24 For Ana Alice Costa and Cecilia Sardenberg (1994), the distinguishing factor between The Feminist Movement and The Women's Movement is precisely the structuring around feminist doctrine and questioning the plight of women in society, and not just by simply having women congregate

has been working out for the affirmation of a Black Womanist movement in Brazil, yet without consensus around the question. Carla pushes the envelope even further when she points to a Womanist and Feminist movement in coexistence.

*The struggle for equality is also the struggle for survival, the survival of women and their families. There I go back a lot to the movement of how the Black Women who came to Brazil organized and tried to make it through. But they weren't just thinking about their own survival, they were also thinking about the survival of their children and husbands. That's what I understand as feminism, but not just by women. It also needs to be practiced by men. Feminist hip-hop, I think that's a bit far off, but it's possible. It's what we believe in.*²⁵

Feminism acknowledged as combating inequalities between men and women appears to be a possible battle strategy, to be constructed by men and women, against misogyny. Yet, is feminism for both men and women? Can they both affirm themselves as feminists? These two questions lead us to our final section.

(De)substantializing feminism

One of the conceptions of feminism found in the hip hoppers' accounts involved questions of feminist and misogynistic men and women, as well as feminism for men on the basis of their experiences in The Movement. Questions such as these bolstered a sense of (de)substantializing feminism.

The relationship between men and feminism was a frequent topic, such as in Carla's account: "[...] *but not just by women. It also needs to be practiced by men. Feminist hip-hop, I think that's a bit far off, but it's possible. It's what we believe in*". Combating women's oppression seems to be an alternative for men who are also held accountable for a social transformation undertaken by, what would be, feminist hip-hop. Paula gives us confirmation: "*It's possible, it's real, it already exists. We're doing it. We're women and feminists. We're not feminists because we're women, but we're feminist women, just like there*

together for specific matters that have no direct impact in acknowledging or transforming the setting where they are.

25 T.N.: *A luta por igualdade é também a luta pela sobrevivência. Sobrevivência das mulheres e das suas famílias. Que aí eu me remeto muito ao movimento de como as mulheres negras que vieram pro Brasil se organizaram e tentaram sobreviver, mas aí pensando não só na sobrevivência dela, mas pensando na sobrevivência dos filhos, dos maridos também. Eu entendo isso como feminismo, mas não só por mulheres, mas que também seja praticado pelos homens, o hip-hop feminista, que eu acho que isso aí está longe, mas é possível, a gente acredita nisso.*

are feminist men as well".²⁶ By saying that, Paula makes a distinction between being a woman and being a feminist, which sparked a controversial debate revolving around feminist men.

Can there be feminist men and misogynistic women? For Paula, "misogyny is something that's already so grossly entrenched in society that even a woman can be misogynistic". Hip-hop acknowledges that misogyny's value system can be altered through the goal of (re)educating men and women.

*Most definitely, today it's with the ideal of having an organization that's self-sustainable, that makes people manage themselves. It's more of a desire to be able to get work done with the public, with women, and with men, too. Men need attention in the sense that they need to be (re)educated [chuckles]. My goal is to make this movement big, which it already is. But, I don't know, be one more person that made it, that got through, that's going on to serve and make our movement grow, build up, and continue to be different from The Movement that's sold in the US American media.*²⁷

This is the concern in maintaining hip-hop as a commitment to social transformation, pointing to a differentiated posture in The Movement in Salvador in relation to a movement that (re)produces discrimination and is 'sold in the media'. It would be possible for this feminist hip-hop to educate men in feminism. Although male hip hoppers were not interviewed for this study, seldom do we see men asserting themselves as feminists. Paula, for example, states: "I know some feminist guys; my partner is. He reminds me not to care for sexist attitudes; he is feminist. There are others, many others".²⁸ Dina, however, is a bit more temperate in her take, affirming that there are men who are sensitive to the cause, yet few and far in between.

