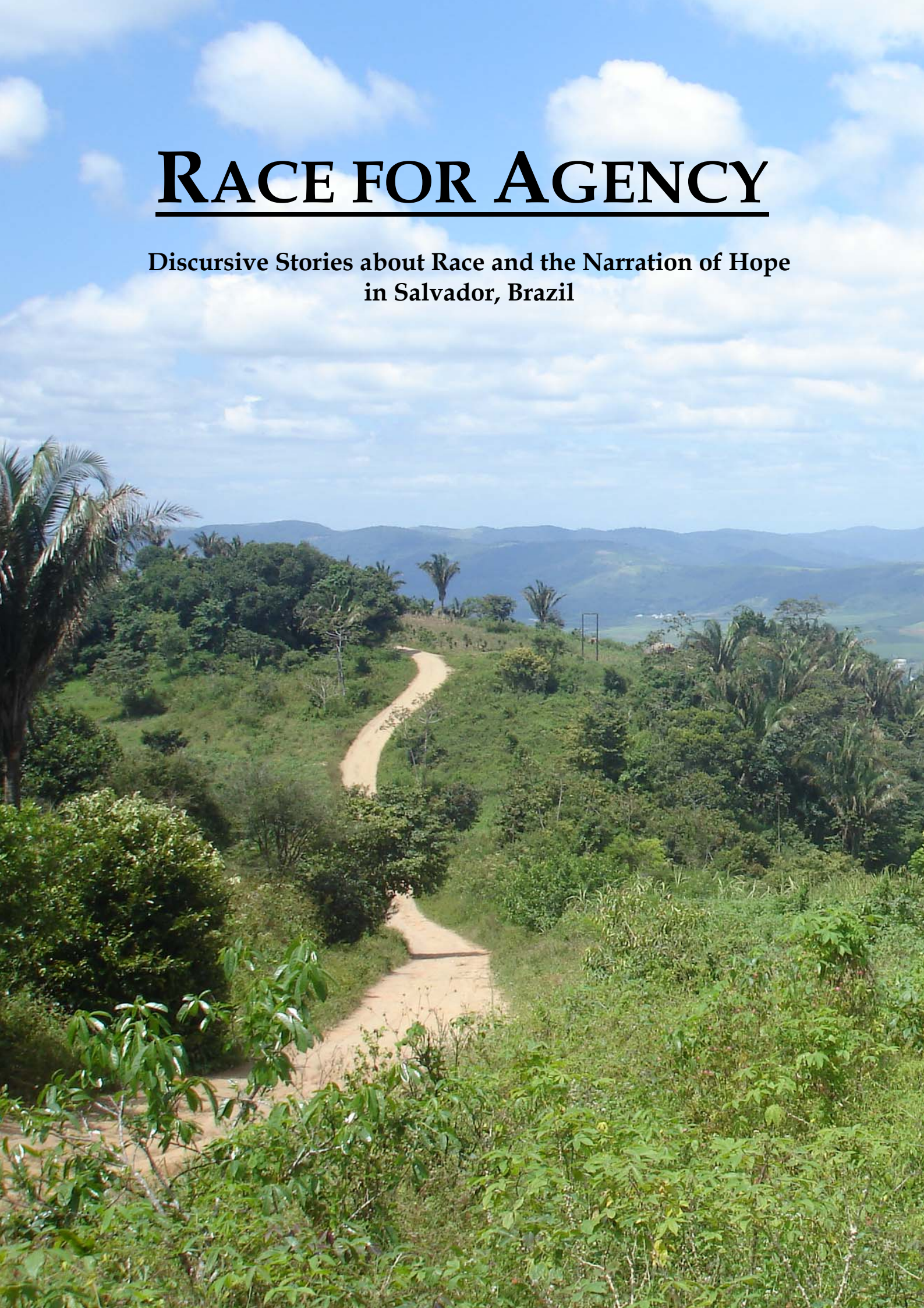
Race for Agency

Discursive Stories about Race and the Narration of Hope in Salvador, Brazil



Dedicado a Anderson Silva de Conceição
- um grande amigo num mundo estranho
e companheiro numa trilha da imaginação

Race for Agency:

Discursive Stories about Race and the Narration of Hope in Salvador Brazil

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Front cover: *The view from Serra de Barriga, Alagoas, home of legendary Palmares king Zumbi and the last stand of the Quilombo republic in 1694 - or, a track leading away from the mountain and into the distant.*

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One

APPROACHING THE FIELD

It is dark and humid just before midnight as we make our way through the narrow twisting streets. My companion, Will, is a militant in the black movement and he leads me towards a Candomblé temple in a shantytown, while talking about the nature of black consciousness. As we draw closer we hear the increasing beats of drums and people are gathering. This is it! I am walking towards an exotic ritual of spirit possession from a strange Afro-Brazilian religion, with a bald guy in camouflage clothes and a spike through his lower lip, while he tells me about his worldview. Finally I feel like a real Anthropologist: I cannot wait to understand what is going on!

The temple looks like a common house, had it not been for two metal statues stained with blood in front. Will tells me that it is goat blood from the opening sacrifice earlier that night intended to please the god *Exú* - in male and female form. The fur of the goat has been splashed up on the outer wall of the house, hanging-on simply by residue blood. The place is crowded but Will finds a place for us along the wall. It is hot and cramped, and we are all sweating. In the middle of the room is a pillar, the ceiling is covered with ornaments and farthest from the door is an opening to the back. On the left side of the opening is a band of drummers. Seven people dressed as African gods come out from the back and dance around the pillar. One by one they stop and start shaking. Will explains that they are now possessed. Some of them swirl around in circles while others crawl along the floor like snakes. One moment a spectator next to me is photographing, the next he starts to shake and before I understand what is going on, he is being led outside to dance - possessed by an unknown African god.

Outside again Will tells me that he does not practice Candomblé, but recognizes it as an important element of blackness. He explains that forced conversion to Christianity was intended to pacify the African slaves. By changing the names of the Candomblé gods to Catholic saints, it could be practiced 'under' Catholicism as a safe space for using the gods against oppression. I am intrigued! When degraded to slavery I imagine you grasp all positions allowing you to have an impact on your life. Will explains that Candomblé is the true religion of the black people, but when I ask more questions he says I should read a book by Pierre Verger for his analysis of Candomblé. It seems that being black is not enough to know about blackness.

WHAT IS THIS?

This paper is based on fieldwork among black movement organizations and their militants[1] in Salvador, Brazil, in 2006. I wanted to explore how they understood their involvement, what impact it had on their lives and why they started. Especially the construction of an alternative meaning of race other than the one dominating public life was fascinating to me. I chose Salvador as it was the city with the most afro-descendents in Brazil, and I chose Brazil because the struggle against racism here is done on the backdrop of an image of racial harmony. Besides I have been performing *capoeira* (a Brazilian martial dance) for some years now with a growing interest for Brazil.

I have previously worked with ethnic minorities in Denmark (the German minority and refugees) within a narrative framework. Fieldworkers usually end up researching what their informants want to talk about anyway, so by choosing a topic of interest for my informants as well, I found that I could not only realize my research, but my work might also be of interest to my informants and therefore used. I hope that my thoughts can spur reflections and discussions among my informants by supplying another perspective – and I have reasons to be optimistic in this regard as certain informants have reported back that I helped them see new opportunities.

It is with this aim in mind that I have chosen to write in English. My native Danish would limit my thoughts from reaching Brazil. Many of my informants were well-educated and commanded English to at least some degree. My study is not therefore a study of poor underprivileged youth, as many are well into their 50's and in positions of relative power. Others are on the path or attempting to create a narrative with the possibility of upward social mobility. Indeed, labelling my study as about blocked mobility, or my informants as without opportunities, would entirely miss the point as they are actively creating them.

WHAT AM I DOING?

The question guiding my fieldwork and this paper can be posed quite bluntly:

> Why do some people in Brazil call themselves 'black'?

Portuguese has two terms for black: *Negro* - strongly associated with race - and *preto* - designating the darkest phenotype. When I write 'black' in the following I will be referring to *negro* or state otherwise. Using the term 'black' further has the implication that I will be able to analyze the racial meaning of skin colour. Thereby my guiding question means

[1] My goal is not to participate in the debate over the definition of the black movement but use it as an emic term. For a further discussion I refer to Hanchard (1994: 160), Burdick (1998) and Telles (2004). Although the term 'activists' is used occasionally to refer to members of black movement organizations, most of my informants used the term *militante* (militant) and so I will use this term throughout the paper.

exploring *when* the concept of race is used, *what* are its meanings, *what* are the alternatives and *what* does its use contribute in context.

In Brazil 'black' is strongly associated with the discourse of the black movement, and several authors have asked some version of my guiding question to investigate its success or failure (Sheriff 2001: 207; Hanchard 1994: 41; Telles 2004: 236; see also Burdick 1998; Nascimento 1999; and Twine 1998). Implicit in their works is the assumption that calling oneself 'black' is a constant and means being part of the black movement. In this view the success of the black movement can be measured by the amount of people identifying as 'black'. Where these authors have all asked the question from a macro-perspective of the movement as such, I ask it from the ground. Where they have questioned the apparent unwillingness of the Afro-Brazilian population to be mobilized by the black movement, I attempt to place the choices made by individuals in a context of racial contestation and look at the uses they make of the term 'black' and its alternatives.

I do this by asking three interrelated sub-questions:

How do people explain their experiences?

This means investigating the *accounts* (Järvinen 2005) people give to legitimize their actions and to explain the experiences they judge to be out of the ordinary. These accounts are positioned within different discourses and by looking at what discourses are used to explain various experiences, I can analyze the gains involved. What people deem relevant to account for, are the experiences deviating from the canonical (Bruner 1990: 47-50). By looking at these experiences and those left unaccounted for, I can analyze the canonical narrative. Thereby the sub-question of accounts is closely related to that of collective narrative structures.

What structures do people use to narrate their lives?

Thereby I will take a look at the *genres* (Bruner 1990: 121) used to narrate experiences. Through genre I can analyze the narrative conventions of the black movement and others, as well as the expectations associated with their use. Looking at genres will enable me to see how people account for the experiences deviating from the genre and thus bring it back into the canonical. As a guiding principle I will focus on how the different genres contribute to the construction of a life with possibilities and a sense of autonomy (Bruner 1990: 118). As genres and accounts are not always stringently used, I will also look for doubts and ambivalence which brings me on to the third sub-question.

How do people express uncertainty in their narratives?

I will analyze this by focusing on different *voices* (Gilligan 2003) and what positions they take up. By looking at voices I can also conceptualize the use of accounts from several different discourses, and the presence of various intersecting genres in the narratives. A voice can thus signal a certain position within a discursive narrative, and by analyzing them I will be able to look at the negotiation of positions and what the narrator gains from them. Combining a look for accounts, genres and voices makes me able to see the positioning inherent in taking up different discourses, narratives and the positions within them. Thereby I perceive both the use of structures of meaning and their continuous negotiation as well as how they each contribute to the construction of a narrative.

My material can loosely be grouped into four methodological groups: Interviews, observation, participation and text. More often than not, the groups overlap as when reading banners at protest marches or the inevitable participation and observation while interviewing. Taking a narrative approach and focusing on accounts, genres and voices, the expected primary material is 'talk'. Following Mattingly's (1998) insights about narrative experience I will also use my own experiences with informants to demonstrate the lived consequences of their narratives.

I have conducted twelve interviews. Six with representatives of the various black movement organizations, three with two students and a teacher from Steve Biko, two with my primary informant and friend, Anderson, and one with his aunt Maria Helena, as well as numerous informal talks with black movement militants. From 16th July to 1st September I made classroom observations in the classes 'Citizenship and Black Consciousness' and 'Science and Technology' at the organization Steve Biko. I participated in four seminars, two protest marches in defence of the racial quotas, a bus trip to pay homage to the Sisterhood of the Good Death[2] in Cachoeira, and numerous cultural events. I spend as much time with Anderson as I could 'deep hanging out' (Sjørslev in Staunæs 2004: 76) and I will draw on homepages, brochures, pamphlets, and banners, as well as the existing literature in the following argument.

I recorded my interviews on an mp3 recorder and I hired two Brazilian girls to transcribe them. In this paper I will use my own translations. Translating from Portuguese to English I have decided to keep the original wording to the farthest possible extent. Trading Brazilian slang for its equivalent US ghetto language would not only further stereotype my informants, but also loose some of the nuanced word-use on which my narrative analysis

[2] The Sisterhood of the Good Death is an old syncretist sisterhood of Candomblé and Catholicism, which collected money to buy freedom for slaves and help them find their way. They are considered an important and highly respected part of black history and struggle, and are celebrated in the weekend around the 13th of August. Candomblé is an Afro-Brazilian religion (see Sjørslev 1995 and Jensen 2002).

rests. This means that some quotes might not be grammatically correct, but I believe them to better capture the atmosphere and the intended or ambivalent meanings of the words.

ABOUT THE THESIS

MY ARGUMENT

This paper will demonstrate that militants in the black movement are encouraged to structure their experiences in accordance with the narrative conventions and internal logic of the black movement discourse. This discourse is in strong opposition to the dominant discourse about race in Brazil, and so the militants construct narratives in the conversion genre to explain their opposition. In order to live up to the narrative conventions they account for trouble and deviation by supplementing with elements from other discourses. Each discourse has an inherent understanding of the relations between individual and society which offers certain positions of agency. The militants use these positions to create a narrative with a hopeful future and the possibilities of succeeding in life. They use the discursive positioning inherent in stories about race to create a sense of agency.

Thus my main argument goes as follows:

- Relative to, and in combination with, other discursive understandings of race in Brazil elements of the black movement discourse can, when knowing the performative and narrative expectations associated with it, be used to construct a sense of agency in life stories and thus create hope for the future.

Then, why do some people in Brazil call themselves black? My argument is that identifying with the term 'black' positions you within the black movement discourse which can then be used to explain important experiences in your life. As a contrary to the implicit assumptions of other writers and certain militants of the black movement, identifying as 'black' is made attractive by the resources it offers for explanation as well as the experiences that needs explaining. Each discourse offers different explanations and meanings of race which can be used as a resource in the narrative construction of a sense of agency for the individual.

STRUCTURE

Like my informants I too have attempted to shape the narrative before you, according to pre-established norms of what, in my case, constitutes academic writing in the thesis-genre. I have divided my narrative into separate chapters that I shall briefly outline in the following. The chapters are structured to analyse different aspects of my argument. This

chapter is about me, what I intent to do with this paper, what questions I will ask and what theories I will use, as well as what kind of material I will use them on.

The next chapter will deal with the popular discursive understandings of race in Brazil and attempt to demonstrate what options are available. I provide a section on Brazilian history or more specifically racial thought in Brazil, and outline how different positions have been taken up within the literature. I use these to sketch out the contours of what I call the popular discourse about race at the time of my arrival to Brazil.

The black movement discourse contains certain key elements and concepts which can be used to explain lived experiences and I will describe them in chapter three. Drawing on my own interviews, observations and collected documental material, I provide an outline of the black movement discourse as it is used by militants in Salvador as well as the central components as judged by them. These are often in opposition to the popular discourse described in chapter two. Thereby I sketch the offers of the black movement discourse relative to the popular discourse about race when used to explain experiences and the conditions of black people in general.

Chapter four is primarily concerned with the performative and narrative expectations associated with using the black movement discourse and thus identifying with the term black. Within the organization Steve Biko I analyse how the black movement discourse is taught in a classroom context. Here I will focus on which elements are highlighted and what expectations and conventions are distributed to the students. I do this by drawing on the discourse as described in the previous chapter, the narratives offered to the students in the classroom and their ambivalence in rectifying their experiences according to them.

In chapter five I analyze the life story of the militant Anderson, to show the many voices present in his narrative. I examine how the black movement discourse, among others, is used in the creation of a narrative with a hopeful future by combination and selective rectification. Focusing on his use of accounts, choice of genre and multiple voices I demonstrate how he narrates a story about ‘poor kid working his way up’ despite numerous difficulties, deviating experiences and lack of apparent progress. Anderson’s narrative serves to show the benefits of the black movement discourse and thereby speculate as to the reasons for calling oneself ‘black’.

I further develop my argument in chapter six by summing up my conclusions to propose an answer to my guiding question. Next I situate my findings within theories about Brazilian society, a globalized world and the classical debates in Anthropology. I end by pointing towards the future suggesting further fields of application for my findings, as well as three pitfalls of social science on the background of my experiences and looking back a the existing literature about race in Brazil.

STYLE OF WRITING

A couple of months into my fieldwork I had a dream. In the dream I played soccer with my informants and friends on an earthen field with a big tree in the middle. The ball left the field and I made the throw-in from the side line. When I threw the ball it went through the branches of the tree and as it was falling to the ground several other balls fell down with it. Because I made the throw I knew which ball was the right one and I could see all of my informants struggling over the wrong balls. I ran into the field and started dribbling the ball. I had a feeling that I was doing well when I discovered that I was running around with a notebook and pen in my hands scrabbling down notes while dribbling. Somehow they were no hindrance to me and the dream ended with a feeling of being on the right track.

Besides the warning inherent in the somewhat arrogant assumption of being the one dribbling the *right* ball, I take the dream to suggest that we are all playing the same game. The difference between us is one of method (notebooks and pens), not of mission (dribbling the ball). - And who is to say that my ball was indeed the right one?

My fieldwork experience was filled with doubts and ambivalence. My partial knowledge (Haraway 1988) never developed into completion and I claim the same to be the case for my informants. We were all in the process of figuring things out. So how do I express this in my choice of writing style? Van Maanen (1988) distinguishes between realist, confessional and impressionist tales, each associated with different ontological views on Anthropology, its method and 'subject'. Realist tales are positivistic reports claiming absolute knowledge and authority within Anthropology as a natural science. Confessional tales are post-modern stories of the fieldworker's personal doubts, eventually turning into some sort of knowledge in the end. Impressionist tales are literary 'paintings' of scenes equipped with sensual impressions and claiming only fragmented knowledge until they end up knowing better than the locals.

When claiming that knowledge is partial for both fieldworker and local, and that the difference is one of method, I seem to be without a tale. In my material multiple genres, discursive accounts and voices intersect to create meaning, and I will do the same. Thereby I use different tales to illustrate the points I wish to make, while they all should be seen to be partial. This is my reading of my fieldwork experience - a process of figuring out, dotted with doubts and moments of understanding - partially rectified into the conventions and structures associated with a thesis.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I place my argument on a social constructionist-interactionist foundation (Mik-Meyer & Järvinen 2005) as I believe that we construct different understandings of the world through interaction and language. Taking my focus to be an exploration of different (discursive)

ways of understanding the world (also Tambiah 1990), the subject positions inherent in these understandings, and the expectations accompanying them, I aim to show the strengths and weaknesses of each, as they are used in the construction of identity by my informants.

This approach means that I have to give up any absolute knowledge about the world *as it is*. An example is that I refrain from talking about the 'actual' existence of racism in order to focus on experience as articulated by my informants. This of course brings with it certain methodological considerations which I will attend to meet when briefly describing my use of method under each chapter.

IDENTITY, NARRATIVE AND AGENCY

Within a social constructionist-interactionist framework identity is viewed as a social construct shaped through interaction, and continually modified through negotiation and dialogue (Mik-Meyer & Järvinen 2005; Bruner 1990; Jackson 2002). There is no core of identity and it is largely determined by the subject positions inherent in different discourses. This means that individuals are all struggling to create a sense of coherence (of identity) out of what appears to be fragmented experiences and different expectations from others (Bruner 1990: 2; Jackson 2002). We attempt to create meaning and understanding by supplying our experiences with plots, narrative structures and explanations. This means focusing not only on what is being said, but also what is being implicitly opposed or justified. I do both when analysing the black movement opposition to the dominant discourse, and the implicit ideals without need for explanation in the narratives in chapter five.

When there is no core of identity and people experience different versions of themselves seen from different subject positions, it is impossible to talk of agency in any absolute sense. I believe with Jackson (2002: 14) that it is more meaningful to talk about "a sense of agency" as expressed through narratives (also Bruner 1990: 118). Narratives transform private into public meanings (Jackson 2002) but in doing so they involve a host of cultural expectation on what constitutes a proper story and of codes for interpreting and understanding it (Bruner 1990). These norms and codes are part of a discursive level of narratives and meaning-making. As narratives and identity are situated, I agree with Bruner (1990) that one should take as trope the orally communicated narratives and not compare culture to text (Geertz 1973) or identity to the static, written autobiography. Narratives can change highlighting new aspects and so life experience is richer than narrative and discourse (Bruner 1986: 143).

DISCOURSE AND RACE

I take discourse to mean "a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements, and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events" (Burr 2003: 64). These are not mutually exclusive and they constitute separate versions of reality, providing definite subject positions and the expectations associated with them (2003: 64). People not only have different available discourses for understanding a given event, it is my experience that they often shift between them exploring their powers of explanation and using different ones depending on the experience. The definition highlights the vocabulary of concepts and metaphors associated with any discourse (2003). All words are entrenched in the history of their use (Bakhtin 2004), although some concepts are more discursively positioned than others.