According to Eliciana, the need for a new action perspective for men in hip-hop permeates a new way of looking at misogyny. It could be the case that what men perceive to be efforts of collaboration and mutual organization with women is just not up to par.

26 T.N.: *É possível, é real, ele já existe. A gente faz, nós somos mulheres e feministas, não feministas porque somos mulheres, mas somos mulheres feministas, como tem homens feministas também.*

27 T.N.: *Totalmente, hoje com o ideal de ter uma organização que seja autossustentável, que faça a gente se auto-gerir, é muito mais um desejo de conseguir desenvolver os trabalhos com esse público, com essas mulheres, com esses homens também, os homens precisam de uma atenção no sentido de se (re)educarem [risos]. Meu objetivo é fazer esse movimento ser grande, que ele já é. Mas, sei lá, ser mais uma pessoa que chegou pra, que chegou que tá chegando, que tá indo, que tá se instrumentalizando pra fazer o movimento da gente crescer, se fortalecer e continuar ser diferente do movimento estadunidense que é vendido na mídia.*

28 T.N.: *Conheço alguns homens feministas, o meu parceiro é feminista. Ele me cobra o tempo inteiro que eu não me atenta às atitudes machistas, ele é feminista. Têm outros, outros parceiros, vários outros.*

I mean, I think that, I don't know. There's still a lot to be done, from lyrics, from the guys I see trying to help out the ladies. Naw, but for real though, I've seen some things where I'm like, "damn man just shut up and don't say anything else. Don't even try and help us 'cause you're actually doing the opposite." They are out there trying to help like: "Ah, I'm the man that's with the females, but look at what I'm saying!"²⁹

With respect to gender conventions and feminism in The Movement, everything that I have laid out sheds light on some of the themes highlighted in my fieldwork, challenges in constant confrontation within hip-hop activism. The youth are indeed aware that this is a constant battle against the various faces of discrimination. Nevertheless, what these young women have been constructing as “feminist hip-hop” unites Feminist and Women’s movements (of all kind, including Womanist movements), Black movements, and Youth movements, thus constituting an instrument to contribute to social transformation by contesting inequalities —especially when it comes to women. This is the conclusion that we reach in Dina’s account when she speaks about expectations for the future:

Ah, they're so many. My expectations are for the Hip-Hop Movement and other movements I'm a part of start changing entirely, to really change. To change in what sense? Mainly in relation to us women. Men need to start too, the majority of them, since today we do have men that are sensitive to our cause, but you can pretty much count them on one or two hands. But I think my expectation is that, soon, all of the men that come to be a part of Movement understand that for them to be there, they need to have their act together with the gender relations. They need to understand those relations in order to change, you know what I'm saying? So that's my expectation. Don't get into hip-hop just because you wanna be a rapper. Nah, be a rapper because you wanna do something different. Your relationship with women is gonna change because you understand that The Movement makes that available to you, you get me?³⁰

29 T.N.: Assim, eu acho que, sei lá, tem muita coisa pra avançar ainda, que vai desde as letras de música, da tentativa que eu vejo dos caras de tentar fazer alguma coisa pras mulheres, mas que porra, eu já vi coisas assim de que, por velho, fique calado, não fale isso não, não tenta ajudar a gente não porque você tá prejudicando, deles tentarem, tipo: “Ah, eu sou o cara que estou do lado das mulheres, mas olha o que eu estou falando!”

30 T.N.: Ah, são tantas, minhas expectativas é que realmente o MHH assim como outros movimentos que eu faço parte, eles realmente comecem a mudar na sua total, mudar mesmo, mudar em que sentido, assim, principalmente em relação a nós, mulheres, que os homens comecem, a maioria dos homens, que hoje nós temos homens que são sensíveis à nossa causa, nós temos poucos, mas eu acho que a minha expectativa é que daqui a um tempo todos os homens que venham a adentrar no MHH eles percebam que para ele estar ali dentro, ele precisa ter uma relação de gênero resolvida na cabeça dele, precisa entender essa relação para mudar entendeu, então essa é a minha expectativa, não entre no hip-hop porque “ah, agora eu sou rapper”, não, não, eu sou rapper porque eu

The female hip hoppers constructed feminist hip-hop to empower themselves and their actions in The Movement as they make their way into political spaces and incorporate their demands. These demands are tied to contesting gender conventions that regulate social norms concerning the masculine and feminine and orient the social relations that these young women—who desire change—experience.