Such discursively positioned concepts are 'race' and 'black'. As I will demonstrate in chapter two, race has been understood by many different discourses throughout Brazilian history, and so the term 'black' has had different meanings depending on the discourse (Hanchard 1994: 15; Sheriff 2001: 217). It can be understood as one side in a bipolar racial discourse (*negro*) or as the lowest extreme in a gradual hierarchy of skin colour (*preto*). It gains different meanings when associated with 'racism' or 'racial mixture'. Throughout this paper I will demonstrate the uses people put race to and what they gain from it. Instead of stopping short at the argument that race is a construction, I aim to answer how and why it is constructed. Only then can I propose an answer to why people call themselves 'black'.

The concept of race has a tendency to spur strong emotions. This was the case in Brazil as well as when discussing my fieldwork in Denmark. I will end this chapter by pointing to the next one. Here I will describe this controversy on race more deeply by showing the struggle between discursive explanations and understandings of what race means and what its consequences are. This will provide a context for the rest of my paper by introducing the black movement discourse in a reading of race in Brazil.

Two

'READING' RACE IN BRAZIL

In order to understand what the black movement discourse offers and why some people identify as black, it is important to take a look at the backdrop of the black movement discourse. As will become evident in the next chapter the black movement discourse is constructed in opposition to popular discourse defining the meaning of race and being black. This chapter is an exploration of the meaning of race in Brazil as understood at different times and by different authors. First, I will take a historical view of the development of discursive meanings of race leading up to today and resulting in Brazil's dominant discourse. Next, I will sketch out the contours of race as understood in the popular discourse and use it in the following chapters.

I start out taking a historical view of the development of discourses about race as demonstrated by the North American historian Thomas E. Skidmore (1999; 1974), to show the different discursive understandings and constructions of race. This is not only to make the point that race is a historical construct open for change, but also that the concept has a history leading up to the present. The present understandings of race are the results of this historical development and a historical outline is therefore important for a better understanding of the concept and its context.

Race has been central to an understanding of the Brazilian nation and people, which I will demonstrate through the authors here. I show the contested nature of both the Brazilian past and present with regards to race by describing different approaches used by writers. The list is not exhaustive, but aims to show different perspectives on the question of race in a Brazilian context. One of these perspectives is the black movement discourse of which identification as black is part. Another is the discourse surrounding the 'special' case of Brazil and 'racial democracy'[3].

I use these writers to outline the contours of a popular discourse in Brazil through which race and skin colour is understood. The popular discourse serves as the backdrop of the black movement discourse and the elements outlined in this chapter will be used in the following both as a silent opposition and in more explicit statements. Identifying oneself as black should be seen in the relative context of other options, these options are therefore the focus of this chapter.

[3] 'Racial democracy' (*democracia racial)* connotes a brotherhood across racial differences.

BRAZILIAN HISTORY – A CONTESTED NARRATIVE

The following is a short introduction to the history of Brazil from its discovery in 1500 to Abolition and Republic in 1888 and 1889. I have chosen to exclusively use Skidmore (1999) based on sympathy for his approach and as he offers the most comprehensive chronology of the development of racial thought in Brazil. I use him despite his (white) elitist focus and I aim to provide the version told by the black movement in the chapters to come. This historical section is intended to serve as a contextualization for the literature and authors treated later in the chapter, to understand the ideas that came to be the dominant thoughts in Brazil. They in turn will serve to show the contested nature of Brazilian history.

The Portuguese nobleman Pedro Álvares Cabral arrived with his fleet in Bahia, Brazil, on the 23rd April 1500. According to Skidmore (1999) the country was described in exotic and erotic terms from the start. The native inhabitants of Brazil prior to 1500 consisted of more than 100 language groups of primarily hunter-gatherers which were portrayed with ambivalence, ranging from the innocent natural state of man to the barbarism of cannibals. The latter legitimated the colonizers' quest for civilizing the 'savages'. Portugal had brought African slaves back to Iberia from the 1450s, and this process was further intensified in Brazil. By 1580 the slave trade was transporting 2.000 enslaved West Africans a year across the Atlantic. The trade blossomed and by 1600 there were more African than Indian slaves in Brazil, the number swelling to a total of 3.65 millions (1999).

Portugal had long held ideas about "pure blood" and "infected races" and in the colony in the New World the hierarchical structure was white on top and black at the bottom. Skidmore writes (1999) that because of Portugal's relatively small size it was impossible to adequately inhabit the colony with Portuguese citizens, so they created several fortified trading posts along the coast line with mainly male occupants. As the African slaves too were predominantly male the gender imbalance resulted in *caboclos* – children of mixed Portuguese and Indian blood – and later in *mulattos* – children of Portuguese and African blood. These groups formed intermediary positions as middlemen just above the slaves. Eventually some even rose to high positions.

As Brazil became richer than its colonizer Portugal and a native born (although of Portuguese descent) elite emerged, subordination to Portugal was questioned, Skidmore writes (1999). Due to earthquakes and wars during the mid 1700's the Portuguese economy needed Brazil's vast richness to simply retain its present level. This meant that Brazil was withheld from industrializing, while it revolutionized the economy in most of Europe and North America.

Skidmore (1999) points to Enlightenment ideas reaching Brazil through young native-born colonists returning from studies in Portugal. At the time there was neither printing press nor any university in Brazil. This all changed when the Portuguese Royal Court fled from Napoleon to Brazil in 1807 and settled for their exile in a country that was now two-thirds black or mulatto. When the Court left again in 1821 Prince Pedro stayed in Brazil and declared its independence in 1822. It was the United Kingdom who had helped the Portuguese Court flee to Brazil and after 1822 the British started pressuring for Abolition as they had done in North America. This led to treaties but they were never enforced and slavery continued until 1888.

POST-ABOLITION RACIAL THOUGHT

Skidmore, while having authored a recognized history of Brazil, also made the only examination of Brazilian racial thought available, covering the period from the abolition to the 1970's (1974) where the book was published. I will here use him to show the development of ideas about race among the Brazilian intellectual elite. I do this to create an understanding of the ideas of the time and how they came to take the form they have in works and public use. This section will be further discussed in chapter three, as the black movement militants often were familiar with and explicitly opposed many of the ideas mentioned here and in the following.

Skidmore (1974) claims that before the Abolition in 1888 race had not been a problem for the Brazilian elite. It was only in the war against Paraguay (1865-70), where the lack of free men to become soldiers forced the Emperor to use enslaved Africans. The slaves gained their freedom after the war and the experience made the military become increasingly Republican and critical of the institution of slavery.

Urbanization created a class of young men who opposed the Empire inspired by abolitionist and republican ideas. These men joined ranks with writers arguing for Abolition based on arguments about the higher effectiveness of free labour. This alliance made the Conservative Party sign the Declaration of Abolition on the 13th May 1888. They agreed that slavery was ineffective, and signed the declaration as a strategic way to prevent any abolitionist success which might lead to an increase in their influence.

Skidmore (1974) writes that Brazil had been trying to find its own identity as a republic from 1889 mainly by imitating Europe. Before the Abolition religion legitimized slavery through the Polygenist idea that God created distinct human races with inherent qualities and focusing on degenerating racial mixture[4]. When the dominant intellectual paradigm shifted to Positivism, race was understood in terms of Social Darwinism which legitimized

[4] The term 'mulatto' was part of this paradigm signifying the barren mixture between a horse and a mule.

the status quo of poor black people as inferior. The theory was used by the Brazilian elite to explain their nation's problems and lack of progress compared to Europe. Despite shifting paradigms the racial hierarchy stayed in place and Brazil's problems were interpreted as "the Negro problem" writes Skidmore (1974).

At the time of Abolition Brazil had three times more ex-slaves than slaves and a large amount of mulattos which according to the elite were the major obstacle for progress and they raised the question of how to rid itself from the black population, its inferior gene pool and the degenerate mixed-bloods. The dominant paradigm had changed to Eugenics with a focus on genetics which spurred an extensive official "whitening" campaign after the Abolition. White European immigrants in large numbers were transported to Brazil to take over the jobs from the newly freed slaves. Skidmore (1974) writes that the campaign's intended purpose was to gradually whiten the Brazilian population as the superior white genes would eventually dominate the inferior Indian and Black ones, over time making Brazil a white 'European' country.

During the First World War the news of black people fighting for Europe reached Brazil. Together with Brazilian patriotism and the paradigm of Eugenics the idea of the mulatto combing the strengths of all the races became dominant. It was an inversion of the Polygenist idea of degenerate racial mixture and it was interpreted as uniquely Brazilian. The idea was that the white man needed the Black and Indian genes for adaptation to the tropical environment, but that the inferior elements would eventually disappear. Thereby the whitening ideal co-existed with the valorization of the mulatto through a Darwinist focus on superior genes.

In 1933 Gilberto Freyre had published *Casa Grande e Senzala*, where he focused on the Indian and Black contributions to Brazil. Although the contributions were well-adapted genes, practical dressing and a better diet, it was a new perspective. The focus had moved away from superior white genes to more environmentalist ideas about malnutrition, healthcare and better decease control. These became the central components in understanding "the Brazilian problem" and after the Second World War Freyre's work became influential in the construction of a myth of the national character combining 'whitening' with pride of the African and Indian elements. His ideas will be further described in the following as they are at the centre of popular thoughts on race in Brazil.

The historical outline of racial thoughts and its development in Brazil demonstrate that according to Skidmore (1974), slavery was legitimized by a racial belief in the inferiority of the Africans and Indians compared to the Europeans. This racial hierarchy was merged with religion to create the Polygenist idea that God created different species of man and put the white man on top. With the dawn of Positivism the Polygenist ideas of separate races became a belief in Social Darwinism and with the old belief in white superiority still

intact, there was no doubt that the problem was the presence of Blacks and Indians. Social Darwinism legitimated the belief that these inferior races would eventually disappear as a result of the white race's superiority. When Positivism began looking at genes the racial ideas took on the shape of Eugenics explaining the inferiority of the black man by his genes and concluding that they would eventually be overcome by the white ones when in competition. As the best would win and the best were white, the future looked bright (and white) in the eyes of the Brazilian elite. All they needed to do was breed the African and Indian elements out to 'whiten' the Brazilian population. When it was later recognized that the Indian and black population were better adapted to the tropical environment, Eugenics could be used to elevate the Brazilian mulatto as inheriting the best of all races, while still believing in the goal of 'whitening'. This was when Gilberto Freyre in 1933 entered the stage with an explanation considered scientific of the promising Brazilian future, systematizing the ideas and elevating them to an official national ideology (Domingues 2005).

INTERPRETING THE PRESENT

This section will serve as an overview of the literature on race in Brazil since Freyre, and building on this I aim to sketch the popular discourse about race in Brazil at the time of my fieldwork. This section is not exhaustive as Portuguese literature is hard to come by in Denmark and as it is not the aim of the paper. What I hope to show are tendencies and relatedness between groups of ideas. Some writers have attempted to conceptualize Brazil by comparing it with mostly South Africa and North America, by looking back in history for the causal explanation of the present or by using advanced statistical analysis to determine the merits of Brazil as a 'racial paradise' and a lesson to be followed. Others again reject the idea of racial democracy and highlight their experiences of racial discrimination. The last grouping attempts to bridge the gulf between the formers in different ways.

RACE AND 'BRAZILIANNESS'

As will be made evident in the following sections, some versions of Gilberto Freyre's ideas are common knowledge for Brazilians today. Freyre studied under Franz Boas in Chicago and writes that while there, he learned the difference between race and culture, or genetics and social influences. He opposes the Eugenics and climate determinist view of the day which had utterly bad prospects for the mixed-blood Brazilian population in the tropics. He does this by focusing on the effects of malnutrition and deceases as well as the social structure of the Brazilians slave-holding family and the influences of the Portuguese, native and African cultures. Let me pick up the story of Brazil where Skidmore left it, with the ideas put forth by Freyre in *'Casa Grande & Senzala'* (1933).

Gilberto Freyre understands the relations between Black, White and Indian in terms of a "social democracy" (1964: 5) and "racial hybridism" (1964: 69) which in Brazil according to him was mainly a result of the one crop system of production and lack of white women. The one crop system of production could only be lucrative on a large scale and this necessitated slavery. As Portugal was a small country not capable of, or intending to, colonize Brazil with whole families, there was an acute gender imbalance which resulted in widespread miscegenation between white men and at first Indian, later Black women. These unions remained formally between white superior and Black/Indian inferior, but were a result of Portugal's location between Africa and Europe from the neo-lithic era and its historic experience with the Moors and miscegenation on the Iberian peninsula. This had rendered the Portuguese without racial scruples or consciousness of race, and thus the least cruel in relations to his slaves. It also gave him a sexual fascination for "the enchanted Moorish woman" (1964: 19) that was transferred to the Indians and Blacks. Sexual interaction between 'Big House' and 'slave hut' thus modified the social distance between the races.

According to Freyre, the institution of slavery and the lack of white women made the plantation owners use black wet nurses for their children and later give them a slave of the same age as a playmate for domination. He explains that this resulted in a sexual attraction due to the wet nurse and an inclination for sadism due to the slave playmate. He thus removes the responsibility of sadistic sexual inclinations both from the Portuguese or 'the super sexual mulatto slave girl corrupting the moral of the white man' to the system of slavery which they were both part of. The miscegenation and use of black wet nurses resulted in a Brazilian population where all had "a shadow, or at least a birthmark" (1964: 255) of the Indian or Black. Therefore talk of distinct races is simply irrelevant and racism impossible in Brazil according to Freyre.

Donald Pierson (1941) evaluates the whitening effect to be working in Brazil as the black population is disappearing leaving only their tropically well-adapted genes to ensure the survival of the "European stock" through racial mixture. He finds that there is no racism in Brazil as the Black and Indian populations have never posed a real threat to the white elite. If there is a race-problem which he doubts there is, it comes from ethnic groups resisting absorption into society.

Charles Wagley (1952) quotes Freyre and Pierson in his book which is part of the UNESCO project and starts out pointing to Brazil's renowned racial democracy. He accepts the idea of Brazilians as mixed-blood of European, Indian and African descent, as well as the Freyrian explanation of the mild Brazilian race relations as a result of the Portuguese colonizers' lack of racial prejudice from earlier encounters with the former Moorish population of Iberia.

Darcy Ribeiro (2000) agrees with Freyre when claiming that the "Brazilian proto-cell" (2000: 70) was mixed-bloods of Indian women and Portuguese men. They formed a macro- or de-ethnicity of de-Indianized, de-Europeanized and de-Africanized which were to become Brazil. He argues that these homogenous people are the new "tardy, tropical Rome" only better because it was "washed in Indian and black blood" (2000: 321). He embraces the idea of the idealized mulatto when arguing that Brazilians have gained the ability to be and think new things as opposed to old Europe and the "transplanted" European people in North America. With this potential he asks why Brazil has not turned out right yet, and concludes that despite their great destiny, they have always been exploited by a dominant minority of capitalists.

Carl Degler (1971) proposes the concept of "a mulatto escape hatch" as the defining feature of the Brazilian exception with regard to race. Contrary to the US 'one drop of blood' rule Brazilian mulattos can rise in the social hierarchy due to their lighter skin colour. He argues that the Brazilian system is based on a Catholic sense of hierarchy contrary to the North American model of Protestant egalitarianism. Where Brazil positions people in a hierarchy according to skin colour, the US argues that Black and White are different, but equal thus needing segregation. 'The mulatto escape hatch' is therefore an expression of whitening tied to social mobility.

Peter Fry (1995) sets out arguing for the specificity of race in Brazil in a review of George E. Hanchard (1994) – see below – as opposed to simply a variant of the United States. He claims that Brazil is assimilationist as opposed to the segregationist US and argues that racial democracy and the one-drop rule are equally exotic.

R. L. Segato (1998) also criticizes Hanchard for importing North American logic to his study of Brazil. Much like Fry he identifies two different logics; the US is separating under a myth of shared effort, whereas Brazil is encompassing under a myth of interrelation. Due to the separation North Americans will eventually be pressured for a conversion narrative as a clear and exclusive identity affiliation is mandatory, whereas for Brazilians such an affiliation is not even meaningful as Brazilian identity is ambiguous with multiple affiliations. He claims that the difference is about the penetration of the rules of the market into social life. In the United States ethnic signs have become emblems of ethnic merchandise for ethnic consumers, but Brazil, on the contrary, still has an alternative myth with traditional values ascribed to ethnic signs. This myth he finds in Afro-Brazilian religion with a subtle presence everywhere, even in the households of the white elite, due to the historic use of black wet nurses. He argues that race thereby is an intra-psychic element in all Brazilians, as opposed to 'inter-community' in the US. Segato is aware of being close to Freyre when claiming that Brazilians are essentially a mixture and focusing on black wet nurses.

Anthony Marx (1998) claims that racism is inherent in nationalism (see also Anderson 1985). Comparing South Africa, USA and Brazil, he argues that the first two created their nation to solve an inter-white conflict. In South Africa it was to reconcile the parties of the Boer War – the British and the Boer – and in USA between the South and the North after the Civil War. In Brazil there were no intra-white conflict and the greatest threats were from the slave revolts. Therefore the Brazilian nation was built to unite the black slaves and their white masters under a common nationalism and it did so in a history of scientific racism.

Gilberto Freyre wrote in an intellectual climate where scientific racism was being opposed internationally. But he also wrote as part of a national history, where Brazil's problems had long been understood in terms of race. By writing about the effects of racial mixture and creating a past of Portuguese racial tolerance he legitimized the view that Brazil was exceptionally free of racism. In my opinion it is tautological when creating a history from a pre-defined interpretation of the present to legitimize that very interpretation (Bruner 1986: 142). Freyre did this by constructing a historic continuity of racial tolerance manifested in interracial sex and thereby celebrating the Brazilian miscegenation and its product: The mulatto.

By equalling historical irreversibility with historical necessity (Hastrup 2003: 414), Freyre made it impossible for Portuguese colonizers, white slaveholders and present Brazilians to be racists. As shown, many authors bought into this tautological construction. The tautology imagines Brazil to be radically different from other nation-states and this construction was also used by others when arguing for Brazil's uniqueness (Anderson 1985; see also Said 1978).

DIVIDING REALITY FROM MYTH

The Freyrian idea that Brazil was an exception with regards to race, made UNESCO start an examination of the harmonious race relations in Brazil, as a lesson for others to follow. The result was not as intended. As part of the project Florestan Fernandes (1969) rejected the myth of racial democracy by pointing to widespread racism and Marvin Harris later did the same to the myth of the Portuguese as friendly masters (Skidmore 1974: 217), constructed by Freyre. Thereby they rejected the tautology of racial tolerance, and since then many have joined in proclaiming racial democracy a myth. Where Fernandes thought it would decline with time and industrialization, others have been less optimistic. As many of the opponents of racial democracy work from within the black movement I will only list a few here and write more extensively on their ideas in the next chapter about the black movement.

George E. Hanchard (1994) writes about the black movement of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo from a Gramscian angle. He concludes that there is a lack of racial solidarity and identification due to the strength of the dominant discourse of racial democracy and a Brazilian racial hegemony – thus taking race as a given. The black movement suffers from an overly culturalist[5] tradition and "backward gaze" (1994: 164) which removes focus from the political arena and changing the conditions of poor black people. He finds this culturalist focus to be the main obstacle in creating a mass movement for political reforms and thus resistance to white racial hegemony. The major difficulty for the black movement, according to Hanchard, is the inability of non-white Brazilians in identifying racially specific types of discrimination.

Abdias do Nascimento was a militant in *Frente Negra Brasileira* (1931-1936), founder of *Teatro Experimental do Negro*[6] (TEN) in 1944 and now member of MNU – United Black Movement. He has since become a role model and leading voice against the myth of racial democracy which he claims is a slogan intended to project Brazil as a model of coexistence to the outside, and to keep the blacks docile internally (1999). He claims that what Freyre called racial mixture was really a racial "massacre" (1989), and urges the black population not to fear the label "black racists", as the only way to extinguish racism is an "antiracist racism" (1999). This is again a reference to Freyre who in a newspaper article in A Tarde[7] criticized the black movement for importing utterly un-Brazilian bipolar racial ideas and racism from the US, thereby making the movement's militants "black racists"[8]. This is also taken up by MNU militant Edmilton in the next chapter.

France Winddance Twine points to the dichotomy in her title 'Racism in a Racial Democracy' (1998). Here she sets out to explain how racism can exist in what has been termed a racial democracy, thereby taking racism as a fact. Her argument goes that the whitening ideal is hegemonic, making racism common sense and creating a taboo around the experience of racism which makes it impossible to talk about even in the family.

Petrônio Domingues (2005) writes that Freyre gave scientific legitimacy to elements present in Brazil from before the abolition. Through him they were elevated into official racial ideology thereby deeply ingraining them in national thought (2005: 128). Domingues writes that there are several elements to the ideology; the ideal of equality of legal rights

[5] Hanchard (1994) uses the word 'culturalism' as a term signifying a focus on artistic endeavors (music, dance, paintings and folklore) as opposed to political ones.
[6] These organizations have become legendary in the black movement and I will return to their place in the history of black resistance in the next chapter.
[7] *A Tarde* is a big Brazilian newspaper. I have been unable to locate the article and thus I use it only as it was referred to me in text or talk.
[8] It seems 'racism' consists of two aspects: The division of human beings into distinctive 'races' and the hierarchization of these 'races'. I understand the bipolar black movement discourse to divide humans into races without hierarchy, and the popular discourse to hierarchize without distinct races through 'whitening'. I shall leave 'racism' undefined instead to analyze my informants' use of it.

for everybody in Brazil contrary to Jim Crow in the US and Apartheid in South Africa (see also Said 1978); the amiable relations between master and slave understood as inexistence of racial prejudice; the harmonious inter-racial interaction explaining experiences of racism as mistaken class differences; and the mulatto category highlighting miscegenation and dividing the black population.

According to Domingues the popular comparison between Brazil and the United States has made racism synonymous with institutionalized segregation and bipolar racial categories, thereby removing racism from Brazil. The amiable relations within Freyre's tautology individualize the responsibility of failure creating a white "superiority complex" and a black "inferiority complex" (2005: 127). Through the gradual mulatto category the black people came to see the vices of exclusion as individual and not the basis for collective struggle against the racial system. Domingues (2005: 120) claims that racial democracy inverts the relationship between rule and exception, the particular and the universal, making generalizations based on isolated cases.

The rephrasing of the Freyrian concepts and the inverting of his tautology have been the instruments of the black movement. Thereby they have had some success when pointing to racism at the centre of Brazilian society and national character. Telles (2004: 237) claims that the progress made by the black movement has been due to their ability to confront the national image of harmony and racial democracy by pointing to its limits and contradictions. This has been forcefully done in international forums pointing to the gulf between the ideal of Brazil happily signing international declarations for equality and the harsh realities of black people.

Rejecting Freyre's historical necessity one element at the time has worked to create an alternative history of racism - and resistance against it - in Brazil. By opposing the content of the Freyrian tautology, the black movement has kept its determinate structure only changing the subject from racial tolerance to racism. The existence of two discourses differing in their views on the present as well as the past poses an apparent paradox. This is the phenomenon the next section of writers attempts to understand. They are working to bridge the gap between understanding race in Brazil in terms of racial democracy or structural racism without choosing one over the other.

BRIDGING THE DICHOTOMY

There are many different ways to conceptualize the existence of (at least) two opposing versions of race in today's Brazil. This can be done either by empirical studies of actual human beings through fieldwork or by comparing different national contexts. The fact that

history and present are contested in Brazil is hardly exceptional[9]. It is more the way people interact with discourses and the options made available to them which make the Brazilian case interesting. What I consider to be the most enlightening accounts are based on empirical studies of what people do with the different versions of race and what the versions do for them in return. International comparison can contribute with an understanding that transcends the national context. These comparisons can easily result in rigid oppositions hiding the gradual and ambivalent nature of social life, and the danger is that human beings are taken to be radically different solely on the basis of national geography. Despite recognizing that race and the Brazilian nation-state are closely interrelated, it is clear that race cannot be studied adequately in a solely national context. Ideas do not obey borders and thus rigid national oppositions are misplaced. As I position myself in this the next bridging group I will also allow myself to be more critical in the following.

Donna Goldstein (2003, 1999) has done empirical fieldwork in a *favela* (Brazilian shantytown) in Rio de Janeiro. Her work on sexuality highlights the idea of racial democracy as a "colour-blind erotic democracy" providing poor women of colour with an empowering myth of social mobility by seducing a rich, white man (*coroa*) with their powerful black sexuality. The power inherent in seduction and black sexuality is what prevents the poor women of the *favela* from joining the black movement. Through this myth they commodify their own bodies and celebrate interracial sex as the opposite of racism. Goldstein concludes that, at the heart of Freyre's racial democracy lies the idea that sexual desire precludes racism. She criticizes Freyre for neglecting the power inherent in racial mixture, highlighting that in the past it was indeed between master and slave. Sexual desire is intertwined in a powerful web making black bodies seem available for white consumption and valued as a result of this. Goldstein also shows that race is linked to agency and hopes for the future.

Also through fieldwork in a *favela* in Rio de Janeiro, **Robin Sheriff** (2001) find three different discourses – or 'ways to talk' - about race. These are a bipolar *discourse on race* dividing people into black or white; a gradual *descriptive discourse* on skin colour referring to Brazil's many shades of phenotype celebrated in racial democracy; and *a pragmatic discourse* when complimenting people as lighter than they are, as understood through the ideal of whitening. Sheriff calls racial democracy a utopian dream which people use to escape when confronted with realities too harsh to digest. Not only is racial democracy a refuge, it also serve as a strong "cultural censorship" (2000) silencing all

[9] The Invention of Tradition debate is telling in this regard (see Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983; Ranger 1993; Otto & Pedersen 2000; also Jensen 2002 and Pinho 2004 for the case of Brazil).

experiences of racial discrimination from being shared even within the closest family (see also Twine 1998). By showing several discourses concerning race Sheriff moves the issue away from the question of what is 'real' to how we understand and describe experiences.

Edward E. Telles (2004) uses statistics to evaluate the merits of racial democracy versus racism. Using numbers from the 2000 Brazilian census he concludes that Brazilian racism "intensifies with each successively darker shade of skin color" (2004: 222) thus gradually and not in a bipolar fashion suggesting the importance of 'whitening'. He concludes that there exists a horizontal racial democracy between people within the same class, but no such thing on the vertical level between classes. Here "a glass ceiling" (2004: 220) prevents any social mobility for black people. Telles' division between a horizontal racial democracy with widespread racial mixture and structural racism on the vertical level making upward social mobility impossible for blacks is another way of bridging the dichotomy. It does, however, not answer why.

Howard Winant (1994) claims that race is "a fundamental organizing principle, a way of knowing and interpreting the social world" (1994: 2) much akin to a discourse. He does this using a framework of race formation theory claiming that the meaning of race can change over time and due to human agency. He criticizes Nascimento for not taking into account why black people do *not* mobilize if they are indeed oppressed and aware of it. Although he writes about uncertainty of racial identity, hopes of prosperity and survival, he never examines how actual people negotiate the meaning of race and thus falls short of examining why some people mobilize and others do not.

G. Reginald Daniel (2000) compares Brazil to the US on basis of the concept "multiraciality". Like Winant he uses race formation theory to conclude that the ternary racial project of Brazil (dividing into white, mulatto and black) is becoming binary (divided by black and white through the 'one drop of blood' rule) and thus approaching the US model, which in turn is becoming increasingly ternary. He argues that what appear to be opposites might really be extremes on a continuum, closing in on each other due to mutual trans-national influence. Still, he is concerned with *the* changing understanding of race rather than different co-existing understandings and what they each offer.

This is where I find **John Burdick** promising. He has done fieldwork in the Brazilian religious field with a focus on what the different options "offer and signify for Brazil's masses" (1993: 5), and has written on the black movement (1992; 1998). In his work on religious affiliation he focuses on the various solutions different religions provide for people's problems, and he uses the same approach on the black movement. He claims that understanding oneself and the social world through the eyes of the black movement's understanding of race, is simply not attractive, due to the stigma associated with blackness and mandatory Afro-Brazilian religion. Unfortunately Burdick never describes exactly what people gain from the black movement discourse and thereby he refrains from

explaining what makes it attractive to some people. When approaching the issue as a problem of the black movement in attracting a larger constituency, instead of looking at what uses are made of the discourse by individuals, Burdick's top-down view limits his vision.

Livio Sansone (2003) advocates for the Latin American tradition of syncretism and ambivalence. He claims that Brazil's tradition of interracial marriage and sexual unions made way for the racial colour continuum, syncretism of religion and culture, and trans-racial cordiality. These *mestizo logics* make people have more than one subculture, and therefore a multi-layered social identity which he claims is episodic and changing rather than a constant. Sansone argues that racial democracy is not a myth of the oppressive 'false consciousness' kind but accepted by the majority for its "social identity rewards" (2003: 17) – which he fails to account for. He also broadens his view from a national context to Latin America, only to conceptualize its ambivalent and changing identities as radically different from the rest of the world – a new orientalism (Said 1978).

What these authors have in common is that they all argue that racism and the idea of racial democracy live side by side in Brazil, creating different possibilities for people. I take with me from these writers how race in Brazil is a complex phenomenon, and that there co-exist different understandings of it depending on the discourse used. Too many authors have stopped short at the popular existence of these discourses, thereby granting them legitimacy without questioning how they work, or what the consequences of their interaction are. What I intend to do here is ask why people choose one discourse over the other, rather than describing the different discourses available or the development of one. To understand why people choose one discourse over the other and thus embrace one understanding of race, we have to look at what the discourses offer. This must be done relative to other discursive offers to grasp why some people choose to call themselves black. Relative to the black movement discourse is what I will call the popular discourse about race, with many of the elements described in the literature above.

THE POPULAR DISCOURSE ABOUT RACE

The link between intellectual work and public discourse is not an easy one to demonstrate. As it is outside my focus here, it should suffice to say that many of the ideas above have been taken up by others and used as explanations in daily life. In Brazil there has also been a considerable overlap between politicians shaping the legislation and speaking to the public, whilest writing books and articles about Brazil[10]. This is the case for former

[10] This is a paradox of representation, where the academic work intended to represent the social world come to shape that very world and thus the social world becomes a representation of the work. I will treat this paradox later when drawing up the consequences of my approach in chapter six.

President of Brazil and sociologist Fernando Henrique Cardoso as well as Gilberto Freyre and Abdias do Nascimento. Thereby the academic thoughts have been transformed and absorbed into what Bruner (1990: 14) calls a "folk psychology" – or, in this case, a 'folk sociology'. Also the thoughts of the North American authors have returned to Brazil as part of the international academic world.

The term 'discourse' is an academic abstraction, not a given reality. I have grouped together different ideas in what I call the popular discourse about race which might just as well have been further divided into several discourses. I have done this to improve the understanding and because it was the way my informants spoke of and opposed the ideas – as a set of meanings grouped together and forming a coherent whole which defined a perspective on, and a version of, reality. Having grouped them together like this I have also to divide them again for a better analytical understanding of the parts. I believe we have to discern between the whitening ideal and the idea of racial democracy. They are the key elements in what constitutes the popular discourse about race.

The whitening ideal has a long history of being shaped by different intellectual paradigms and actual politics, as I have shown earlier in this chapter. It is a mechanism evaluating people according to their position on the continuum of phenotype, with white on the top and black on the bottom. It is not just about beauty as it rests on the belief that superior genes will eliminate the inferior ones, and as the superior genes are white, whiteness is valued in all regards. This includes trust, intelligence, work ethics and class. As genes are equalled with skin colour the idea is that a static (genetic) essence is made visible on a person's skin. Thereby all characteristics of whiteness are made preferable and young black people will straighten their hair to 'whiten' their appearance, marry lighter to 'whiten' their children or adopt white middleclass values to 'whiten' the conception of them by others and themselves. Although not recognizing the essential division of distinct races the whitening ideal evaluates according to what is conceived of as racial characteristics.

The whitening ideal coexists with the idea of Brazil as a racial democracy described by Freyre. The Brazilian racial democracy is scientifically legitimized and determined by the Freyrian historical tautology. I will refrain from describing this history of Brazil, as I have done so when referring to Freyre earlier, only noting here that his version is commonly accepted. Like whitening, racial democracy is closely tied to sex, and 'racial mixture' is a key concept. The Brazilian celebration of sex is based on the assumption that sex precludes racism and prejudice, and by positioning interracial sex at the centre of the formation of the Brazilian people, the assumption is that Brazilians cannot be racists. As a people they are both a product of, and the participants in, interracial sex and racial mixture, resulting in the celebration of the sexually attractive mulatto girl as the stereotypical Brazilian - negating

the possibility of distinct races. When answering whether I thought black women attractive with a 'yes', a light-skinned Brazilian family were content to conclude that I could not be racist. The same observation was made by Goldstein (1999: 569), when her black female informants talked about seduction. This was celebrated as much for proving that the seduced was not a racist as for the security it granted the seductress.

Racial democracy is associated with harmonious interaction and often argued as opposite to the racial segregation of Jim Crow in the US, or Apartheid in South Africa. According to Domingues (2005) the constant academic comparison made racism synonymous with legal segregation. When looking at the idea of racial democracy as a founding element in the formation of the Brazilian people or as 'the Brazilian exception', national frameworks take centre stage. Racial democracy is intrinsically related to nationalism and the 'imagining' (Anderson 1985) of the Brazilian nation and its people as radically different from, and morally superior to, other nation-states (Said 1978). Not only does the mulatto define the Brazilian both with regard to the process and the product of racial mixture, it is this quality that distinguishes Brazil as nation from other nation-states. Only within a nationalistic and essentialist framework could the metaphor of 'importing' foreign ideas or logics as well as the charge of being 'un-Brazilian' have any salience.

The different discourses offer various understandings. Florestan Fernandes use an evolutionary discourse to declare racism a left-over from slavery soon to disappear with the capitalist economy. Within the socialist discourse Domingues claims that racial prejudice is understood as mistaken class differences, and Pierson writes that any problems with assimilation should be attributed to the individual or group in question. The black movement offers an explanation of difficulties as resulting from racism and discrimination. Domingues (2005) claims that racial democracy inverts rules for exception and makes generalizations based on isolated cases, but who can determine the distinction between rules and isolated cases? This is exactly where the controversy lies as each discourse makes rules out of what the other considers exceptions, while imposing its own understandings of a given phenomenon.

Upon arriving to Salvador I took a taxi from the airport, and I curiously asked the driver about the presence of racism in Salvador. His answer perplexed me when he said that personally he thought there was a lot of racism, but the largest differences were between rich and poor. I asked him if there were many different races here and he answered that there was "a lot of mixture". I noted that it sounded like a correction of "many races" and wrote "paradox?" in my notebook, because if there were no races, then who were mixing?

At the end of my fieldwork President Lula visited Salvador on his 2006 election tour. I was standing in the crowd listening as he was introduced by several black movement militants. The first thing he said was that the most important division in Brazil today was

between classes, *not* races. The idea of Brazil as a class based racial democracy apparently ran from taxi driver to president - and back.

As I hope to have shown above, race is a contested field in Brazil, where the use of discourse is indicated by apparent synonyms. The difference between 'many races' and 'racial mixture' implicates a change of discourse from the black movement to racial democracy. My driver questioned racial democracy when he stated that personally, he thought there was a lot of racism, but he changed the discourse again when focusing on the class divide and racial mixture. This was my introduction to race in Brazil and what it means to be black in Salvador, as I drove from the airport towards my research site to begin my fieldwork.

Three

BEING BLACK IN SALVADOR

Having ended in a description of the popular discourse about race in Brazil in the previous chapter, I now turn my attention to what I have termed the black movement discourse, as expressed by militants in Salvador. Doing so will make it possible to describe the black movement discourse of which the term black is a part relative to the other discourses on race in Brazil. There is a variety of different discourses, each with a different story to tell about the object in question, and a different way of representing it to the world (Burr 2003: 64). The popular discourse described in the last chapter is one of these 'ways' and the black movement is another. Together they are the two most prominent versions of the racial reality in Brazil. As the black movement discourse is in opposition to the popular discourse, many of the questions are the same although their perspectives differ radically.

When talking about mulattos, the popular discourse will celebrate them as the product and proof of harmonious interracial sex in Brazil, but the black movement understands them as the results of systematic rape of black woman during slavery or, as Nascimento pointed out in the last chapter, in terms of a racial massacre. These differences are what this chapter is about and I will describe the black movement discourse in relation to the dominant discourse, focusing on what I have judged as the central elements. The primary empirical material of this chapter will be interviews with movement leaders, and when comparing these interviews I will look for metaphors, representations and stories to describe the set of meanings that constitute the black movement discourse.

I will discuss any shared understanding among my informants to show the discourse, but I will also point to colliding views and experiences, where my informants give differing versions. Implicit in my material I find both internal and external critique. My informants used a lot of energy on explaining what they had previously been accused of, whether this be by people from the outside or inside of the movement. I asked explicitly about the start of their involvement in the black movement to spur a narrative showing the expectations associated with it. This means that I will describe the central features of the discourse, the agreements and disagreements, as well as the narrative genres or stories dominating the discourse. These are some of the aspects of the discourse that can be used in the construction of narratives leading to an expected future of hope.

DEFINING THE FIELD

I interviewed prominent members of six different organizations in the black movement and spoke informally with several others. I participated in protest marches, seminars and excursions. This section will mainly be founded on interviews and I will briefly sketch out my method in the following. My participation at events made it possible for me to contact militants from different organizations and get their phone numbers. Later I would contact them and arrange for an interview. My initial contact at black movement events made me known to the militants and gave them a chance to ask about my interests and approach. By presenting myself to the militants in advance I encountered situations where militants would demand that I go back to Denmark after my study and leave them to fight their fight without foreign white involvement. I had not expected a refusal to get involved.

Access to the militants and time in their busy schedules was granted through my status as researcher. This status in turn determined much of our relationship in positions of wanting-to-know and knowing (Wadel 1991: 45), making the interview have a formal structure without any real dialogue and creating an authority of knowledge. In the interviews of this chapter I do not consider it to be a problem as it gave me the authoritative knowledge I wanted.

In my interviews I discovered that the term 'black consciousness' was a good entry into how they understood the world and the concept race. By using a semi-structured and theme-divided question guide (Kvale 1996), I mixed meta-discursive questions with descriptive ones (Spradley 1979). Asking questions about black consciousness, what it meant, how it was achieved and what expectations were associated with it, gave me an understanding of black consciousness as competence in the black movement discourse. Participation in the black movement discourse understood as having consciousness blurred the boundaries between organization affiliation and militancy. The goal of the movement was facilitating consciousness more than achieving organizational members. The militants referred to in this chapter, however, all work within organizations.

Black consciousness is participation in the black movement through competence of its discourse. When researching why people call themselves black as part of the black movement discourse it is therefore necessary to conceptualize being black as a situational category. This has made me open up my interpretations of the narratives to the possibility of participation and competence in multiple discourses, and thus the use of 'black' simultaneously with other categories in the same narrative. With the authorized knowledge from my informants due to our relation described above, I got the official black movement version, which I will use in the following chapters.

BLACK MOVEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

With the definition of participation as competence in, and identification with, the black movement discourse, I conducted interviews with high ranking militants in the various organizations I judged to be central in the black movement of Salvador. My choice of organizations was based on several criteria. One was which organizations were mentioned in my daily interaction with militants, another was the participating organizations at events and protest marches. I also tried to incorporate different positions within the black movement such as cultural, political and educational which are also the subheadings chosen here, or feminism and religious affiliation. These are not emic divisions and should not be taken to suggest that I agree with Hanchard (1994) when criticizing the movement for prioritizing the cultural over the political. I view the division more in terms of generations of organizations, and approaches to the struggle (see Burdick 1998 for others). There seemed to be a genealogy leading from cultural over political to educational organizations both with regard to age of organization and militants.

The cultural organizations use music, dance and art to create consciousness in the black population. This aim is in many ways political and many of the cultural organizations work closely together with political parties when sponsoring educational seminars and creating school materials. The political organizations are by no means the only political groupings in the black movement. The organizations I have placed under this heading are the ones with direct ties to political parties, some are even part of that party. They receive money from the parties and as a consequence they are criticized within the movement for being silenced by the white elite. In turn they claim that it is the only way to gain political influence. The educational organizations work less at gaining political influence and more with issues regarding the introduction of more black people into the higher educational system. For them the central issue is the racial quotas.

THE CULTURAL

The organizations I here refer to as cultural, work with cultural expressions to enforce the creation of consciousness in black people. One militant told me that it was easier to do this through music and dance as it attracted another audience than seminars and lectures. Many of the militants in the following also spoke of their coming to consciousness through cultural events. By distributing black consciousness and opposing the popular discourse through percussion music and reggae, the organizations use the stereotypes of black people as closer to music and dance with an empowering perspective (Pinho 2004). They turn the black stereotypes of the popular discourse against itself to oppose it, and this might be a reason why even people who believe in the popular discourse applaud the organizations - they are recognized in both discourses. The difficulty is however, as pointed out by

Hanchard (1994: 91), appropriating the dominant codes of political thought and expression without being subsumed by them.