Final considerations

The Womanist Hip-hop Movement in Salvador was at the center of this research, which examined gender conventions and feminisms within The Movement. As a voice of the oppressed denouncing social inequalities with respect to the realities of Black Youth throughout the world, hip-hop also contests gender conventions surrounding the masculine and feminine in such a way that it is transformed into a weapon of battle and a space for women to act.

An analysis was conducted on the hip hoppers' activism based on the proposition that they were either reinforcing or resignifying the gender conventions in hip-hop. Our objective was to understand, according to the interviewees' formulation, of what a 'girl's thing' is and what a 'boy's thing' is in hip-hop. An array of challenges was laid out from the hip hoppers' initiatives in entering into The Movement, which was initially assumed to be a male-majority space. However, hip-hop contained a 'loophole' for women's action, which not only allowed them to incorporate themselves in hip-hop's forms of street art, but also to have the opportunity for input in claims and demands, demonstrations, and in the configuration of hip-hop in Salvador since its creation in 1990.

The hip hoppers came into contact with the art forms of hip-hop through socialization among young people who were driven by worries concerning the status of class and race stamped upon poor Black Youth in Salvador. These same worries were shared by the youth of other nations, taking after the US American Black Youth who, inspired by their reality of exclusion and the teachings of The Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, gave rise to The Hip-hop Movement there. Yet, what made it possible for the hip hoppers in Salvador to understand hip-hop was a path to question gender conventions was the Feminist Movement. The

quero fazer algo diferente, a minha relação com as mulheres vai mudar, porque eu entendo que esse movimento me propicia isso entendeu?

lessons it taught in regards to combating inequalities that afflict women bolstered their appropriation of a feminist train of thought, which in turn configured the conceptions of feminism that they (re)produce in their own political and activist practices.

These conceptions of feminism, combined in the claims and demands already instituted in The Movement, incubated the existence of a local, feminist hip-hop. With the aim of advancing understanding on the plurality of feminism as a social movement, our research subjects compared the ways in which hip hoppers appropriate and adapt feminist rhetoric and engage in The Movement. These issues were grasped in the tension between their own conceptions and their daily practices as they relate to the demands of The Hip-hop Movement, as well as in the role interpreted by the connection between gender markers, sexuality, and race in activism.

The results yielded principal arguments formatting the analyzed rhetoric of our research's interviewees, grounded on the conception of feminism as white with European reference—ultimately that which perpetuates inequalities among women of different races and classes. The hip hoppers, in their activism, challenge and resignify feminist movements when they themselves take a hold of feminism, which is understood as a struggle for women's sexual autonomy, yet opt for references that translate the experiences of poor, working-class Black Women.

From their conceptions of feminism, these young women made feminist hip-hop possible based on the reflection of three social movements: The Feminist Movement, Black Movement, and Youth Movement. In the interviewees' accounts, some issues surfaced around the idea of (de)substantializing feminism, due to the question of incentivizing the specific relationship between women and feminism. Such was the case especially due to considerations concerning men's posture in The Movement, who were classified in three different ways: misogynistic men, men who are sensitive to the cause of women's rights, and feminist men.

What ought to be noted from this discussion is the responsibility that The Movement assumes with respect to social transformation in the dialogue—geared toward this youth—between culture and politics. Therefore, as a social movement, hip-hop simultaneously dialogues with and challenges local, political culture by establishing demands and political strategies to reclaim rights and combat inequalities in general, particularly gender inequalities.

The biggest difficulty today is the logic of misogyny, the logic of misogyny of how things should go. 'Cause misogyny don't affect me, never has affected me. It doesn't phase women like us because we know how to deal with it, or we learned how to deal with it. Our goal is to have other women know and learn how to deal with misogyny too. But what bothers me in hip-hop and what makes me... what worries me is the logic of misogyny of how things should go. 'Cause all the time, no matter how squad deep we are - us women out there in the struggle making things happen - the barriers are always there. It seems like the stronger we get, the stronger the walls around us get, the bricks of misogyny are stacked higher and higher and get stronger. They use a stronger cement, something more impenetrable. So we've got to gain other skills. Today I'm in rap, tomorrow I could be in breakdancing, and after that I could be spinning some discs, and after that tagging up a wall, and then... you know, doing or creating another element, or have another element, do you understand? We have to always surpass ourselves, that's the biggest challenge in hip-hop that I feel as a woman in this thing. Because society and the people we're around are getting on us more and more. And also seeing that there are some sisters who just can't get it together, can't surpass themselves. They can't get over the logic of misogyny and we think they're pushing ahead, but no, they're not, they're actually going backwards (Paula).³¹

Knowing women's perspectives from their experiences in hip-hop in Salvador represents the scribe who records The Movement's history. Therefore, feminist hip-hop in Salvador is indeed one of the expressions comprising the plurality of feminist movements which point to challenges, possibilities, and creativity for Black Women to practice art and explore the political arena.

31 T.N.: A maior dificuldade ainda hoje é a lógica machista, a lógica machista de funcionar as coisas. Porque o machismo ele nunca me atingiu, ele nunca me atingiu, porque o machismo não atinge mulheres como nós, porque a gente sabe lidar com ele, ou aprendeu a lidar e o objetivo da gente que outras mulheres saibam, aprendam a lidar também com o machismo. Mas dentro do hip-hop o que me incomoda e o que me deixa mais... O que me preocupa é a lógica machista de funcionar, porque a todo tempo por mais que a gente esteja ali, mulheres na luta, conseguindo coisas e conquistando coisas, as barreiras elas sempre... elas permanecem. Parece que a cada vez que a gente fica mais forte, mais forte os muros são, os tijolos do machismo são cada vez mais empilhados, mais forte, eles usam um cimento mais forte, uma coisa mais impermeável. E aí a gente tem que ganhar outras habilidades, hoje eu estou no rap, amanhã eu posso dançar break e depois eu posso tocar disco e depois eu posso grafitar e depois eu posso... enfim, fazer, inventar um outro elemento, ou ter um outro elemento, entendeu, a gente tem sempre que se superar, esse é o maior desafio do hip-hop, que eu me sinto quando mulher no hip-hop. Porque a sociedade e o grupo onde a gente tá inserida sempre cobra mais da gente. E ver também que tem irmãs que não conseguem se superar, não consegue superar essa lógica e a gente pensa que ela tá indo, ela não tá indo, ela tá voltando.

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Towards a Brazilian Hip Hop Feminist Praxis: An Introduction

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From the moment I opened this book, I knew that *Hip Hop Feminista? Convenções de gênero e Feminismos no movimento Hip Hop soteropolitano* is an important book. The author, Rebeca Sobral has made an important contribution to hip hop studies, the new field of hip hop feminism studies, feminist studies, cultural studies and social movements theory. The book begins with the central questions: is there a City of Salvador-based youth-based hip hop feminism? Are there hip hop feminists? If so, what is hip hop feminism and how does it influence notions of gender in Salvador, Bahia. I should note here that these are the formal questions posed by the author in her text. The book also engages larger questions about political praxis and the continued negotiation of what constitutes “citizenship” in Brazil by people typically excluded from Brazil’s political processes. Specifically, hip hop, as one of many social movements centered in the cultural sphere, challenges what constitutes a “citizen” and who is to be included into emergent notions of citizenship in post-dictatorship Brazil.