Ilê Aiyê is a carnival percussion band consisting only of black musicians and they conduct weekly concerts at their headquarters in Liberdade. According to their homepage their objective is to preserve, valorize and expand the Afro-Brazilian culture, to pay homage to the African countries, nations and cultures, and black Brazilian revolts which contributed to enforce the ethnic identity and self-esteem for the black Brazilian people. Part of this is the construction of a historical line of blackness (*negritude*). They also arrange black beauty pageants and write school books about black history. Ilê Aiyê has strong ties to the Candomblé temple Ilê Axé Jitolu headed by Maê Hilda and since their founding in 1974 they have been an important part of the black movement in Salvador.

My first interview in Brazil was on May 18th where I interviewed Edmilson, a member of Ilê Aiyê. Edmilson told me that black consciousness means to perceive oneself as a critical subject with knowledge of ones basic rights and being part of the African Diaspora with regards to religion and culture. Black consciousness means knowing your position in the system, and teaching this to young afro-descendants is the goal of Ilê Aiyê, he said. Thereby he proposed a view on black consciousness as the knowledge of your rights and history, as well as of your "position in the system". He continued how some people do not have a consciousness, but feel a lack of opportunity and many suffer from "a mental commodism". The role of Ilê Aiyê is therefore to awaken these people through education and by telling the story of the black people. This means that by supplying knowledge of rights and history, people can come to understand their limited position and what it means in their lives.

Edmilson explained that the history was about "the greatness of Africa" as seen in the pyramids of Egypt, the first masks of Bronze, the invention of mathematics, architecture and irrigation. By learning about the greatness of Africa, people come to understand the limitations forced on them. He mentioned the need for more *quilombos educationais*[11] where young black people can take classes in preparation for *o vestibular* (the university entrance exam). Thereby black people would be able to break through their limitations. The roots of consciousness, he said, are a perception of discrimination independent of colour. Thereby he equalled the limitations of discrimination with black consciousness, and the discourse thus came to be more about limits than race or skin colour.

I asked him what influence black consciousness had on his life, and he answered that he was a critical subject who knew how everything worked and confronted discrimination

[11] *Quilombos educationaís* is built around the concept *Quilombo* signifying maroon communities. They are educational communities for black people associated with the black movement.

where ever he saw it. He used it constantly, and acted in every way as a citizen who knew his rights and obligations, what was happening in the community, as well as what he wanted for it. This suggests that the ideal he created was one of constant awareness and confrontation of limitations and discrimination.

Another music group with a central position among the militants in the black movement is **Olodum**. Like Ilê Aiyê Olodum started out as an all-black percussion group - but later they allowed white people to participate. Thereby Ilê Aiyê and Olodum take up different positions regarding the participation of white people in the movement. Where Ilê Aiyê is located in Liberdade, the Olodum headquarters are in Pelourinho – the old part and tourist centre of Salvador. Their geographical location could thus be seen as mirroring these positions as Liberdade is the part of Salvador with the largest percentage of black inhabitants, and Pelourinho is the rich tourist centre. Olodum also host seminars and as I have not conducted interviews with the organization, it is on one of these seminars and documental material I will base this section.

The seminar I attended was called "208 years since the *Búzios* Revolt: From slave rebellions to policies of affirmative action" named after a revolt in 1798 and hosted by the director of Olodum. According to the pamphlet, it was intended to stimulate reflections and discussions about the role of slave rebellions in the construction of Afro-Brazilian citizenship by remembering the fights for equality for all. Thereby the seminar created a plot about the continuous struggle of black people against slavery, by constructing history as a resistance narrative.

Dr. Ubiratan Castro (*Fundaçao Cultural Palmares*) talked about the links between the French Revolution and the *Búzios* Revolt in Salvador. In the debate that followed, he explained that the French revolution and its liberal ideology called for the equality of all humans, but being human meant being European. This demonstrated the discursive understanding of being robbed of 'real' equality. Dr. Matilde Ribeiro talked about her work with implementing racial categories throughout the national census. Her work was a manifestation of implementing the bipolar racial categories. Because racism is structural on a national level, there is a need for a political plan, she said, and continued that when black mothers had a three times higher risk of dying in labour, it was explained as due to poverty, thereby echoing the argument of mistaken class differences. Racial problems did not exist in the 'rational' logics of statistics, she said, but really this was a crime. This meant that she was "racializing the country", she said.

Prof. Roberto de Mattos explained that there had always been a struggle for equality even between the revolts. This was visible through the daily insubordination and disobedience of the slaves to their masters. For Sergio de Barros the links between the past and present was the sense of black solidarity from the shared conditions onboard the slave ships. He

saw the solidarity manifest itself in the communitarian economy and mutual help. They both constructed plots of continuity for the black population, one of solidarity and one of hidden resistance.

According to their pamphlet, **Acareggae** – or Cultural Aspiring Association of Reggae, is an organization inspired by the Rastafari religion and it fights against racism, prejudice, racial discrimination and historical inequality. They aim to do this by inspiring people since, quoting Bob Marley "only ourselves can free our minds". Rastafari is a diasporic religion from Jamaica which creates a different focus than Candomblé and positions Acareggae vis-à-vis Ilê Aiyê with Olodum in the middle, working with both diasporic and African themes. The quote from Bob Marley expresses a belief in the agency of black people to change their own position in the system by mental measures.

The president of the organization is Jussara Santana, who introduced herself like this:

> **"**I am Jussara Santana, I am a militant in the black movement the last 22 years and it all began when I got to know Ilê Aiyê, right. My self-esteem was very low for being woman and being black, I was discriminated and then I got to know Ilê Aiyê and when I got to know Ilê Aiyê with their essence of beautiful women in coloured clothes there I, I encountered myself as a black woman and assumed my blackness (*negritude*), I left my hair natural without the need to use anything and discovered that I was beautiful, that I already had a beauty that the media never showed, that the beautiful never was black. Ilê Aiyê brought this about**"**

Her narrative was about finding self-esteem and 'encountering' herself. The transformation took place at a party at Ilê Aiyê, it was instantaneous and resulted in problems with her family as well as in the neighbourhood, where she was called crazy (*maluca*). The narrative plot of awakening with a new understanding and being misunderstood by your surroundings is a classical Marxist one. When she 'assumed her colour' she also rejected her former affiliation with the Catholic Church for its intended pacifying effect on African slaves. She said that now she was without religion although she identified as cultural Rastafari. Thus her racial conversion from mulatto to black was mirrored in her religious same from Catholic to Rastafari. To her, black consciousness meant seeing racial discrimination and acting against it. And parallel to Edmilson (Ilê) she said that she did this every single moment and that it was her life.

Along with her black consciousness and religious conversion she also gained a feminist perspective, which made her criticize the place of women in the black movement as secretaries and treasurers rather than as equal participants. She said that she sensed a triple

domination based on race, gender and poverty. This suggests that the conversion of assuming your colour was more a conversion away from the belief that discrimination did not exist in Brazil - away from the popular discourse. Having black consciousness thus seems to mean the increasing perception of various forms of discrimination, like Edmilson (Ilê) also stated.

Jussara explained that, contrary to others, she would not deny that slavery was part of the black history at a certain time, but it was not all of it. The explicit link between blackness and passive slavery was one I heard opposed many times among the militants. The agency they sought was not found in slavery, and they would therefore construct another past sidestepping it. The history Jussara highlighted was the Quilombos and the kings of Palmares[12] like Ganga Zumba, Zumbi and Dandara. This was a past of active resistance from the Diaspora as opposed to Africa by Edmilson (Ilê). As blackness was linked to slavery, Jussara felt the big challenge for the black movement was to give self-esteem back to black people.

When I asked about her views on white sympathizers, she said there had been a time in the black movement where black people had grown tired of "creating stairs for the others [white people] to rise [socially]". Many white people had taken without giving back, she said. She also had a problem with white people getting dreadlocks without knowing its true meaning as part of an African essence. Thereby she voiced an essentialist bipolar division of white and black, with the ideal of performing this racial essence correctly.

If white people, however, assumed the black movement discourse, she would call them friends she said, and she claimed that she had been critical of this when asking me about my motivation. When I said that I was interested in discrimination in both Brazil and Denmark, she had known "we spoke the same language". This suggests that discrimination is a central concept in the black movement discourse as opposed to the popular discourse which denies the existence of any discrimination in Brazil. When I said the word I demonstrated the discourse through which I understood the world and she could conclude that 'we spoke the same language'.

THE POLITICAL

What I have termed political organizations are black movement organizations with explicit focus on political change and representation through alliances with national political parties. The danger of appropriating dominant codes while not being subsumed by them, also apply here. This is the axis of critique, when militants claimed that the organizations were silenced by their white party alliances and made loyal to the party programmes

[12] Palmares was a republic of maroon communities, or Quilombos, in what is today Alagoas and it lasted for a hundred years from 1590 to 1694 consisting of 15 % of Brazil's population at the time (see also front cover).

through sponsorships. In turn the organizations would claim that the only way to change things was politics on a national level. In Brazil, there is a general mistrust towards all politicians for being too far from the people and only interested in personal gain. The critique is that the political organizations consist of middleclass blacks far removed from the conditions of poor black people in the *favelas*.

As a presentation of their organization in a pamphlet, **MNU** - or United Black Movement - wrote:

> **"**We inherit a tradition of black struggle from the Brazilian slave rebellions and maroon communities [*Quilombos*], the revolutionary experiences of black people from the African continent and so many other movements, like the Black Panthers (USA) and the Haitian Revolution.**"**

This was the historical plot of black resistance used by the organization. It is linked with and supported by *O Partido dos Trabalhadores* (the Workers' Party) with present President Lula. It claims to be the organization which unites the black movement, and is seen by many to do so. Its formation in 1978 after the beating and death of black opera singer Robson Silveira da Luz by the police in São Paulo is mentioned by many as a turning point for the organizations of the black movement.

I interviewed Edmilton, who is a militant, former state coordinator and member of the national coordination of MNU. He was once involved in the workers' movement but realized that he was being discriminated first and foremost for being black and secondly for being a worker. The same understanding made him change from being a Catholic to an adept of Candomblé. He said that he had been taught as a child that Candomblé came from the devil, but later learned that Catholicism arrived to Brazil "with a sword in one hand and a cross in the other", with the intention to pacify the dominated African people. The plot is the same as Jussara's, complete with racial and religious conversion from a pacifying Christianity to what he considered the spiritual expression of the black people, and a space for organizing the resistance for the last 500 years.

When I asked about black consciousness, Edmilton said that it is about the fact that black people are always discriminated for being black and treated as inferior. This view of discrimination is central to the discourse as mentioned above. He explained that the prevailing discourse denied that racism and classes exists. It would argue that the status quo was legitimated by God, but Edmilton claimed it was the work of man and thus it could be changed. Thereby he expressed a view of the system being able to change, and that it is up to the people themselves to change it. This is an empowered sense of agency at the heart of the black movement discourse.

Edmilton explained that black consciousness first manifested itself in the Quilombo of Palmares, where black people led by Zumbi fought against slavery, and later in the *Frente Negra Brasileira* in the 1930s with Abdias do Nascimento, who continued it with the foundation of *O Teatro Experimental do Negro* (TEN) in 1944 and the *blocos afros* [African inspired carnival groups] like Ilê Aiyê in 1974. Edmilton told me that Gilberto Freyre in the newspaper A Tarde in 1974 accused Ilê Aiyê for importing questions about racial discrimination from the US and South Africa to Brazil which did not have those problems. According to Edmilton Freyre claimed that Brazil had a racial democracy, and that there was no racism in Brazil. Edmilton explained how Brazilian racism is radically different from the United States and South Africa where people are segregated. In Brazil the black population has been divided and subdivided into "*mulattos, mestiços, caboclos, confuzos* [and] *morenos*", while in truth they are all black. This is also the view of Nascimento (1999) in chapter two, where he writes that this is done to keep the black population docile with what I will call a 'divide and conquer'-strategy.

This does not mean that racism was less painful in Brazil than in the United States. Where the US law was that black people could not vote, he said, in Brazil it was prohibited for illiterates to vote, but it was mainly the black people who were illiterate. Elevators are still divided into 'service' and 'social', with the domestic servants using the service elevator. But when the domestic servants are black, the division in reality is racial Edmilton explained. The black movement has many names for the Brazilian racism implying its masked and indirect nature (see also Sheriff 2000: 121), and Nascimento (1999) argues that the combination of no legal segregation and a hidden whitening ideal makes Brazilian racism worse than the US or South African versions, as it is harder to mobilize against and thus combat it. Edmilton explained that black people are influenced by the discourse that blacks are inferior and when they cannot become white, they claim to be something in between. This is the whitening ideal where people attempt to look and be called whiter than they are.

The organization **UNEGRO** – or Union of Blacks for Equality – is associated with the Communist Party of Brazil (*PCdoB*). I interviewed the leader Alexandro who explained that the crucial fight was against the idea of a racial democracy which claimed that the Brazilian problem is social and economical, and thus can be resolved with money. He said according to the idea of racial democracy, there can be no racism in Brazil. According to Alexandro the black population is suffering from the capitalist system, and he added that it was important not to forget that the fight is also about class and gender, voicing the same shift from no racism to multiple discriminations.

He linked the idea of racial democracy to Freyre and scientific racism, and to a racial hierarchy with the blacks in the bottom due to the whitening ideal. Thereby he indicated

the double nature of the popular discourse, with an official racial democracy hiding a racist whitening ideal. This led black people to want to appear white as black is devalued, and so racism became structural, and part of the system. The example he gave was about a poorly paid black domestic servant in a white family: They hug her, tell her that they love her and give her a piece of clothes sometimes, while not wanting her to share their table, their food and their elevators. This he called integrationist racism, adding to the words for the hidden racism in Brazil mentioned above.

Alexandro told me that when he was fifteen years old, he had lived an alienated life of flirting, drinking and having sex. When he became a militant his behaviour changed which resulted in confrontations in the family when he wished to study, and they wanted to watch *telenovelas* (Brazilian soap operas). His narrative was about transforming from childish alienation to academic militancy with a focus on the misunderstood enlightenment he had gained. The change happened when he was in the audience in a theatre playing *Cabaret de raça* (Carbaret of Race), and he identified with the characters. Later he frequented movement meetings and joined UNEGRO. This is one example of how the cultural organizations play an important part in the conversion narratives of the militants.

Alexandro said that UNEGRO has a Marxist foundation which places the Brazilian state at the centre of the oppression, as the state reinforces the oppression through the neo-liberal and capitalist idea that the system will correct itself. This is also the idea voiced by others which I have called the empowered agency. Shifting to the black movement discourse makes it possible to see the many forms of hidden discrimination and act to change them actively – a move away from fatalism.

I asked him about the place of white people in the movement, and he explained that UNEGRO had the policy that black people should be the protagonists and authors of the struggle, in order to radically combat European racism. This is similar to Jussara when she said that black people were tired of making stairs for white people to rise, and it is a manifestation of the bipolar logic of the discourse. Alexandro explained that the only way to do this was through self-esteem and valorization of their identity and beauty. He said that the fight began when the first black people arrived in Brazil onboard the slave ships, and later the fight was organized through the Quilombos uniting the different tribes from Africa. This is the same black plot line as described by others and it changes focus from the slaves to the resistance of the Quilombos.

Alexandro criticized Ribeiro (2000) for making oppressors and oppressed inseparable by focusing on racial mixture. By claiming that Brazilians were mulattos, he apparently made it impossible to distinguish between (white) offenders and (black) victims. This is another discursive critique of the concept of racial mixture which is central to the popular discourse and the national myth of Brazil. According to Alexandro, Ribeiro (2000) neglected the role of the free black population when he constructed the Brazilian people from racial mixture

on the plantations. Thereby Alexandro opposed the 'black history as slavery', not only by positioning himself in a history of Quilombo resistance, but also by highlighting the free black population outside of the plantations.

THE EDUCATIONAL

The educational organizations consist of organizations with some explicit focus on education and actively helping the black people to enter into, stay in and successfully exit, the higher educational institutions. They are the organizations actively recruiting militants by offering solidarity and a path to higher education, whilest bridging between the organizations and the people in the *favelas* - although they often have an academic language distancing them from the poor uneducated *favela* inhabitants. With their active focus on education as a way for black people to change their situation one at the time, I would claim that they are the latest wave of black movement organizations impatient with the cultural organizations' aim of creating awareness and the lack of progress by the political organizations.

One such organization is **Steve Biko**. According to their homepage, their mission is to promote social ascent for the black population through education and knowledge of ancestral values. Linking present and future suggests a narrative positioning. They have three programs: OGUNTEC giving supplementary classes to high school students; a course supplying preparatory classes to potential college students; and POMPA, aiding and supporting students already in college. As Steve Biko is at the centre of the next chapter this is where I will examine how it is done in OGUNTEC and how the students react.

I talked on an informal basis with the director Silvio, and he explained that the primary objective was the self-esteem of the young people. They wanted "to open their heads" and make them "enter into subjectivity". He said that they chose the students by three main criteria: They had to be black, have a low self-esteem, and be poor students from public schools in the periphery. Steve Biko's aim was to develop the individual and create young black leaders for the movement, he explained. Their criteria for selecting would further suggest the positioning of the students in a narrative of awakening coupled with social mobility through education.

Silvio told me that many black people are subject to 'alienation' and quoted Bob Marley to "free the mind from the slave mentality". By using Marxist rhetoric and placing the agency for liberation in the hands of the individuals, he empowered them to change their own conditions mentally much like the other militants above. To do this they had to create a consciousness about the discrimination of black people, visualize exits and supply alternatives. He said that if they did not "think beyond the racism" they would never overcome it. Focusing on exits and alternatives could be linked to the sidestepping of

slavery in the construction of the black history. It could also be taken to enforce the belief that things can change at the hands of individuals and thus be the empowering agency mentioned earlier.

Silvio explained that to create this change they provide compulsory classes in 'Citizenship and Black Consciousness'. The learning process has several steps: Providing information, supplying an explanation, creating an understanding and perceiving the consequences. He called it "ear, head, eye and mouth". Coupling equal citizenship, regardless of race, with bipolar black consciousness would seem like a contradiction in terms had they not been positioned as different stages in the development. By teaching the students (black) consciousness about the existence of discrimination and professing equal citizenship, the organization moves beyond the racism, and envision a future of equal rights contrary to the discrimination central to black consciousness.

Silvio also talked about the distinction between class and race. Whereas it is possible to change class through social mobility, there is not such possibility with regard to race. Explaining problems as due to class he claimed, was the political system's way of ignoring the racial questions. This view might well be what Alexandro (UNEGRO) opposed when explaining how to be a black Marxist and the argument of mistaken class differences. In the black movement discourse race is essential and unchangeable unlike class. Nevertheless, Steve Biko works to create upward social mobility and thereby it renegotiates the meaning of race.

Silvio introduced me to the coordinator Tarry. She gave me an outline of the discourse but as I apparently was too slow to take proper notes, she took my notebook and wrote the key concepts with arrows between them to explain their interconnectedness. I will let them stand without further analysis as they speak forcefully by themselves. This is her explanation of the black movement discourse and the work of Steve Biko.

She wrote the name of the course CITIZENSHIP AND BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS and explained that they worked with IDENTITY, SELF-ESTEEM, and RECLAIMING THEIR TRUE HISTORY for THE BLACK PEOPLE as the students have only learned the white Brazilian history. They fought STEREOTYPES OF THE BLACK PEOPLE as CRIMINAL, MARGINAL, and LAZY by creating a CONSCIOUSNESS about RACISM and thereby challenging the WHITE SUPREMACY and the IDEOLOGY which the stereotypes are part of. The ideology is based on RACIAL DEMOCRACY and the belief that all LIVE IN HARMONY and the RACES MIX. The PUBLIC schools are DEFICIENT in TEACHERS because of LOW SALARIES and lack of RESSOURCES. The students have to learn that this is RACISM, and Steve Biko combats it by making the students see themselves as SUBJECTS and BLACK INDIVIDUALS. This has profound implications on their RELATIONS to others, both in the FAMILY, the GROUPS, and the COMMUNITY. She also explained that for many the experience of learning their place in

the system and changing their self-perception is too strong: They reject it by dropping out of the classes.

I will only highlight her use of identity as central to the work of Steve Biko when they position people in a black history which should give them self-esteem and oppose the white history of Brazil with its stereotypes of black people. By focusing on the hidden racism in neglecting public schools they oppose the white ideology of racial democracy and the belief that all live in harmony and racial mixture. When positioning the students as black subjects, they impose a change with repercussions in their families, groups and communities.

NENU – or Nucleus of Black Students in public Universities - has divisions on the universities in Salvador, Brasília and Rio Grande do Sul. Their role is also tied to the racial quotas and to education. I have been unable to find a homepage or pamphlets from the organization, so I use information gathered from conversations and one interview with a militant named Jairo.

Jairo told me that under the slave regime the white colonist elite went to Portugal for education. Later on, the idea was to have equal access for all people, but blacks were not considered 'people'. The idea that equality of all does not apply for black people suggests a link to the hidden nature of racism as seen from the black movement discourse which was also voiced by Dr. Ubiratan Castro, when talking of the liberal ideology above. When education became available to black people, they could only enter the technical educations for manual work Jairo said, hinting at the whitening ideal as determining the education available for black people. He explained that it was the continued struggle for equal opportunities for education that motivated his involvement in the black movement.