Oftentimes social movements that occur within the cultural sphere are not considered to be *social movements* or even as being *political*. What Sobral's book does is to make an intervention into these discourses and to turn them on their heads. Drawing from leading scholars in the social sciences in the area of cultural politics, the author makes an important contribution to the emergent scholarship and empirical research concerning arts-based social movements. She uses this scholarship to contextualize an important social phenomena, the significant role that hip hop is playing in women's activism within Salvador, Bahia, all the while considering its implications locally and nationally.

Rebeca's usage of ethnography, and participant observation combined with interview data is also guided by feminist methodology. That is, within feminist research methods, the scholar undertakes empirically-based research that also seeks to overcome biases in academic research, contributes to social change, reflects human diversity and acknowledges the position of the researcher. Sobral accomplishes all of this, to the point that she has also presented her findings to the communities where she has conducted her research.

Most importantly, any seasoned researcher understands, the research methods that a scholar chooses depends on the research question. That is, if the goal of the researcher is to understand emergent social phenomena, then it is important to take time to observe and collect data on said phenomena. This approach is important in setting the groundwork for future research in new and important areas of social and political activity, as there will be an established starting point for future contextualization and comparison. Sobral's research question is simple and important: what is this phenomenon that has presented itself – specifically hip hop activism, a phenomenon that has had a documented impact on society and its individuals, and how do we move forward in our analysis of this social phenomena? The results of her research yielded the documentation of a feminist social movement that is addressing central questions about citizenship; presented by a population often excluded from established political processes. Additionally, and rightfully so, these activists' intervention occurs within the area of culture.

The author locates the hip hop scene in Salvador within a larger national social movement. She then locates this larger national social movement within the literature on culturally based social movements. Using the literature on culturally based social movements, feminist social

movements, youth and Black social movements in Brazil, Sobral challenges the construction of what is considered to be legitimate political participation. Sobral challenges the idea that the cultural is not political, when in fact all social movements in-act a cultural politics. In situating the hip hop feminist movement in Brazil at the nexus of several social movements (Black, feminist and women-centered and youth-based social movements), Sobral creates the space necessary to begin analyzing women's organizing within hip hop in Salvador as a social movement, specifically a feminist (or women-centered) social movement. The way in which Sobral makes this important intervention allows for future social scientists to be able to study something that clearly sounds a bell to examine, as she argues, the generational changes in how politics, specifically cultural politics, are undertaken by new generations of activists.

After the first few chapters situate Sobral's research and findings, in final three chapters of the text, Sobral presents her work. In chapter three Sobral draws from her ethnographic experience attending hip hop events in Salvador. She wrote that did not know what to expect at first, whether to expect a show or some other kind of artistic event. What she realized was that these events were actually meetings. They were consciousness-raising meetings that centered on empowering young women to participate in hip hop events, and/or to work for changing society generally.

These events had titles such as *Lugar de mulher é também no hip hop*. The activities of the events directly challenged the male centered nature of hip hop activism to argue that women too are an active and important part of hip hop and, in a broader sense, social change. Drawing from her interview data, Sobral quotes a *rapper* named Dina who argues that men had come to occupy space within hip hop in which their access to public is actually culturally-based, not a result of something particular to hip hop.

Dina argues that women needed to be empowered and ready to stand in the faces of these men who continue a longer cultural process of dominating public space and political movements, and to say 'it is not like this! This space is ours!' "*nãe é assim! Esse espaço é nosso!*" (page numbers are not in my copy). One of the interventions that these women make is to challenge the symbolically male aesthetic that has been commonly used within hip hop. That is, in order to be taken seriously, women were expected to wear men's clothing. *Rapperas* challenged this as a way to create space for women to also be able to speak, and to be taken seriously, as feminine subjects. In reflecting on the diversity of hip hop discourses

within the United States, Sobral also situates her discussion on the diversity of women-centered and/or feminist perspectives within hip hop. She also highlights how hip hop solterapolitana (hip hop from the City of Salvador) is very much located in a nexus of national women-centered and/or feminist activism shown by the presence of hip hop artists from various cities around the country at events in Salvador.

One central question that the participants (artists and the general public) in hip hop events address is: what is a woman, specifically what is and who is a woman within hip hop. Through engaging this question, the artists and the general public participating in the conferences, symposia and other events organized by artists, begin to deconstruct gender practices and the ways in which women themselves, through an expressed solidarity with men, continue to inadvertently reproduce many of the discourses they were working to change.

Sobral focuses on women's artists' interventions into the four key artistic expressions, or *elements* of hip hop Break dance, MCing, DJing and Graffiti. All of the women face various forms of discrimination in which they are assumed to not be as good as men, when they have opportunities to exhibit their art. However, one of the interesting insights of Sobral's work is that she compares how women, and femininity is understood in each of the art forms women chose to express their creative energy. She learns that break-dancers, perhaps, face the biggest challenge as break dancing itself challenges nearly every aspect of social constructions of femininity particularly by rendering visible women's corporal autonomy. What Sobral has done here, via her insightful analysis, is to articulate an important area for future research: much of the research on women in hip hop do not consider the gender politics of each of the elements of hip hop and flattens women's experiences participating in each of these art-forms. By considering women's experiences within each of hip hop's four artistic expressions, we can actually learn more about women's experiences from diverse perspectives within hip hop itself.

Sobral locates hip hop within other global Black cultural traditions such as *funk*. Hip hop, as a racialized public sphere, and a Black music culture, has emerged as a space where Black youth can begin to feel empowered, enjoy themselves, learn and even cultivate a stronger self-esteem in the face of a racist and sexist society. The artists interviewed felt that hip hop was a profoundly social enterprise, one centered on collectivity, social transformation, and as a movement that dialogues with nearly every

social movement in the country. This is something that I also found in my research in Cuba: Cuban Underground Hip Hop as a racialized public sphere, also served as a nexus for the numerous social movements occurring within Cuba's cultural sphere. This should not be surprising as the lives, experiences and interests of Afro-descendant people are diverse as well.

Chapter four and five are where Sobral makes her strongest theoretical contributions, drawing from her ethnographic data, participant observation and interview data. In chapter four, Sobral addresses the direct discursive challenges that women hip hop artists make to how gender is understood and experienced. Ranging from discussing the family and violence against women, to talking about sexual diversity. The fight for women's corporal autonomy has also been a key aspect of women centered hip hop activism.

In chapter five Sobral addresses the question of whether or not there is actually a hip hop feminism? In this chapter she presents the diversity of theories and self-definitions articulated by artists about their activism as women within hip hop. Ranging from women identifying with feminism, and with hip hop feminism in particular, to women distancing themselves from the term feminism because of the history of class-based Eurocentric intellectualism associated with the term. I will not go into detail here about the details of this chapter, I think here Sobral makes brings together all of the threads of her texts and makes a strong argument for why it is important to think through whether this women-centered movement is a feminist social movement. What I would like to do here, however, is to offer some considerations based on the emergent field of hip hop feminist studies in the United States, as a way to place Sobral's work and the work of these artists (artists who use art to make their political interventions and to work for social change) in conversation with each other.

Similar debates concerning feminist identity politics have emerged among the younger generations of women who form the first hip hop generation in the United States. After the commercialization of hip hop, the place of women within hip hop lyrics and videos shifted to an overwhelmingly sexist, and racist imaginary. Young women who were empowered by hip hop and developed their political consciousness via hip hop were dismissed by many feminists, particularly white U.S. American feminists, as people participating in their own oppression.