He explained that the idea of racial democracy is "a great trap", and said that in the period when the Brazilian nation was being constructed Gilberto Freyre termed the phrase 'racial democracy' as "a harmonious interracial equilibrium" making it impossible for Brazil to have racism as understood through the United States. He opposed this by stating that interracial relations were not as harmonious as Freyre had perceived, thereby placing racism and discrimination as central to both past and present. He said that people would justify racial democracy by highlighting poor white people living in the *favela*, when in reality they had more opportunities than black people. This suggests Domingues' (2005) inversion of exceptions for rules, or at least the different versions of reality each discourse constructed around racism or racial democracy offers.

Jairo explained that the black movement struggle started with the Quilombos, religious sisterhoods, *terreiros*[13], TEN, MNU and UNEGRO, thereby creating a continuity of

[13] Temples of Candomblé (see also Sjørslev 1995 and Jensen 2002).

resistance sidestepping slavery as above. He said that racism is a crime in Brazil, but when the police are racists who would punish them? This is not only the hidden nature of Brazilian racism, it also hints at the integrationist and structural aspects of it according to the black movement discourse. Jairo told me that young black people watch TV and ask themselves why they are in this situation while others are much better off, and if it is because they look different. By attempting to appear lighter than they are, black people hope to achieve social mobility through the whitening ideal.

Jairo explained that he had been involved in the student movement, but eventually began meeting people from the black movement through events at Ilê Aiyê, just as Jussara. Here his conception of class began to be sub-divided into gender, sexuality and race, which shows the discursive centrality of all discrimination. He told me that three years ago he stopped going out with his childhood friends and started organizing a group studying for the university entrance exam. In all this he paralleled the narrative put forth by the organization Steve Biko, in which he was a participant at the time of the interview. He said that because of internalized racism many black people are satisfied to leave high school and look for work, but after he had begun thinking about his life through the black movement, he started gaining more self-respect and decided that he wanted more out of life. This suggests that by opposing the internalized racism of the whitening ideal through the black movement discourse, he achieved self-esteem and a college education.

Atitude Quilombola was founded in 2005 and as they do not yet have a homepage I will refer to the self-presentation as it is on their online community in Orkut.com. Here they write that:

> **"**Atitude Quilombola is an institution with the larger goal to fight for the rights of the black people, always searching for political forms directed at the reparation of a historical debt. [It is] created by students and former students of UFBa, who fought in favour of the quotas for blacks in University [and today it has] 70 affiliated and 200 sympathizing with the aim of the movement**"**.

I will return to Atitude Quilombola in chapter five when I investigate the narrative construction of identity by one of its militants, Anderson.

I interviewed the primary founder of Atitude Quilombola, Walter, who said that when recruiting new militants he would attempt to talk about what was closest to the reality of the audience, and then make them understand that their individual conditions could be seen through a collective perspective calling them to the struggle. By relating collective conditions to individual realities he would create a racial solidarity of shared

discrimination. After making them perceive discrimination he expressed an urge for action, as the state would do nothing and they had to do it themselves - an empowered agency.

Walter said that a big part of black consciousness is to know that you are poor *because* you are black. According to Walter you have to have a consciousness of being oppressed, and show solidarity with the oppressed. The discursive concept of discrimination has been translated to the oppressed and the need for solidarity. For Walter race comes before poverty, much like for Edmilton (MNU) and Jussara (Acareggae).

When asked about his own process of achieving consciousness, Walter said that he had always had an interest for manifestations of blackness, but that his neighbourhood had considered him white because of racial democracy. Walter had a white mother and black father which gave him access to 'the mulatto escape hatch', which he associated with racial democracy and the whitening ideal. Most of the time he valued his white side and he explained it as due to television's influence in adolescence, but at other times he felt black, as when watching Olodum march with their percussion music. This ambivalence of racial identity might be a strong aspect of the cultural organizations and their use of dominant discursive stereotypes to attract black people. Walter admitted that the beat of the percussion music was what initially attracted him to Olodum and Ilê Aiyê whereas they now were important symbols of resistance. Walter seemed well aware of this ambivalence and double discursive bind when he mentioned Fanon's concept of black alienation and double consciousness. The inspiration from former black resistance made Walter talk about their "mythical philosophy of the Quilombos", voicing the view on black resistance sidestepping slavery.

Contrary to the others he gave me no specific time for his conversion, but told me that he had made a retrospective re-reading of his past and reconstructed his true identity. This suggests a radical re-interpretation of his life through the black movement discourse (see also Snow & Machalek 1984). He recognized the white aesthetic ideal of straightened hair and light-skinned girlfriends, but threw it aside to assume a black perspective. The first conflict was aesthetic, he explained, and the second concerned relations of friendship and love. Here he seemed to follow the narrative path described by Tarry (Steve Biko) and Jairo (NENU). The third was a rereading of his intellectual references, discovering academic explanations of his experiences. This corresponded with the path leading to education as in the cases mentioned above. Today Walter believed himself to be in the phase of dialogue, with no problems with white people, only with "the affirmation of whiteness against the black position". Thereby he understood racism not as individual action, but as structural and hidden - as a 'false consciousness'.

THE BLACK MOVEMENT DISCOURSE

In the previous chapter I have demonstrated that the central concepts of the popular discourse are 'racial democracy' and the ideal of 'whitening'. But where racial democracy professes equality for all independent of colour, the whitening ideal rank people according to the colour of their skin, which makes the black movement talk of a hidden racism (see also Sheriff 2000: 121) or what Jairo (NENU) called "the great trap of racial democracy".

The central concepts of the black movement discourse are 'racism' with all its connotations of multiple discriminations, the racial bipolar division, and the wish for equal human rights. By creating a black history of Quilombo resistance sidestepping (and even denying) slavery, they invert what I have called 'the Freyrian historic tautology' by creating a past of resistance to legitimize the present. This makes it possible to rephrase 'harmonious racial mixture' as 'systematic rape of black women', and actively oppose all the central elements of the popular discourse. By keeping the structure of the tautology intact, the black movement refrains from questioning the premise of the essentialist-nationalist framework and comes to reproduce the Brazilian exceptionalism, but with a different content (see also Sheriff 2001: 213). When declaring racial democracy a myth and creating a line of continuous resistance from the past, the black movement denies the Abolition of slavery in 1888 as a lie (Burdick 1992: 23), and states that the slavery has simply gone from legal to mental, as seen in the Bob Marley quotes.

Where the popular discourse consists of seemingly self-contradictory ideals of racial democracy and whitening, the black movement discourse uses a bipolar understanding of race while advocating citizenship and human rights. I understand the elements of the discourses to counteract each other. The whitening ideal consists of a gradual understanding of race coupled with a hierarchy of colour. The gradual aspect is opposed by the black movement's bipolar understanding, as when opposing what I have called the 'divide and conquer'-strategy (Nascimento 1999; see Burdick 1992: 24), and the hierarchy valuing whiteness is opposed by a focus on equal and universal human rights. The same can be said for the idea of racial democracy as combining an apparent racial division with equality for all. When inverting Freyre's idea of a racial democracy by positioning racism and multiple axis of discrimination as central to their discourse, the black movement re-negotiates it as an ideal for the future, *not* a present reality. Although they hope to eliminate racism from Brazil, the inverted use of the Freyrian historic tautology to legitimize it in the present might make it hard to imagine a future free of racism.

The black movement claims that the low self-esteem of black people is due to the effects of internalized racism by the whitening ideal (see also Domingues 2005). By positioning black people relative to their skin colour in a narrative of genetic inferiority disappearing with time, the narrative inherent in the whitening ideal creates an understanding of black

people as inferior left-overs, destined to fail and disappear. It is a narrative of assimilation highlighted by the Brazilian exceptionalist idea of syncretism, and encompassment as essentially Brazilian or Latin American virtues (Fry, Segato, Freyre, Sansone).

In order to fight this narrative of assimilation, the black movement proposes a bipolar racial division to combat assimilation and mixture. In this regard you might say that Pierson (1944) was right when writing that any race-problem is due to groups resisting absorption. This is exactly what the black movement opposes, as clearly demonstrated when Nascimento rephrases what the popular discourse calls racial mixture and assimilation as a 'racial massacre' (1989).

Having opposed the gradual understanding of race in both racial democracy and whitening with the bipolar understanding, the black movement needs another narrative structure than the one predetermining them to disappear. Like Bruner's North American Indians (1986), the black movement does this by positioning themselves in a narrative of resistance. With slavery already taken to mean racial inferiority by the popular discourse, they sidestep this era by focusing on the greatness of Africa, the Quilombos and various historical black movement organizations. They create a narrative plot about communitarian resistance. I believe it to be in relation to this that conversion from Christianity to Candomblé and Rastafari should be understood. Both signal a bipolar division of religions associated with white and black people, and especially Candomblé has a lot to offer the black movement militants. Where there is agreement that Christianity was intended to pacify the black people by legitimizing the status quo as Divine Will, Candomblé has a more instrumental relation between humans and gods. In Christian monotheism God is omnipotent and determines the destiny of all humans whereas the gods in Candomblé can be manipulated and pleased with offerings and sacrifices[14]. There seem to be a more empowering agency inherent in Candomblé than in Christianity which was also expressed by Will at the ritual on the first page.

This empowered agency is also a central feature of the black movement discourse. Central to the discourse is the Marxist opposition to the liberal idea that the system will correct itself[15]. In the black movement discourse exists what Walter (AQ) calls "an urge to action": Upon recognizing that the state will do nothing, black people realize that change is up to them. This might be linked to the hidden and denied nature of racism and discrimination in the popular discourse. The critique of the liberal ideology inherent in racial democracy and the individualistic claim of equality is that human equality is only

[14] This is akin to Evans Pritchard's distinction between the different uses of magic and religion (1976). I use the term 'Christianity' here well aware that it is not a heterogeneous religious category. I use the term as it was used by my informants. For a more nuanced view of the distinction between omnipotence and instrumentality within Christian Catholicism and Protestantism see Weber (1995).
[15] What Adam Smith called 'the invisible hand of the market' (2000).

equality as long as humans are white. This was expressed with regards to the French Revolution by Dr. Ubiratan Castro (*Fundação Cultural Palmares*) and with regards to equal education by Jairo (NENU).

It seems that the black movement in Marxism has found a forceful critique of liberal ideology. It has appropriated the ideas of 'false consciousness', 'alienation', 'a communitarian economy' and the narrative of 'awakening'. I find the concept of 'importing ideas' dangerously misleading and essentialist-nationalistic as it designates the transfer of nationally foreign ideas across national borders to an essentially different national context. This leads me to disagree with both Segato and Freyre when they accuse the black movement (and Hanchard 1994) of using foreign logics and being un-Brazilian. I believe that the black movement in Marxism found a discourse that expresses their experiences better than the popular discourse (see also Bruner 1986). Nevertheless, the Marxist inspiration of the black movement is not at all a harmonious one without conflict or contestation.

Indeed, how can one argue simultaneously for the predominance of race and class? As I interpret it, this was the central conflict of UNEGRO, the black movement organization linked to the communist party. Alexandro seemed at odds to create a hierarchy of discriminations between race and class. Many, like Edmilton (MNU) and Jairo (NENU), even positioned the class struggle as one they had converted *from* when they came to the black movement. In this light the popular discursive argument that racism is essentially mistaken class differences points to a conflict over whether class belongs in the popular or black movement discourse. While the discursive possibility of seeing multiple axis of discrimination made many create a hierarchy of race, class, gender and, some, sexuality, the exact ranking of the axis' was also a matter of contestation (see also Sheriff 2001: 216). Jussara (Acareggae) pointed to the feminist angle criticizing the black movement for offering women positions only as secretaries and treasurers. What axis of discrimination came after race is a highly contested matter.

When asked about their process of becoming conscious, the militants expressed the Marxist idea of awakening in their narratives. They all seemed to have some kind of conversion narrative (see also Sheriff 2001: 207). Snow & Machalek writes that conversions "entails the displacement of one universe of discourse by another or the ascendance of a formerly peripheral universe of discourse to the status of a primary authority" (1984: 170). I cited Jussara (Acareggae) when she told me that "it all began when I got to know Ilê Aiyê, right […] there I, I encountered myself as a black woman and assumed my blackness".

Her narrative, and others', leads me to disagree with Segato (1998) when he claims conversion narratives to be products of foreign logics imported to Brazil as there is no pressure to produce such clear and exclusive identity affiliations. He claims that 'Brazilian

identity' is characterized by ambivalence and multiple affiliations. With my claim against essentialist-nationalism still intact, I would indeed state that within the black movement there *does* exist such a pressure to produce a conversion narrative as a clear and exclusive identity affiliation. With that said, I have not heard of a place where identity is not ambiguous with multiple affiliations[16]. The two do not seem to exclude each other.

The conversion narrative that I heard had different 'voices' (Gilligan et al 2003). When researching conversion narratives within the Jehova's Witnesses, James Beckford (1979) found that the stories they told about their experiences changed according to the expectations expressed in their authoritative journal 'The Watch Tower'. This suggests that the narrative conventions expressed by people with authority have a shaping effect on the narratives of others. Looking closely at the conversion narratives I heard during my interviews, I identified three voices which all are to be found in Jussara's (Acareggae) words above.

In Jussara's conversion narrative she claimed a sudden transformation, she can even give the date of a party at Ilê Aiyê. But she phrases it as "I encountered myself", which suggests an awakening. When she claims that it "began" at Ilê Aiyê and later describes how her development came when she started a black discussion group, it suggests a more gradual coming to consciousness. These three voices of sudden transformation, consciousness in phases, and an awakening of an inner essence, can be found in most of the conversion narratives I heard.

Many of the ideas put forth by the black militants in this chapter seem to have been strongly influenced by the ideas of Paulo Freire in the book 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' from 1968 (1997). Here Freire writes about the need for *conscientização*, or achieving consciousness with a strong Marxist approach. According to Freire the oppressed internalize the values and attitudes of the oppressors and wish to imitate them, as being human comes to mean being the oppressors (1997: 36). The oppressed are de-humanized (1997: 17) and end up lacking self-esteem (1997: 38) with a fear of freedom from oppression which causes them to experience a doubleness, as they wish to be free and remain safe at the same time, due to their internalized oppressor (1997: 20). They also often have a fatalistic view on life with no belief in the possibility of change (1997: 34).

The oppressors themselves cannot free the oppressed, as they are caught in their own distorted thought patterns and thus it becomes the responsibility of the oppressed to free both themselves and the oppressors from an oppression that de-humanizes them all (1997:

[16] Scott & Zahur (2003) explains the fragmentation of identity in Latin America as due to globalization and the political instability of the nation-states. According to my choice of theoretical framework, fragmented and ambiguous identities are a human pre-condition. The issue is how we create coherence (Bruner 1990; Jackson 2002).

33). Any attempt from the oppressors to free the oppressed is thus considered "false generosity", which legitimizes the very system it is an exception from. Therefore there is a need for the oppressed to keep the oppressors at a distance from their struggle (1997: 16). In this struggle the oppressed fight to gain consciousness of the causes of their oppression in order to fight it. They work to create a critical awareness, transforming themselves from passive to active, and creating a solidarity based on shared oppression (1997: 21). Through this process the oppressed are expected to become true human beings reversing the distortion and de-humanization inflicted upon them by the oppression they are struggling against. They thereby make the oppression more oppressing by adding to it an understanding of the oppression (1997: 24). This 'pedagogy of the oppressed' can only be done *with*, not *for*, the oppressed, as the lack of confidence in, and objectification of, the oppressed is at the centre of the oppression itself.

In the next chapter I will demonstrate how this 'pedagogy of the racially oppressed' works in the classrooms at Steve Biko. Here poor black students apply to programmes offering them obligatory classes in 'Citizenship and Black Consciousness' to help them assume their colour in Steve Biko.

Four

ASSUMING COLOUR IN STEVE BIKO

In the last chapter I described the different elements of the black movement discourse relating them to the popular discourse about race from the chapter before. As each of these discourses brings different aspects into focus, raises different issues for consideration, and has different implications for what we should do (Burr 2003: 65), the concept of learning becomes relevant. One has to learn which aspects to focus on, which issues to consider and what influence these should have on one's doings. This learning process has been referred to as "turning black" (see Pinho 2004) or "assuming your colour" and it is the central theme of this chapter.

The empirical material used in this chapter is from Steve Biko, who was introduced in chapter three. Steve Biko is an organization of volunteer militants from the black movement who teach different disciplines to young black people. As mentioned earlier the organization has three programmes: OGUNTEC is for high school students who need supplementary classes in the afternoon; a preparatory course for adults wanting to go to university; and POMPA is a support programme for black university students which gives aid in buying books, writing papers, finding internships and acquiring the first job. I observed the OGUNTEC classes in 'Science and Technology' and, most importantly, 'Citizenship and Black Consciousness' from the 16th July to September 1st 2006. In Steve Biko the racial question is incorporated into all classes, but the classes in 'Citizenship and Black Consciousness' deal more explicitly with what it means to be black and which expectations are associated with assuming colour in the black movement discourse. I have found the organization to have a strong inspiration from Paulo Freire's 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' (1997), and I will argue that his ideas function as a 'folk pedagogy' in much of the black movement.

I have chosen to use Etienne Wenger's social theory of learning (2004) as it highlights many of the central elements of my experience in the classrooms of Steve Biko. Wenger places 'learning' in relation to lived experience and as a production of meaning (2004: 13-14). In the perspective of Wenger's theory a discourse is a shared repertoire of resources for the negotiation of meaning equipped with expressions and metaphors which members use to create meaningful statements about the world (2004: 101). Wenger makes me able to analyze what positions are being offered and what expectations - silent and explicit - are associated with being black in the black movement discourse (2004: 174). Identity in this theory is the experience and performance of competences associated with these discursive

positions in narratives (2004: 177). In the act of negotiating the present, various collective narratives are incorporated into the identities. These narratives are offered by more experienced members of the group (such as the ones interviewed in the last chapter) as 'tracks' to follow (2004: 174; also Beckford 1978). The competent performance of these expectations and narratives signal membership of the group (Wenger 2004: 207; see also Steffen 1997).

Applying this theory to my argument, I am able to look for the competent performance of the black movement discourse. I can also look for different narratives within the discourse and see how the students position themselves taking up the positions offered. This chapter is divided into three parts. First, I describe the classroom context and the power relations and expectations within it. In the next section I take a look at the different narratives which are offered in the classroom and how this is done. The last section will demonstrate that the process is not one of the students as a *tabula rasa*, but rather of offering narratives and positions which the students can then recombine and use to create meaning from the experiences they bring with them from outside of the classroom. Here they have multiple memberships and thus many sets of narrative resources to draw on.

THE CLASSROOM CONTEXT

In using Wenger's framework, I will be treating the Steve Biko classroom as a "community of practice". 'Practice' here refers to the stories, resources, frames and perspectives supporting the action of being black (Wenger 2004: 15). If 'communities of practice' are communities where one learns the expectations accompanying a certain practice, then Steve Biko is a community where one gets to know how to be black in practice. The classroom can thus be conceptualized as a place where the students learn how to act or perform 'black' by skilled veterans in a process of continuous assignment, attempt and correction.

To study this I used observation and interviews. I started out observing in the classrooms by placing myself in the back noting the assignments and how the students' attempts were received by the teachers. Thereby I used an interactionist approach to observation, where I looked for the interaction between the institution and the individual (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer 2005: 97pp). Evaluations are an integral part of Steve Biko, with the intention to improve the teaching and install critical awareness in the students. These provided me with valued information by making explicit the organization's expectations to the students. Often the coordinators would participate in the classroom debates of certain issues central to the black movement. Although the idea was for the students to be the central debating participants (as when Freire 1997: 20 writes *with* the oppressed, not *for* them), the coordinators often supplied them with concepts, metaphors and slogans. This gave me an

understanding of the terminology of the black movement which can be used to rectify experience into different narrative structures (see also Steffen 1997).

I also conducted interviews with two students and a teacher. I had hoped to interview more teachers but this was denied at the last moment. I interviewed the teacher of 'Science and Technology', Renato, who explained to me the expectations he had for a successful class and what he hoped the students would gain from it. He was one of the people selecting the students to participate in the Steve Biko programmes and he explained the process and criteria to me. He also told me the narrative of his life and how he worked to relate it to the lives of the students to create a sense of identification. I interviewed the two students Márcia, a female student age 15, and António, a male student age 16. I asked them to talk about what they had gained from studying at Steve Biko and what the classes meant to them. I also asked them to tell me their life stories to see if it corresponded with the authorized narratives from chapter three and how they accounted for their experiences.