Hip-hop feminism as an explicit feminist praxis emerged in the 1990s, as a term coined and theorized by Joan Morgan in her book *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost* (1999). The fact that hip-hop feminism

came forth with the emergence of hip-hop studies in the 1990s, should not be a surprise. Black women have always been a part of, and played a foundational role at that, in Black social movements in this hemisphere – as Sobral argues in her book. Black intellectuals such as Joan Morgan wrote that the fallout from the 1960s had an impact on Black youth who grew up during this period; an effect that is intertwined with the period's form of deindustrialization linked to the stealth pace of the 1970s' and 1980s' waves of globalization. Morgan (1999) writes:

I am down, however, for a feminism that demands we assume responsibility for our lives. In my quest to find a functional feminism for myself and my sistas – one that seeks empowerment on spiritual, material, physical, and emotional levels ... We need a voice like our music – one that samples and layers many voices, inject its sensibilities into the old and flips it into something new, provocative, and powerful. And one whose occasional hypocrisy, contradictions, and triteness guarantee us at least a few trips to the terror-dome, forcing us to finally confront what we'd all rather hide from. [my emphasis added] (pp. 61–62)¹

The work of Durham, Cooper and Morris certainly complements the call Morgan makes for a feminism that reflects the spiritual, material, physical and emotional experiences of women. In taking more of a diasporic approach to understanding hip-hop feminism, Durham, Cooper, and Morris (2013) define hip-hop feminism as: '[A] generationally specific articulation of feminist consciousness, epistemology, and politics rooted in the pioneering work of multiple generations of Black feminists based in the United States and elsewhere in the Diaspora but focused on questions and issues that grow out of the aesthetic and political prerogatives of Hip-hop culture' (2013, p. 722). The inclusion of the "diaspora" – a reference to the African Diaspora, is why I think it is so important to place the artists' and Sobral's work in conversation with U.S. American hip hop feminist studies: we have the possibility of strengthening and reinforcing hip-hop feminism as a twenty-first century feminist movement, and bringing the voices of the larger diaspora in the Americas and on the African continent into a larger conversation about the relationship between hip hop and contemporary forms of diasporic Black feminist praxis. As Isoke (2013, p. 317) argues in her discussion of the importance of 'translocal subjectivities in framing analyses of global black women's political expression ... how specific locales relate to one another and resonate with one another as a form of cultural border crossing and bridge-building.'

Like Black feminists, non-normative and queer Black subjects have always been part of the Black public sphere. Much like Brazilian hip hop activists are doing, scholars such as Adreanna Clay have brought visibility to LGBT and queer populations who are also a part of the hip-hop generation. Her article “‘Like an Old Soul Record’ Black Feminism, Queer Sexuality, and the Hip-hop Generation,” argues that artist Me’Shell Ndegochello marks an important turn in Black feminism and reflects the complexities and contradictions of hip-hop feminism (Clay, 2008, p. 53).²

What I would like to point out here is the following, from its conception, feminism in the Americas emerged *with* the participation of Black women. In the United States, for example, of the most notable speeches of this longer this history is the speech “Ain’t I a Woman?” given by Sojourner Troth (1797-1883) who was born into enslavement. She gave this speech in 1827 at the Women’s Convention in Akron, Ohio. In the speech, she challenged white feminists’ conception of Black women and women’s equality.

One thing I would like to posit here is that, if feminism is a term that is used to describe the women-centered activism of women, in which the activism of women who existed before the term was coined are also considered to be feminists, then this term should not continue to be restricted to analyzing the women-centered activism of white women, when in the Americas, Black women have certainly been involved in women-centered activism from the moment we arrived to this hemisphere. Additionally, Black women have been pivotal in the production of history that the term “feminism” describes. It is for this reason that hip hop feminism is considered a form of Black feminism in the U.S., and the reason why I think it is important to include the women-centered activists as being hip hop *feminist* activists, even if they do not themselves identify as hip hop feminists. Or better put, while some women themselves may not always identify as feminist, in scholarship that considers the theoretical interventions of women-centered women activists (and here I am including transwomen), claiming the term hip hop feminist, as a way to recognize the formative history Black women have played in the emergence of various conceptualizations of feminism, is important.