While conducting the student interviews I got the feeling that the students were trying to answer my questions according to what Steve Biko had taught them. The social space of the interview was pre-determined by our initial meeting inside Steve Biko (Wadel 1991: 45) and although this was not what I had intended, it made me look at the interviews as a 'rectification test' where the students tried to use what they had learned from their own experiences and life story. Thereby I got access to the trial-and-error process of rectification instead of its end product (so far). The students were in the process of finding out what 'black' meant and could do for them, and the interviews were used as a way for them to do this.

Meaning is always a process of negotiation, but not all positions are equal in this regard. There are always local power relations where some have the influence to halt the negotiation and thus create stability of meaning (Wenger 2004: 118). This is indeed the case in a classroom where the authority of teachers will often have the last and correcting word. The teachers and coordinators worked hard to create a sense of 'being chosen' in the students, making them feel like the exception both with regards to other black people around them, and the black people that came before them. This was done in evaluations where the coordinator Tarry would highlight the things Steve Biko provided such as free lunch, school supplies and transportations refunds to and from Steve Biko. These things, along with the volunteer teachers, were conceptualized as "a chance to succeed". The expectation was that this would create a sense of reciprocity towards the teachers making the students work harder and be grateful for having been selected.

The selection process was explained to me by Renato. He said that the basic prerequisites for the students were public schools attendance, being black, poor and living in poor peripheral neighbourhoods. Besides this, the primary thing they looked for was motivation. When students applied, the coordinators would conduct an admission interview with each

student where they asked if the student wanted to get involved with the organization both as a student and later as an activist.

AVAILABLE NARRATIVES

Within every discourse there are different collective narratives and positions which can be used to convey membership and identification. These narratives define us by where we have been and where we are going, and are often offered to us by identifying with more experienced members (Wenger 2004: 181). The play of positioning inherent in the narratives and discourses is a negotiation of the very way of being a person – the definition of individuality – and thus has profound implications on identity (2004: 170; Harré & Langenhove 1999). Taking up positions within a discursive narrative means having the experiences and performing the competences associated with that position (2004: 177). Shifting to a position radically different from a previous one is thus not only a new 'way of being' the process itself is also a new experience that needs to be narrated competently. This is done in authorized conversion narratives (Beckford 1978). By offering the students a position within the black movement discourse, they have to create three narratives: One, a collective historical narrative in accordance with the black movement; two, a conversion narrative to explain the change in identity, and; three, a life story narrative in which personal experiences are rectified according to the discourse to show membership. These are the three narratives I will analyze in this section.

The classes at Steve Biko are participatory in the regard that they work to get the students to talk and to correct each other through the discourse. The terminology is about making the students see 'the reality' in opposition to its distorted image in the popular discourse (following Freire 1997: 11). This means posing questions which are clearly positioned within the black movement discourse and asking the students to validate as when a teacher wrote on the black board:

> We live in a social asymmetry – how can we establish this fact?

The students were thus asked to take up a position inside the black movement discourse and see the world through its perspective when answering the question.

The discussions in the classroom also often took the shape of an opposition to the popular discourse about race supplying other understandings than racial democracy and whitening. At one class two girls had prepared a debate about recent scientific research concluding that a large majority of all Brazilians had genes from both Indian, Black and White due to ancestral mixture. The research claimed that people with a black phenotype could easily be genetically mixed or even white. Thereby the research was an argument for the idea of racial democracy and Brazil as a mulatto nation.

In the classroom a dark-skinned male student raised his hand and said that all humans were black because human beings evolved in Africa and emigrated from there, equating black with African. Another student asked about the meaning of 'ancestral'. The two girls explained that ancestry could be denied or highlighted, as when blacks were equalled with slaves and white people with colonizers. They got applause. Later a male coordinator added that Brazil was a racist system which alienated black people. He claimed that this alienation had produced an embarrassment over their ancestry and had resulted in European immigration and whitening (*branqueamento*). He said that it was visible in the beauty standards on TV (much like Freire 1997: 36).

The example shows how ideas associated with the popular discourse are opposed by means of different arguments. These were: All human beings are black as they evolved in Africa, racial mixture is racist as it is part of whitening, and according to whitening black is considered ugly and black ancestry shameful. Together they could deny the authority of scientific research legitimizing the claims of the popular discourse. Inherent in the arguments are also the primacy of black people and the opposition to whitening through a bipolar racial division. Not all of the arguments were from the black movement discourse, however.

QUILOMBOLA WARRIORS

In chapter three I showed how a narrative of black resistance is constructed from the Greatness of Africa over the Diaspora, sidestepping the era of slavery and abolition, and focusing instead on the active resistance of the Quilombo inhabitants – the *quilombolas*. Recounting this history is intended to make the Steve Biko students proud of their ancestry and value their history. A central feature when claiming continuous racism in Brazil is the 'falsification' of the abolition in 1888 (Freire 1991: 'False generosity'; Burdick 1998). Thereby the racism derived from slavery can be claimed to exist to this day and the falsification is thus closely tied to the existence of racism. This is a way to create a historical tautology around racism opposing the Freyrian tautology. Márcia expressed this change well when she said that "we have black consciousness and prejudice is present in everything".

One day at a debate in class the students, teachers and two coordinators sat in a semi-circle talking about identification and representation in television. A male coordinator said that 80 percent of the population of Bahia was black, yet the politicians were white. He explained it as "a very big supremacy" being installed in people from infancy and proclaimed that "Slavery is not our history! It is a lie!" He received applause from everybody and then concluded "you are sick, and now you know the cure" in a dramatic tone of voice. Later he explained that "prisons are today's *senzalas*, the *favelas* are the

Quilombos"[17]. He said that the students were "warriors", people who recognized reality with an attitude. Pen and paper were their weapons in the academic fight. Again he received applause.

The male coordinator created a historical line of racism in Brazil by equating the slave quarters (*senzalas*) with prisons and the Quilombos with the *favelas*, despite Abolition. In doing this he also sidestepped slavery by stating that it was not their history and thus created a history of continuous resistance which he invited the students to take part in. This was also the view expressed by Jussara (Acareggae) and Walter (AQ) when discussing the Quilombos in the previous chapter. By calling the students 'warriors' the coordinator equated the academic carrier metaphorically with the *quilombola* fight against white supremacy. Taking up the positions in this narrative was presented as the solution (or 'cure') to the students' problems.

The importance of the narrative about black resistance was understood by the student Márcia who said that people would identify with the past and thereby learn that they are black. She explained that it was a "history in the history in the history" contrary to the white history of the Europeans and thus voicing the opposition. The male student António said that he had long had an interest in history and so he had gone to the library to read. Here he had read about "miscegenation of races and colours in Brazil and the slaves from Africa" - it would seem he had opened the wrong book, seen from the black movement's point of view. Márcia explained that everything started in Africa even though the official history may be about "some little white one" (*aquela branquinho*) from Europe. She explained that without knowing the history of slavery it was impossible to know what to think about the quotas, "but if you know [about history], you will know if you are for or against the quotas".

The metaphor of the resistance warriors was expressed again another day when one of the teachers said that the class needed loyalty and corps spirit. She compared the students to soldiers in war movies where the soldiers would be loyal till the end, and die at the others' side if necessary. At the next class she showed the students a video on the VCR and said that their assignment would be to write a short and critical paper about the movie. The things they should look for were: The posture of the protagonists, the development, the message, and the human ideals expressed in the movie.

The movie was 'Drumline' (2002) about a young black man called Devon,

> **"**a talented street drummer from Harlem who enrolls in a Southern university, expecting to lead its marching band's drumline to victory. He

[17] S*enzalas* were the Brazilian slaver quarters.

> initially flounders in his new world, before realizing that it takes more than talent to reach the top.**"**[18]

It was clear from the movie that it was impossible to be a drummer alone. The plot of the movie was about Devon's problems with fitting in. In his competition with the established leader they both worked against the good of the drumline and the movie ended with the two becoming friends and supplementing each others talents to create great music for the band. After the movie the teacher asked the students what it was, that was needed 'more than talent' by writing the following questions on the black board:

> What is necessary for Devon to become a complete musician?
> Theory + Practice = ?
> I only have value when I am alone, but when I am in a team, what is valid?

By comparing the students with soldiers and warriors as well as musicians in a band, Steve Biko attempts to create a feeling of collectivity. As described in the previous chapter, the black movement opposes the liberal idea of individual responsibility (also Freire 1997: 18) when it claims that Brazil is characterized by structural racism. Following the Marxist and Freirian (1997: 21) inspiration they create a community of shared oppression. Walter (AQ) told me that it was important to understand that "because you are black you are oppressed and then have solidarity with the oppressed". The essential part of this process is to remove the students from their understanding of black history as slavery by positioning them in a narrative of black resistance. As described in the last chapter, the popular discourse about race offers them a position as the remains of an enslaved black people disappearing by the survival of the superior white genes in the process of racial mixture. The narrative of black resistance, on the contrary, offers them a position as *quilombola* warriors in a narrative of ethnic resurgence and a solidarity based on oppression. Their understanding of the difficulties they have encountered is thus changed from the result of individual failure to a structural racism and the shift offers them an empowered position of agency and future hope.

A NARRATIVE OF CONVERSION

When I first talked to people at Steve Biko, a militant told me that the classes he had attended had been a 'transformative' experience. He described how he had laughed when looking back at his life with the knowledge he had just received. The same was the case for all the militants I talked to in the previous chapter. They all told stories of transformation

[18] The quote is from International Movie Database (IMDb).

and changing their perspective from 'alienation' to 'knowing what is real'. As I understand this change to be discursive their stories qualify as narratives of conversion (Snow & Machalek 1984: 170). Creating this personal change is the explicit aim of Steve Biko ('rebirth' in Freire 1997: 34).

During an evaluation the coordinator Tarry gave the students a powerful reprimand. She claimed that the students did not do their assignments because "you do not want to leave the place where you are" (see also 'fear of freedom' Freire 1997: 19). The teachers were leaving the organizations because of lack of respect from the students she claimed, and urged them to "not use time on the white consciousness, use time on the black consciousness". She claimed they had had ten months to change, making it clear that *they* were the problem. For two hundred years black people had been saying that with the same opportunities they would be able to do as well as white people she said, and it frustrated her that the students could not. The teacher said that the students had to police themselves more. "We have never been privileged in our history – there will be no other opportunities!" she said, "reflect on what has been said!"

The aim of Steve Biko is to get young black people to see the world through the black movement discourse. The need to change perspective can easily be understood as a need to produce a conversion narrative. At one time the classroom discussion turned to personal experiences of discrimination. Márcia, the girl I later interviewed, told the class that she had been discriminated: A light-skinned friend had told her that she had become crazy (*louco)* after she had started at Steve Biko. This was a normal experience, which suggested that the accusation of being crazy and misunderstood was an essential part of the experience.

Márcia later told me in the interview that before attending the classes her head had been "empty". At Steve Biko she had began to "consciousize" (following Freire 1997) and perceive that it was necessary to do more. The teachers had helped her to "open her eyes" and improve. Nothing was like it had been before Steve Biko, she said. She had tried to take the university entrance exam before without knowing that the public schools were bad and that she would never achieve acceptance. She explained that she knew that she would have many difficulties and that it was important to assume these difficulties. Now she could envision a better future than before, well aware of the difficulties she would meet, and already had met without knowing it. The same terminology was used by the male student António. They both said that before Steve Biko they had been "empty minded" with a lot of free time on their hands. Now they "knew in reality what was happening". Steve Biko had opened their eyes and now they both tried to do the same to their friends and family back home.

The parallels in their choice of words do not come as a surprise. Steve Biko supplies an array of terminology conceptualizing the change they expect to happen in the students.

Like in my talk with Silvio quoted in the previous chapter, Steve Biko wanted "to open their heads" and Tarry claimed they would teach the students their "true history". Indeed the programme POMPA had the subtitle: "Open doors and open minds". The urge for conversion was demonstrated after the teacher had urged the students to adopt a soldier-style solidarity as described above. A young girl started to cry and confessed that she had been an individualist but she wanted to change and help others. It was an emotional situation but the teacher barely reacted. I came to understand it as a paradox between handling the pressure for conversion through confession, and the hard ideals of military solidarity in the black movement (see also Freire 1997: 34).

Márcia voiced this in her interview. She said that Steve Biko had taught her to accept her identity as black and to know "in reality what was happening". Previously she had considered racism a joke, but now she knew that it was serious and that they all needed to fight and not just to "lower our heads" and accept. She explained that for some people racism did not exist but for her it was serious and she needed to consciousize and tell others what was happening. Language was another aspect she pointed to. She claimed that if someone knew the history they would learn that it was "impossible to call yourself *moreno*, because the word does not exist". The history of black resistance and the bipolar discourse on race (Sheriff 2001) are intrinsically linked as also pointed to by Alexandro (UNEGRO) in chapter three.

The conversion narratives which Steve Biko urges the students to produce are naturally embedded in wider life stories and should be understood in terms of them. Here I will only point to some of the characteristics of the conversion: What are the students urged to leave behind and what do the black movement discourse offer in return?

The black movement discourse and the positions inherent in its narratives are about a resistance which I have referred to as the '*quilombola* warrior' position. I have done this to convey the creation of continuity between past and present resistance sidestepping slavery, considered too passive, and abolition, considered false. The individualized responsibility within a wider equality of the popular liberal discourse is changed to a collective solidarity based on shared oppression. The narrative of blackness as vanishing inferior genes (whitening) is traded for the active resistance fighters in a narrative of ethnic resurgence. All that is needed is the production of a conversion narrative and the realization that you were once 'alienated'. Making this structure fit your own experiences is, however, not always easy. There will often be experiences and elements too dear to the sense of identity, for people just to throw them away in pursuit of others (Bruner 1990: 54). That is why it is necessary to look at the wider life story to understand how life experiences are rectified (or not) to fit the black movement narratives.

SUGGESTIVE LIFE STORIES

The production of conversion narratives highlights the profound implications for the identities of the students. The classes are not just intended to educate them, but to change their lives as said by Tarry in chapter three. Therefore the wider life story and the everyday experiences of the students become important. Steve Biko continuously reminds the students that they have been selected and given a chance which they would not otherwise have had. The students are told that they are the exception as a result of more than 200 years of black movement struggle against discrimination.

Wenger writes that veterans supply novices with 'tracks': By identifying with the veteran the novice can observe what is desirable and expectable (2004: 182). The community offers recognized narratives to follow, and thereby the novice can show identification and membership. The veterans in Steve Biko were the teachers, coordinators and militants. When I interviewed the teacher Renato he told me that he worked to create identification between him and the students. I asked him what he considered a successful class and he said that it had to do with 'feedback', or the flow in the class. When he was talking about globalization, for example, he would relate it to the everyday lives of the students and what was going on in the present world. He could show them that he was black with the same life story as them, but he had a bi-combustible car because he studied. He said that in this way he taught them about the material of Science and Technology while becoming their role model and showing them how they could achieve what he had.

Renato worked explicitly with the identification and relating his own life to his students' to make them see that they could achieve what he had achieved. Thereby he offered his own narrative as a desirable 'track' they could follow to reach an expected end. He said that he would talk about the street where he grew up and he could recount the same stories as in their lives, showing them that they were alike. Thereby he could convince them that they were capable despite the many difficulties they would encounter – empowering them to try.

The use of black role models as a way to offer narrative 'tracks' for the students to follow, was also voiced by the students. Márcia recognized that Steve Biko had given her role models and that "when you don't have anyone to mirror yourself in, for you to correct yourself, you don't have a light, you don't have a notion of what is happening". Her use of the 'light' metaphor shows the expected ends which the narrative offers. By taking up the narrative track offered in Steve Biko, the students get a new perspective of 'what is happening' as well as a 'light' to show them the way. António also saw the need for role models. He did not however claim the teachers as his role models, but talked of his parents instead. His choice between parents and teachers can be taken to suggest that the students see the family sphere and the black movement sphere as competing for their loyalty.

The narrative track Renato offered was about his own experiences at Steve Biko. He told me that before entering, it had been hard for him to break through the barrier of prejudice, racism, discrimination and lack of opportunities, but the classes in 'Citizenship and Black Consciousness' had changed this and helped him to enter university by giving him the things he had been missing. He explained that he had gained an elevated self-esteem, a will to struggle and a perspective of the future. He began to perceive that he was capable and Steve Biko supplied him with black role models who had achieved an education. They had the same life story as him and this was important as he was the first from his family to go to university. He claimed that he had dedicated himself to the black movement from the first day in class and it was through the black movement that he had become the person he was today. From being a poor kid in the *favela* he now worked in a five-star hotel reception as the only black receptionist, while giving back to Steve Biko in his spare time.

It is impossible to know if the students did take up the narrative track offered by their teacher and black role models. Although António mirrored himself in his parents, he still introduced himself as "the son of two black persons who passed through difficulties in arriving at a certain place, a certain better place in life because I lived in the suburbs". His story was filled with references to the possibility of crime and drugs in his neighbourhood and the difficulties it posed for him. Steve Biko was his chance to get away from the street and they had made him conscious of his true identity, he said. He had been using straightener in his hair but knew now that it was necessary for black people to assume their colour and not "de-characterize the black".

António explained that Steve Biko had been the "missing opportunity" and here he "saw the necessity for black people to enter the job market in the exact sciences". He dedicated himself "to appear and show a difference". The narrative structure of the story was about radical personal change and conversion followed by making a difference on the job market by showing that black people are capable and later return to spread the word. António said that he would go back after class and tell his friends about slavery and try to open their eyes and get them to assume their colour. This structure was mirrored in the words of Silvio in the previous chapter. He said that the learning process had several steps, and I would claim so do the narrative: "Ear, head, eye, and mouth" - listening, understanding, perceiving and telling others.

In Renatos narrative he dedicated himself to the black movement after the first day in class and Steve Biko helped him overcome the difficulties of racism and prejudice. Through Steve Biko he got a chance to go to university and get a good job. Now he had returned to give back to Steve Biko and help others to gain black consciousness and the chance of a higher education. For Renato the narrative of overcoming was over, he had overcome the difficulties in his life and was now on the other side. António on the other hand was still in the middle of his story (Good 1994). He was creating a conversion

narrative based on the shift from mulatto with straightened hair to black with natural hair. The trouble he had overcome was not abstract as 'racism' and 'prejudice' but concrete temptations of crime and drugs in his neighbourhood. Steve Biko had helped him overcome these temptations and now he tried to give something back to his friends back home, by telling them about slavery and the need to assume their colour. Although not at university yet, he wanted to show that black people were capable, even though he did not know what he wanted to study yet.

The narrative of overcoming through Steve Biko, entering university for a good job and later returning to consciousize others was canonical in Steve Biko. All the Steve Biko militants I talked to told similar stories. It was voiced when talking about the expectations for the students and when evaluating their progress. The narrative expectations even surfaced in the admission interviews when students were asked about their motivation for returning and giving back. As the students were also selected on a basis of poverty, lack of opportunity and skin colour, they were from the start positioned at the beginning of the narrative. Renato explained that the larger goal was to place the students in university where they would become engineers, doctors or others professions in the exact sciences.

As António showed, the students can use the three narratives to show membership and identification with the organization's aims. They thereby apparently take up the offer of structuring their experiences and actions according to the canonical narrative and thereby show their narrative competence. Taking a closer look at the narratives, however, shows that it was not the only narrative 'track' in their stories. The process was not straightforward rectification of experience as there were many elements of subjunctivity (Bruner 1990; Good 1994) as well.

RECTIFICATION AND SUBJUNCTIVITY

The teachers and coordinators at Steve Biko did not continuously ask the students to recount their life stories. It was enough for them to observe if the students performed according to their expectations. I asked Renato how he evaluated the students and if he could tell which students would become militants and thereby live up to the canonical narrative. He explained that he looked for students who demonstrated a lot of interest in the racial question and were "more conscious" (*mais consciente*). To do this he looked for students with a high self-esteem who were not ashamed of having curly hair.

When António said that he had straightened his hair, he was acknowledging this ideal of showing consciousness and self-esteem through his hair style. Black consciousness has a well-defined performance with hair as a central component. Other components of the

competent 'black performance' are 'African'[19] clothing and calling yourself 'black' as when assuming your colour. Respecting Candomblé as the religion of the black people is another, and I have already mentioned demonstrating soldier-style solidarity.

Through my observations in Steve Biko I saw many students changing their hair to spikes or rastafari, some wearing African tunics and necklaces with brown wooden globes. When asked, other informants would state that this was 'performing black consciousness'. Some students however did not change their hair and continued using straightener. Others, like António, kept alternative narrative tracks open in their narratives. There was an innovative tendency showing resistance within the frames provided (Wenger 2004: 97). I would say an urge for 'subjunctivity' - to keeping the future open for other things than what the narrative made desirable or expected.