Scholars must continue the work of acknowledging Black women’s formative participation in the emergence of feminist praxis, as active members of local, national and international public spheres, regardless of whether the activism of Black women continues to be dismissed by canonical

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forms of academic scholarship. Nonetheless, given the innovative work of scholars such as Rebeca Sobral, I am heartened to know that regardless of whether one decides to use the term *feminist*, *womanist* or another women-centered activist term, it is clear that the political interventions of Black women in the transformation of larger society are increasingly being documented within academic scholarship as well as increasingly receiving the empirical and theoretical consideration that it most certainly merits. An accomplishment reflected in *Hip Hop Feminista*.



About the Book

This book discusses questions concerning gender conventions and feminisms in hip-hop in the city of Salvador, Bahia, through the prism of young female activists. Its objective is to analyze the possible existence of a feminist hip-hop in Salvador, with a broader intention of understanding feminism in its plurality as a social movement. To this end, the book will ponder the ways in which feminist rhetoric is appropriated, as well as to what extent the author's research subjects represent the movement's ideologies in their activism. Thorough attention must be given to the connection between social markers such as gender, sexuality, and race in the political practice under investigation. By adopting qualitative methodology fixed within the interdisciplinary framework of Gender and Feminist Studies, this ethnographic-based analysis employs semi-structured interviews carried out in partnership with female hip hoppers and participatory observation from the author's own experiences with them. This new edition, translated from Portuguese to English, will allow the book and its research to reach a wider audience.



About the author



Rebeca Sobral Freire is a political scientist and specialist with a master's and doctoral degree in Feminist and Gender Studies from the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), where she was a Capes scholarship recipient in the Graduate Program of Interdisciplinary Studies on Women, Gender, and Feminisms (PPGNEIM). Both degrees were supplemented with study abroad experiences. In 2017, while completing her doctoral work, Rebeca held a teaching internship as a visiting researcher at The Ohio State University's Department of African American and African Studies in the United States. While still in Brazil in 2011, Rebeca visited the Federal University of Santa Catarina's (Procad/UFSC)

Graduate Program in Human Sciences where she conducted research for her master's degree. The year prior, she carried a specialization in Gender and Regional Development with a concentration in Public Policy (NEIM/UFBA). In 2007, she fulfilled degree requirements to become an educator of Social Sciences with an exchange period at Vanderbilt University in the United States as a Capes/Fipse scholarship recipient. A few years later, in 2010, Rebeca earned her bachelor's degree from UFBA in Political Science as a scholarship recipient of Pibic/Cnpq.

Currently, Rebeca is a professor and advisor of graduate studies at UFBA's School of Law. Her teaching within the department has a primary focus on courses dealing with contemporaneity and human rights and their connection to gender relations as well as ethnic and racial relations. She is also an associate researcher for *A Cor da Bahia* (The Color of Bahia), an education and research program in ethnic and racial relations, culture, and Black identity in Bahia (FFCH/UFBA), a position she has held since 2005. Furthermore, Rebeca has been working on an additional undergraduate degree in dance since 2017, and is an associate researcher for PORRA, a study group in dance where she has focused on the body and sexuality since 2019. She also collaborates on a team that arranges seminars on dance and diversity known as *Desmonte*.

Feminist Hip-Hop? Conventions of Gender and Feminisms in Salvador's Hip-Hop Movement is a translated edition of *Hip-Hop feminista? Convenções de gênero e feminismos no movimento Hip-Hop soteropolitano*, originally in Portuguese. The work explores the experiences of young Black women in the capital of Bahia in the Northeast of Brazil, a city known throughout the country for its majority Black population. The author's research captures expressions of the Womanist and Feminist Movement within the Hip-hop Movement of the early 2000s. This research came about from an opportunity abroad while in graduate school for Social Sciences through Brazilian female writers in the United States, contact with literature, discussions, and movements. A proposal was then formed around the subject of impediments vis-a-vis Hip-hop, particularly in the fields of Political Science and Feminist and Gender Studies.

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