When I asked António about his future he would tell me the canonical narrative of Steve Biko. But when I asked into his more concrete plans he told me about applying for the military or the temptations of easy money through crime. Earlier he had given me the story about using straightener and realizing that the natural hair of the black people was curly. When I asked why he had not gotten dreadlocks or some other 'African' hair style, he said that his hair was military-style for the courses he followed on the neighbourhood base. What apparently looked like following the canonical narrative, on another level was filled with ambivalence and double meanings.

This was also the case for the conversion narratives recounted to me by the two students. While they could both tell a canonical conversion narrative when asked, their experiences were understood differently when looking closer. Márcia said that she had changed radically while attending classes in Steve Biko, thus she followed the canonical narrative and the Freirian prescriptions. When asked what had changed, she said that she had become more mature, suggesting an interpretation of the change as pathological in stead of pedagogical through Steve Biko. I also asked her when she had changed from calling herself mulatto to black and she answered that it had happened a long time before she came to Steve Biko.

Steve Biko has very rigid expectations to its students with regards to rectifying their experiences and living up to the ideals of a 'black' performance. These narrative and performative expectations are quite explicit and used when selecting the students for admittance and later when evaluating their progress. The students are expected to identify with the history of the black movement and ignore the era of slavery and abolition in order to create a continuous line of racism and resistance. Learning about this history and

[19] See Pinho (2004) for an analysis of the invention of 'Africa' in Bahia, and Segato (1998) for an analysis of Africa's place in Brazil.

identifying with it is expected to produce a conversion in the students which is associated with a change in language (from *moreno* to black), identity (conversion narrative) and performance (hair style and African cloths). The students are expected to take up the position of *quilombola* warriors fighting with solidarity, based on shared oppression and a soldier-style loyalty.

The expectations lead to a pressure for a conversion narrative demonstrating the students' unambiguous affiliation with the black movement and history. There are very strict guidelines for the narratives and they are demonstrated by the teachers and coordinators who also supply the terminology and arguments in which the conversion is expected to be narrated. There exists a pressure for a conversion, although there are some doubt as to the character of the conversion expected and ambivalence as to the desire to rectify.

The teachers further function as role models, offering their life stories created around the canonical Steve Biko narrative, as tracks for the students. Thereby the students learn what is considered desirable and which future they can expect if they choose to rectify their experiences according to the narrative. The teachers are well aware of this function and they work to create a relation of identification between the students and themselves, by recounting their own stories and relating them to the experiences and everyday lives of the students.

The students do not, however, simply rectify their life stories in accordance to the expectations of the organization. They keep alternative endings open, and although their stories may seem to correspond with the narrative expectations, they often demonstrate a skilful use of subjunctivity. The students thus create a sense of agency by attributing the expected changes and future chances (at least partly) to their own actions or internal development, although the narratives they produce suggest influence from Steve Biko. The narrative tracks offered by the organization are used, but with an array of subversive plots and subjunctive endings.

I would argue that Paulo Freire's ideas have become a 'folk pedagogy' which the black movement, and Steve Biko in particular, use when opposing the popular discourse. Through his ideas they gain a theory of mind and motivation (Bruner 1990: 13) to conceptualize the changes they expect to occur in the students and how to help the students to achieve them. Thereby it becomes necessary to analyze narratives within a 'folk' Freirian framework to understand the change which is associated with 'assuming your colour'. Still, the change has to be understood on the background of a wider life story narrative, which I will attempt to do in the next chapter when analysing how to create agency in narratives.

Five

CREATING AGENCY IN NARRATIVES

In the previous chapters I have demonstrated how the black movement is constructed in opposition to the popular discourse about race in Brazil. I have highlighted the central elements of the black movement discourse and described the expectations and conventions associated with it as it is taught in the organization Steve Biko. In this chapter I turn my focus to the life story narrative of one militant, to show what the discourse offers and how it is put to use in the construction of a narrative leading to success and a sense of agency. The story was told to me by Anderson who was also a militant in the organization Atitude Quilombola and my friend. He was part of the deciding body of the organization where he held the position of Coordinator of Culture and he was a rap performer.

In my analysis of Anderson's narrative I have chosen to use the framework offered by Jerome Bruner in 'Acts of Meaning' (1990). Some of the central features of his approach are the rectification of experiences deviating from canonical narrative genres by use of accounts (see also Järvinen 2005). These accounts relate to cultural systems of interpretation (Bruner 1990: 33) or what I have called discourses. Canonical narratives are stories commonly known within what Bruner calls 'folk psychology' (1990: 35). He also uses the earlier mentioned term 'subjunctivity' (1990: 54) to refer to the multiple plots and voices (see Gilligan et al 2003) of an only partially understood narrative told by people in the middle of their story (Good 1994: 144).

Anderson was both my principal informant and a close friend during my fieldwork. Our friendship created a relation between us that differed radically from the relations I had with the students from Steve Biko, where our initial meeting had a determining effect on our relationship. With Anderson I had multiple relations as I knew him on a casual basis, as a rap performer, a family member, an unemployed struggling to get a job and a friend missing his parents in São Paulo (see also Wadel 1991: 45). When I met Anderson he was in a difficult place in his life which will become evident in the narrative. Using Bruner's approach to narratives enables me to see the struggle that Anderson fought to understand his experiences and to somehow fit them into a coherent narrative which could lead to a future of hope and a sense of autonomy in the present (Bruner 1990: 118). This was an important struggle and he used all the resources he had at his disposal. This chapter will analyze these resources, how he used them and what he gained from it. Thereby I will also demonstrate which subjunctive alternatives to the black movement discourse may co-exist, when narrating a life story.

MEETING ANDERSON

Having talked to militants and participated in a protest march arranged by Atitude Quilombola, I was invited to a party to celebrate a soccer match between Brazil and Australia. This was where I met Anderson for the first time. The party took place on the second floor of a house in a central neighbourhood in Salvador. The room had been decorated with balloons and black movement banners insinuating a strange mix of racial consciousness and national pride. In the room were different militants and friends of the organization. When I later that night was about to leave, Anderson invited me to spend Midsummer's Eve (*São João*) with him in the birth town of his parents, Cabaceiras de Paraguaçu. This became the beginning of a close friendship between Anderson and me. For four days we hardly left each other's side while partying and talking with his uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, grandmothers etc. We slept in the same room, shared feelings of longing for home, and for our families, and we talked about race, black consciousness, and women.

Trust was a central element to our relationship from the moment he invited me to Cabaceiras. I followed him without knowing much about him and he brought me to meet his family with likewise limited knowledge about me. Another aspect that brought us together was the similar situation of being away from friends, family and girlfriend. Anderson had only recently moved from his home in São Paulo to Salvador, and my fieldwork had likewise brought me far away from home. Both of us were thus in a strange far-away place trying to understand what was going on and how to find our way. Anderson would, however, claim authority of knowledge when I asked him questions. He would ask others and return with the answers to legitimate his position as knowledgeable. Our relationship became a small-scale laboratory of interpersonal positioning including how blackness could be put to use in friendly interaction (Harré & Langenhove 1999).

Inger Sjørslev has coined the term "deep hanging-out" (in Staunæs 2004: 76) and I would argue that the concept accurately defines my method of research with Anderson. It is characterized by being present, and waiting for significant events to occur. This was what I did when joining him to see his family, visiting him at his aunt's house in Santa Cruz, enjoying his rap performance at Ilê Aiyê, or just 'deep hanging-out' in Salvador. While being out with Anderson, I would jot down keywords and upon returning write out my impressions, thoughts, and experiences (Emerson et al. 1995; Sanjek 1990). Besides our hanging-out, I conducted a genealogical and a life story interview with Anderson and one with his aunts. Anderson's life story will be the central empirical material of this chapter.

The interview took place in a small restaurant on the beach with rain falling down in poles just outside the open door. When I placed my recorder on the table Anderson moved

it closer to him and put his arms on the table between me and the recorder. His head was bent over it and the entire story was told to the recorder with only a short look up when he needed a question from me to go on. When I said that I wanted to know *the story of his life* for my research, I might have inclined him on his use of metaphors from the start. The metaphor 'life is a story' is so common (Lakoff & Johnson 1999: 172) that I thought little of it. On the other hand this is the most basic metaphor and trope for narrative studies and, I would claim, not an unfamiliar one for Anderson when understanding his life. Indeed, I have doubts as to what my alternative could have been.

ANDERSON'S STORY

Anderson's life had been a dramatic one and so was his story. I will recount his narrative with analytical comments in between certain sections, in order to understand what he is saying and contextualize it with experiences from outside the interview. There was no doubt that the story was intended for me, even though it had characteristics of an autobiography. There was a certain "shadowy epistemology of the story" (Bruner 1990: 55) in Anderson's attempts to gain an understanding of his life by telling it as a structured narrative. It will be evident though, that this was an attempt that was only partly successful. In my comments I will point to troubling themes and how he tried to account for them. I will also highlight his use of metaphors and the genres of the story he told as well as his use of voices.

When Anderson told his story it was not only oral. He performed it with sighs and headshakes, which are hard to put in writing. But I do think that the reader will be able to imagine just by reading the phrasing and grammatical rhythm. I will let Anderson set the aura of the story with his introduction:

> **"**Let us start brother. You want to know the history of my life, right? How began the life of a guy who was born in the *favela*, grew struggling to try to achieve a better life, right, to improve? Well, God, my life? Ah! My life was a history, you see! It is a book where each day that passes I write a part. But let us start then, where it all began, where I remember. I was six years old when I moved to Guaianazes [part of São Paulo] with my aunt, I moved to Guaianazes and then came various difficulties, a one-room hut was all for five persons to live, you understand?
>
> We began with five, but later arrived yet another, the youngest son was born, six, right? Difficulties! I and my brother collected cans to help my mom. My dad and my mom drank and so the difficulties started to come and each day more. I remember, brother, that when I was little my dream was to earn money to be able to give my mom a car, a house, and an airplane. A dream

> of the *moleque* [scoundrel or black boy], you know? So far… Irony? Is it the irony of fate? Or is it that destiny wants it like this? Or is it that I don't have the opportunity? I think that I don't have the opportunity because it is you who makes your destiny. I have not yet been able to give any of these things to my mom but I have faith that I might still achieve it.**"**

Anderson introduces his narrative with a clear reference to the genre into which he will attempt to rectify his experiences – the narrative that will give his life meaning. The key phrase is "struggling to achieve a better life, to improve" and so the plot is about rising from the hard conditions of drinking parents in the *favela* and overcoming "difficulties". This is a canonical narrative also known as 'the American Dream' and 'poor kid working his way up'. The position within such a narrative is determined by the liberal discourse and its individualistic view of humanity. Anderson is alone in his attempt to succeed, other people act as trouble in their numbers, their low starting point or in moving him to Guaianazes.

Like I have mentioned above, I explicitly asked for *the story of your life* and thus I cannot be surprised by his choice of metaphor. 'Life is a book' is a very common metaphor, almost cliché, but it also has the advantage that it can contain very different voices of agency. One voice might suggest that you write your life and therefore have absolute agency to determine its course and end. It can also mean that your life is written (as 'in stone') and so the course of your life is determined elsewhere. The last option is what I will call the 'diary'-version. Here the metaphor is understood as when reporting experiences after they occur yet with agency in the process of structuring and choosing. When Anderson says that "every day that passes I write a part", it can be taken to mean both the diary version and the absolute agency. He does however say that "My life was a history!" in the past tense, implying a break between then and now. This would suggest that he is using the metaphor in a reporting 'diary' way and thus using a voice and thereby a position where he is at the mercy of external circumstances, only reporting his life as it happens around him with little to say as to the elements of his story.

Anderson recounts the gulf between rising difficulties and a dream that seems out of reach from reality as he tells it. A disillusioned voice describes him as a young *favela* kid with a dream of buying an airplane, in a poor family of four siblings with parents that drink. When evaluating his possibilities for achieving the dream, he makes a flash forward and explains that he has not yet achieved this life long dream. The narrative about a 'poor kid working his way up' is thus halted. This deviation from the canonical has to be accounted for, and in doing this Anderson poses different rhetorical questions which he also answers. I understand these questions as signalling the alternative subjunctive voices in his narrative.

Anderson is still in the process of creating an understanding of his life (see Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 229; Good 1994: 146; and Bruner 1990: 55). He is working to understand why his situation does not live up to his expectations and dreams. There seems to be two voices at play here. When referring to destiny or fate, Anderson opens the possibility of a narrative 'written in stone' in a world where the course of his life is out of his control, and when talking about lack of opportunities he is positioning himself as oppressed and held back. 'Lack of opportunities' suggests a position where the end point of his narrative is only haltered for a time and he has the agency to fight this 'haltering'.

The position of agency is also highlighted when he says that he believes that people make their own destiny. This is almost a slogan of the liberal ideology and the American Dream narrative. It seems that the ideal which is also expressed in the narrative genre is liberal, but the gulf between expectations and reality is accounted for by referring to lack of opportunity, although it contradicts the liberal ideal. Anderson thus creates subjunctivity through use of voices with free, limited and fatalistic agency, referring to the same positions. Subjunctivity is created through apparent contradiction.

The liberal ideal as canonical narrative is further highlighted in the next section:

> **"**Eleven years old I started in Pizzaria Paratiba, I earned five reaís a night and then, there I learned to ride a motorcycle. Twelve years old, thirteen, fourteen, I started to deliver alone and I was driving. I was already earning money and more, fifteen reaís a day, I gave it to help more.**"**

This is the ideal voice of the narrative as it should be. Here everything is progressing according to the narrative genre of 'poor kid working his way up' and Anderson even indicates the proximity to achieving his dream when saying that he helped more. It might not be an airplane, but he is gradually contributing more. The correspondence with the canonical narrative is further expressed when Anderson chooses not to account for his work experiences. Bruner (1990) writes that only the deviating experiences need accounting for, and that this is a way to rectify the experiences into the structure. When I later asked, Anderson told me that this time was the happiest of his life. This was the time where his life progressed according to the narrative through which he understood it. His narrative was experienced.

SUFFERING

So far the narrative is about 'poor kid working his way up', and Anderson has used different accounts to rectify the experiences deviating from the canonical narrative. He has used three voices, one of free liberal agency, one of limited agency when talking about lack of opportunities, and a fatalistic one when referring to faith as the solution to his

problems. So far in the narrative Anderson is still a 'kid' working and earning money but the difficulties have only just begun.

> **"**As I was working, I started to grow right brother, as you know the mind change, adolescence, women, car, money. I went out at night, I felt happy. Then, when I came back to the house, right brother, [I had] various discussions with my dad and my mom. Besides when I worked at the pizzeria, I worked for a time as an office boy, the rumour was that I was a crook [*ladrão*], that I was paranoid, that I was using drugs. All day when I came home was a beating, do you understand? A thrashing, I was furious. Several times I tried to escape from the house. Damn! I lost all the money. But this is normal in the life of a black! For the majority who has money this is normal. Normal? Is it? I think not, brother. I think that the system limits our life, right brother, of the black, of the poor.**"**

The canonical narrative Anderson uses is still liberal in structure. The deviating elements of the narrative are now problems with his parents, the rumour at work that he is a crook, and the following loss of money. They seem to be connected when he goes from family problems to rumours at work and back again. Somehow the loss of money seems to be attributed to this as if he lost them when he attempted to leave the house to escape the family problems.

In his accounting for the problems, Anderson starts out referring to adolescence in a pathological discourse, thereby explaining external problems with internal changes. At the end of the section he uses other accounts such as race and poverty in a voice of limited agency. I understand the two phrases "this is normal in the life of a black" and "I think the system limits our life" as central to the account. Apparently it is normal for black people to have their lives limited by the system, and it is a central aspect in the black movement discourse which can be recognized from the previous chapters as well. The use of both race and poverty in the last sentence suggests ambivalence of class or race as the central denominator of oppression. The difficulties expressed in the feeling of limited lives are yet again set against the ideal of liberal free agency, but Anderson's narrative is drifting from this ideal.

This was also the understanding I came to have of another incident. Anderson and I were walking one afternoon in Salvador when he told me that he had a little money on his card and he wanted to buy me dinner. The offer has to be understood in a history of unequal economical reciprocity where I had bought bus tickets and beers for Anderson throughout most of my stay in Brazil, and it had come to be expected. Therefore I was surprised when he offered dinner as I had thought he would save the money for later or alternatively give

me back what he owed me. It seemed important to him though, and so I followed him to a McDonald's in a shopping mall where he ordered two menus. We sat down at a table. I decided that I would like some more ketchup and went to get it. When I returned, Anderson claimed that 'this' (I think the whole situation) was racism on behalf of McDonald's. It was the first time I heard him use the term about a present situation, which suggested that there was more at stake than just ketchup.

I came to understand the situation in terms of "the system limits our life". The menu might have been intended as a symbolic gesture to level the unbalanced reciprocity between us and my wish for ketchup broke that symbolism. Somehow I wanted more than he could give. When I actually got more ketchup Anderson might have felt that things were in general easier to get from my position than from his, and accounting for his limitations compared to mine with racism, was a way to re-establish the symbolic balance. By referring to racism he could claim that his position was more limited than mine and that therefore the McDonald's burger he bought for me could symbolically balance out what I had bought him throughout our relationship. Anderson used 'racism' to restore a symbolic equality which he found to be lacking in experience.

> **"**Then I went to sell… I caught direct, started to go away from my streets, didn't stay in the centre of Guaianazes, I made friendships like crazy, I started to work in a one-ninety-nine reaís store [a store that sells things for 1.99 reais].
> I was happy and then from one moment to the other, my mom became ill, went to the hospital, was sick. At dawn I despaired! I remember that I was cleaning a pile of detergent soap, I started to cry, cried more, my employer said 'what is it Anderson?'… And I said 'brother, my mom is in the hospital and I don't have any money to save her"... And my employer helped me, he was good.**"**

This section shows several central dilemmas and solutions for Anderson which he struggles with later on as well. The first dilemma is about the dream of helping his mom while not having the resources, as I have described above. The other is more implicit. Earlier, when I asked Anderson about his first encounter with racism he described the incident with the hospital above. This time he claimed that his helpful employer was white, which was the reason he could improve the situation for Anderson's mother suggesting racism. The fact that he does not mention the race of neither his employer nor his mother here suggests a dilemma about the position of white people in Anderson's narrative: Are they helpers or oppressors? How should he conceptualize a helpful oppressor? I understand

the fragmented nature of the beginning as doubt of how to make the story 'fit' further suggesting the dilemma.

It was also a dilemma which I experienced in my relationship with Anderson. His positioning of me seemed to shift from the white oppressor of his people to a close friend regardless of skin colour. At one time he talked about the minimum salary for black people compared to what I used before asking for money for a bus ticket to go see a girlfriend. When I said "no" he talked about our colour blind friendship and then tried again. As will be demonstrated at the end of the narrative, we were both black and white, *and* two human beings with hearts – different yet the same, depending on the context.

FROM DRUGS TO SALVADOR

Several times I had asked Anderson why he was in Salvador and not with his family in São Paulo. Each time he had given me a different answer. First he said that he was in Salvador for the same reasons as I, although I had not told him yet why I was there. At other times he told me that he had not encountered the black movement before arriving in Salvador and that his time here was a journey into 'blackness'[20], or he would say that he was in Salvador due to family problems. It was not until this interview that he told me the story that follows. It took me by surprise and I did not really believe that I understood him right until I saw the transcription of the following section. I came to understand the hesitance as doubt. Anderson did not understand it himself and could not fit it into his narrative, so he had kept it to himself or given ambivalent answers.

> **"**Sixteen, seventeen years old, you know. In this *favela* you get into fights, into drugs, crime, for the majority it is common. I? Not totally, but I was part of this life, of crime. Today I am out, thank God! Rap showed me the way, samba also showed me the way for me.**"**

As in the beginning of Anderson's narrative, he summarized the problems and solutions from the start. But now it is crime which is the central problem for his canonical liberal narrative, and he rectifies it by referring to its commonality in the *favela*. He also demonstrates three solutions: Religion, rap and Samba music. It is a core part of Anderson's narrative as will be shown in the following where he elaborates.

> **"**I remember, brother, shit, I started at sixteen to sell drugs, one night I went out for a walk, I felt free, but the next day things started to proceed anew, seemingly proceeding with more force. […] Only, I was caught in the law of

[20] See also Pinho (2004) for Salvador's position as the authentic African essence in Brazil.

> survival [*lei da sobrevivencia*], in the law of crime [*lei do crime*], right brother? Then I started to get involved. Like selling chunks of cocaine for ten reaís, I earned twenty reaís, thirty reaís a day, I felt important. Then a crazy guy did something bad to me, the guy wanted to catch me, to kill me. Seventeen years old I went to prison, I made a mistake, eighteen years old I didn't sell drugs anymore. Fuck! My dad and my aunt picked me up at the police station, I cried, running out. I got support from my dad, support from my aunt. I asked my dad if I could go to the coast, I stayed at the coast of São Paulo for six months and then returned. When I returned I received a sad notice. Some guys were against me, wanting to kill me and I thought 'and now, what am I going to do?' This was in two-thousand-and-five.**"**

This is the crime section of Anderson's narrative. Looking at agency it seems that his voice is referring to external forces such as when he says that thing proceeded anew with more force, and when talking about the laws of survival and crime. He narrates a sense of being controlled by forces stronger than himself. This is also suggested by his lack of accounting for his feelings, like when he tells that he cried running out of the police station and his final despaired statement "and now, what am I going to do?" It seems he cannot explain his feelings or what is happening to him.

Besides being about Anderson's criminal past, the section is characterized by its structure. It is a list of occurrences, where Anderson seems to lack any reference to causality or even a connection between the incidents described. It seems to be simply a chronological list of incidents suggesting that Anderson does not understand their interconnectedness himself. I understand it to be due to him having very ambivalent feelings about how to fit crime and prison into his narrative. The point can be illustrated in another way too.

Anderson saw himself as a rapper more than anything else. To him there was a strong connection between the black movement and hip hop as both were spokesmen of the *favela*. When he talked about his idols he mentioned Will Smith and 50 cents[21]. He called himself "Will Smith *brasileiro*" at times and at others he would dress like 50 cents. With Wenger's (2004) idea of role models supplying narrative tracks to be followed as presented in the previous chapter, I believe that Will Smith and 50 cents provided Anderson with different ways of narrating his criminal past. The tracks were less about the idols' actual autobiographies than about the myths surrounding them. Will Smith's track was from his role in the US soap opera 'Fresh Prince of Bel Air' where he plays a young ghetto kid from Philadelphia who is sent to live with his aunt in Bel Air after getting into trouble with

[21] Will Smith and 50 cents are North American rappers and actors.

"some guys who were up to no good", according to the theme song. Where Will Smith is the 'good boy' escaping crime for a better place, 50 cents has turned crime into an image and a career.

The two rappers create different tracks for Anderson to follow, and highlight his ambivalence towards his criminal past. He is trying to tell a narrative where his troubling experiences make sense as part of a wider life story, which leads towards the success both of his idols have achieved in different ways. It thus becomes a question of whether to focus on his gangster image (50 cents) or his escape from crime in the *favela* (Will Smith).

> **"**On the eighteenth, a Tuesday at nine-thirty at night, I got on a bus in São Paulo heading for Salvador, where I had never been, scared, suffering, missing my friends, my family, cousins, siblings, school, fuck! Will I have to leave all this behind to try to live a new life? We are going to try, right? What can we do? Then on the twentieth of February I arrived in Bahia to start a new life. My aunt picked me up at the bus station, my new home. Recently arrived here in Salvador, land of the black doctor [*terra do negro doutor*], is that what it is? Not at all, my friend, pure illusion! Beautiful beaches, beautiful women. I said 'I will come here to earn money, they come by working', but did they come? After one year and five months did my life improve? Fuck not at all! It is the same way as it started, two-thousand-and-five went, what a rush, and half a year here? Ah! [he sighs]**"**

The move to Salvador posed another problem to Anderson's canonical narrative. Accounting for why it happened is difficult and he therefore looks forward at the promises of Bahia, instead of backwards at the reasons for his move. The move is described in emotional terms highlighting his suffering.

By looking at the promises of Bahia, Anderson seems to take up the challenge of earning enough money to return and continue his narrative in an optimistic voice - at first. The equal chances, according to the liberal discourse of his canonical narrative, disappoint him. He judges the idea of Bahia as "the land of the black doctor" to be an illusion and his willingness to work does not lead him to success as would be expected within the discourse. His narrative is at a standstill. His voice expresses a sense of not progressing the way he ought to, which is further described in the following example.

> **"**I worked at the Carnival, earned one-hundred-and-forty reaís and I said 'I only need sixty to be able to go back to São Paulo'. Did you get the one-hundred-and-forty? So, my friend! It has been six months and I still have not gotten them. Will I return to São Paulo one day? Only God knows, brother, I

> am trying! Without work, only studying, attempting to improve our life. Will it go like that? I try, try, try, and it never improves my friend. But God lays all on our path, right brother?"

Here Anderson uses a disappointed voice to describe the feeling of following the rules of the liberal discourse but being cheated of the expected development of the narrative. He also evaluates his chances for returning to São Paulo. Again his voice expresses the sense of struggling to improve but not succeeding. He poses a number of rhetorical questions to test alternative subjunctive possibilities and this time the options are understood through the liberal discourse and fatalism. He narrates his possibilities as limited due to unemployment and student status, and the solution is a fatalistic "God lays all on our path". His dream seems far away and the only way for Anderson to reconcile his apparent lack of opportunities and the hope of achieving his dream in the future, is faith despite reason. The voice is optimistic yet fatalistic.

It seems that Anderson uses different accounts to rectify his deviating experiences into a structure of 'poor kid working his way up'. He refrains from accounting for the experiences associated with the canonical narrative, but uses voices referring to a limited position of agency due to race or poverty, or a determined position of agency as when referring to a fatalistic view of God. Anderson is caught between a liberal ideal as canonical narrative through which he understands his life and his experiences of limitations and unsuccessful attempts to 'work his way up'. One way to reconcile the two is using the racial discourse which highlights racism as the limitations the system places on black people, or the socialist discourse explaining problems as due to class differences and oppression.

ASSESSING THE FUTURE

Anderson's narrative so far has been the liberal 'poor kid working his way up' but with immense problems when accounting for the lack of 'up'. He has used voices related to fatalistic religion or lack of opportunities. The next section might be about looking back, but it is from the position of the present. From here, he evaluates his chances for progressing in accordance with his narrative and for achieving his dream some day. The first step however, seems to be returning to his family in São Paulo. Around the time of our interview his mother had gotten sick again and he told me numerous times about the frustrations he felt not being able to help her.

It seemed at times as though he had been forcefully removed from his narrative. This was either by the lack of opportunities or the geographical distance between him and his family. São Paulo became the place of his narrative and the move to Salvador manifested the standstill he felt. He used a rational voice about the better chances at achieving

employment in São Paulo and a nostalgic one about his fond memories from the pizzeria. In São Paulo his narrative had progressed, at least at times, according to his expectations.

> **"**What I feel misses the most in my life today is my mom, my dad, my siblings the one-room hut with six persons, today three live inside, because my sister married and has a daughter, my brother became involved in the world of crime and is anywhere [in jail] and I am here in Bahia. My mom [is] in São Paulo suffering, right? And I am without power to do anything to send money to her. I don't have a job. I try, try, try and never achieve. Black, curly hair, not out of high school, should I cry or should I laugh? I don't know brother! I will not cry, not smile either. What I know is that I will struggle to improve, brother.**"**

Anderson's family is the problem in his narrative now; the distance between them and the problems they are in such as crime and suffering. This can be seen as his evaluation of the entire narrative, it is made clear that the development expected in a narrative about 'poor kid working his way up' has been halted and that it is not due to lack of trying from Anderson's side. It seems that money comes from working and both the journey back and the help he desires to give can only happen with money. So, work is the central problem for Anderson here. His chances of employment are accounted for by referring to race and education, both in a pessimistic voice. He is left not knowing how to reclaim his narrative. The only solution is to struggle and this can be read as either the continuous egalitarian struggle of the liberal discourse which insists that success has to be earned (also Weber 1995), or through the black movement discourse as a struggle to overcome the racial limitation put forth by the system. It can even be understood as a struggle to reclaim his narrative. Looking at the wider narrative would suggest that Anderson is somewhere in the middle or changing from one to the other, depending on the situation. The trouble is a lack of progress and the solution is what Anderson attempts to find in the following.

> **"**I want to say something to you, brother: Love your dad, love your mom because we are only going to miss them when they are gone, you know? I love my siblings, I love my family, I love the black people, I am Atitude Quilombola, the black people's road to power! [*o povo negro rumo ao poder!*]. And we will achieve this. I suffered and I still suffer, but I am sure that one day I will be happy, me and my family. Will I earn a huge pay? I don't know. It is easy and difficult at the same time. I don't have luck with the game. Will I be a soccer player? I don't like soccer, I am very bad at it, soccer player, I know that! Samba singer? Maybe. Rap singer? Rap doesn't

> give money, rap is for those who are activists. Can you become an activist? But you already are, I don't know. I think that if I am to sing halfway through my life, I think this fantasy won't give money, you have to find others, and others, and others, and others, and others.**"**

There are many interesting aspects in this section. One of them is the stream of consciousness Anderson makes when talking about his love for his parents and moving on to being the black people's road to power - Atitude Quilombola's slogan. There is a movement of affection from family to race and from love to improvement. I noted the link between family and race in the last chapter where I suggested a competition between loyalty for the family and loyalty for the race. Anderson seems not to have that division. I have come to understand them as linked for him through their interconnected goal. The black movement struggle is what will ultimately allow Anderson to live out his narrative and achieve the success he needs to help his family. The black movement is thus the means to an end. What I described in the previous chapter as the task of relating the larger goal of the movement to the everyday lives of the students seems to have worked with regard to Anderson. The black movement's goal is very much related to the progress of his life story.

Another thing is the suffering that he mentions. According to one voice he is no better off than at the beginning of his narrative. Although framed in a non-religious language, it is Anderson's faith that will earn him success when he says "but I am sure that one day I will be happy". It is not far from the fatalistic use of God from the other sections of his narrative. This is the voice where success will happen regardless.

Next he talks about earning a large salary, "It is easy and difficult at the same time", he says. In the context of his struggle it seems paradoxical that he should claim that earning money can be easy. I understand the line in relation to the statements immediately after it; as an optimistic voice saying that there are still opportunities. It is a way of reclaiming the possibility of progress in his narrative and in this regard, the next sentences listing his possibilities are telling. The tracks are there to be followed, only following them acquires skills. The possibilities which he sees before him are soccer, samba and rap music. Soccer is discarded as he does not feel competent. Samba is a possibility still open to him and so is rap music although he claims it does not yield the necessary money.

At another time he told me that there were two ways out of crime in the *favela*. They were "walking with the Bible" or becoming a rap musician. With his trouble accounting for his criminal past, rap might be a way for him to put it behind him. As he also associates rap music with black movement militancy, it is the obvious choice with the only negative that it does not provide money. His ambivalent use of role models would further suggest

that rap music did not preclude crime entirely. The tracks associated with rap might be better described as genres supplying explanations for experiences with crime.

Anderson had many plans for getting ahead. At the time of the interview he was performing as part of a rap duo, he was the singer in a samba band and he was a guest rap performer in a well-known samba band called Negros de Fé (Blacks of Faith). In addition to this, he talked about opening a store to sell hip hop clothes some day and he started selling towels at city intersections. He also took the same military courses as described by António in the previous chapter. I understand his hectic activity to be a question of subjunctivity. Anderson needed to keep all his opportunities open to be able to believe in his own narrative. Subjunctivity of different voices and accounts are thus ways for him to keep faith in the chance of success despite his limiting situation. This constant attempt to subjunctivize his reality (Good 1994) is also what I believe him to express in the last sentence. When referring to "this fantasy" he is voicing the different tracks possible and highlighting the imagined character of the different futures. They are expected narratives, but with the limitations put forth by the system, he constantly has to find new ones to make the narrative believable. The narrative genre thus provides a bright future of hope, while also creating despair when it is not possible to live up to its expectations.

> **"**Fifteen minutes, my life turned out to be fifteen minutes, fifteen minutes going on sixteen. Is this a life? What to do? Let us stop. What will happen, will happen and my life, it is I who write it, I decide what the end will be, if it will be sad or happy, it is only I who can do that, nobody else, so I am here fighting for this. […]
> You are my friend, I am black, you are white, but before the black and the white we are human beings, we have hearts. The herb has ended, let's stop.**"**

The disappointment in the duration of telling his life story is obvious. I understand it as relating to the overall disappointment Anderson has with the progress of his life story. If he can tell his story in only sixteen minutes using most of it to talk of setbacks and accounting for deviation, then what kind if life is it? Indeed, the voice questions if his experiences even qualify as a life, when told through the liberal narrative of 'poor kid working his way up'.

I have a hard time understanding the line "it is I who write it, I decide what the end will be" if not as a demonstrative assertion of agency. The voice seems to contradict the fatalism of "What will happen, will happen" from the line before. The dilemma of what determines his life, himself or external forces, is central to his narrative understanding. He is actively trying to understand the determining forces in his life, but when external forces seem to determine more of his life than he would like to think, he asserts the optimistic

voice and thus creates a sense of agency and autonomy. This is done through lines such as "I decide what the end will be", by use of the liberal narrative genre, and the promises of fatalism to open for unexpected possibilities. It *has* to happen.

I understand a central word in the second last line to be the "but". Anderson narrates an opposition between race (white/black) and shared humanity - the last being the essence. He opposes Sheriff's bipolar discourse on race with a descriptive one, where skin colour is only 'skin deep'. Using the descriptive discourse is what has been associated with the idea of racial democracy claiming the irrelevance of skin colour in Brazil. By referring to this idea over race, Anderson claims friendship (and heart) as more central than skin colour and race. I understand this to be a way for him to reclaim his relationship with me as well as to assert the premise of the liberal narrative through which he narrates his life. The sentence ends his narrative in a friendly atmosphere while also voicing his agency by positioning us both in a liberal ideology of equal opportunities and shared humanness.

There might also be a certain moral high ground at stake (see also Goldstein 2003; Sheriff 2001), if one looks at the sentence in the light of the wider narrative about limitations. This would suggest that Anderson uses the idea of a shared humanness in racial democracy to narrate his difficulties as irrelevant to the wider liberal narrative. By hanging on to the liberal ideal of equality in a racial democracy he legitimizes his narrative by denying his difficulties.

NARRATING A SENSE OF AGENCY

Through this reading of Anderson's life story I have come to understand it as a canonical narrative about a 'poor kid working his way up'. The narrative genre is canonical within the liberal discourse with implicit assumptions such as the equality of all and progress through hard work. This ideal is an accurate description of the present according to the idea of racial democracy and the popular discourse described in chapter three. It is also part of the black movement discourse but here it functions as the expected future of their collective narrative, *not* as the present. When Anderson uses the popular belief that all are equal despite race or class, he positions his narrative within the conventions of the popular and liberal discourse, where his narrative genre is considered canonical.

Bruner quotes Culler when writing how in a narrative "the present is given meaning in terms of that anticipated present we call the future and that former present we call the past" (Culler in Bruner 1986: 142). The narrative 'poor kid working his way up' is equipped with a 'former present' which is 'poor kid' and an 'anticipated present': 'Up'. Anderson thus gives meaning to his present as being on the way from 'poor kid' to 'up' and all his experiences are interpreted and understood relative to this expected development: They are given meaning according to the overall movement towards his anticipated goal and his method of 'working'.

In Anderson's life he has experiences which are hard to fit into the structure of his narrative, and some are even contradicting it. What appear to be the central problems for the successful narrative are his criminal past and his move to Salvador from his home in São Paulo. He is actively trying to rectify these experiences while also attempting to find other narratives which may better explain them and how they can contribute to his narrative progression.

This is subjunctivity on two levels. Anderson works with different accounts to rectify the deviating experiences, while commenting in different voices. He also identifies with other narrative structures that might better transform his deviating experiences into a canonical narrative. This is what I demonstrated with his use of the two idols: Will Smith and 50 cents, where each offers a different track to explain the place of crime in his life story. They both offer success through rap music, suggesting how Anderson could change his narrative genre at some point. Anderson does, however, keep his liberal canonical structure and accounts for his criminal past by referring to the limitations put on poor black people by the system and laws of survival in the *favela*. Anderson also uses other accounts as when his problems with his family are explained through the changing minds of adolescence (a pathological discourse). Not having achieved his dream yet, is explained by fatalism and being unemployed as due to racism. The move to Salvador however, is not accounted for, and stands as a chronological list without narrated causality which suggests Anderson's struggle to understand it. The accounts suggest a position of pre-determined personal agency moving the responsibility for his situation from himself to external forces.

The narrative genre of Anderson's story is liberal with a free sense of agency - limitless and equal possibilities for those who earn them through hard work (see also Weber 1995). Despite this he uses voices positioning him with a limited agency. Thereby they might contradict the conventions of the genre, but at the same time they defend its basic structure and thus supply Anderson with hope and a sense of agency and autonomy in his life. The narration of a sense of agency is thus a result of the successful construction of a canonical narrative with an anticipated future of success - by any means possible.

Having established this, I can see what Anderson gained from calling himself black or referring to the black movement discourse. The term 'black' supplied him with one of several positions that could account for the experiences deviating from his canonical narrative and thereby providing him with a position of agency. It could also balance out unequal reciprocity by referring to racism and the limitations it places on black people. Thereby it 'balances the scales' so to speak, and creates symbolic equality by claiming that the differences between various positions should be explained by racist (external) limitations, and not as due to some personal (internal) value. This is the central promise of the black movement discourse relative to the popular discourse's liberal approach, as described in chapter two and three.

Anderson could not account for everything however. Certain experiences such as his problems with the *favela* crime gang and the move to Salvador that followed are told in a distanced and 'listing' voice, suggesting that he is still struggling to understand the causality between them. This aspect is important as it demonstrates that narrative understandings are always particular in context, time and audience. As a basic human premise knowledge is always partial (Haraway 1988), and we are all struggling to achieve a sense of coherence in our experiences through narratives (Bruner 1990). One of Anderson's ways of doing this was by referring to race and racism to account for the deviations from his canonical narrative of success, and thereby provide him with a sense of agency in his life.

In the next section I will sum up my conclusions and answer my guiding question. I will do so by looking back to the previous chapters, while also looking forward to see the relevance of my study for my field, a wider application of my findings and what their relevance is for Anthropology. In other words, you might say that I will look 'in' at the use of being black and 'out' at the beyond.

Six

BLACK AND BEYOND

The previous chapters have been characterized by 'a narrowing in'. I have gone from the Brazilian history to the black movement of Salvador, over the Steve Biko classroom to the life story of Anderson. In this chapter I will answer my guiding question and broaden the scope of my findings. By summing up on the conclusions of the previous chapters I will attempt a contextualized and relational answer of why people choose to identify with and call themselves 'black' in Brazil.

Next I wish to widen the relevance of my findings by relating them to more general theories of Brazilian society and the world. I do this by using Roberto DaMatta's theory of "moral spaces" (1991) in Brazil and relating my findings to his Weberian inspiration to go beyond the nationalist Brazilian context. Having thus situated my findings in a globalized world, I move on to propose three criticisms of anthropological literature, or pitfalls of qualitative social science. This will serve as a claim to insights of relevance, despite the particularity of time, place and people inherent in any anthropologic practice and in my limited field of study in particular.

The chapter can thus be said to go both inwards and outwards. It answers the question of why people call themselves black, based on empirical analysis from a particular time, place and people only to move from these surroundings to the national and global context by its relation to other theories and at the end point in certain directions for the future of anthropological analysis. But first thing is first.

WHY CALL ONESELF 'BLACK'?

Throughout this paper I have attempted to answer the question of why some Brazilians chose to call themselves 'black'. I have used a social-constructionist framework and conducted anthropological fieldwork among black movement militants in Salvador, Brazil, with a wide array of methods. Thereby I have demonstrated that the term 'black' belongs in the bipolar racial discourse of the black movement, thus the term and people's reasons for applying it, should be understood relative to this discourse. This discourse, however, is not the only one, and I have shown the existence of a popular discourse about race which is constructed around the apparent paradox of a gradual concept of race which values skin colour relative to its whiteness – whitening - and the idea of equal and harmonious racial relations - racial democracy. The whitening ideal has a long history of being shaped by different intellectual currents. Although it might have existed prior to 1933 I have labelled

the idea of Brazil as a racial democracy as a 'folk sociology' (Bruner 1990) based on ideas from Gilberto Freyre.

When adding a narrative framework to the discourses, it becomes clear what they offer. Whitening offers Brazilians with mixed racial characteristics either a position as 'black' in a narrative about black genes which are gradually vanishing through racial mixture with the superior white ones – that is, as leftovers of a vanishing inferior race – or as mulatto in the same narrative – that is, as being halfway 'there'. This would explain why many people value their white sides and degrade their black ones refraining from calling themselves 'black' due to the stigma associated with it. The popular discourse also consists of the idea of racial democracy professing liberal and individualistic equality of opportunity, where responsibility for failure, as well as the credit of success, is solely an individual matter – the narrative of 'poor kid working his way up'. As shown in chapter five this can be a hard narrative to live by when having experiences deviating from the canonical. Stories of crime and setbacks can be hard to rectify into a liberal narrative.

The duality of whitening and racial democracy is understood by the black movement as a hidden racism behind an egalitarian ideal which attributes success or failure on an individual basis. The popular discourse is thereby not uncontested. This black movement discourse also has a duality of apparently contradictory concepts. It divides people according to bipolar race while professing citizenship and equal human rights. This is where the popular discourse understands the black movement to deny the equality of all Brazilians and create racism instead of fighting it – and giving way to the paradoxical term 'antiracist racism'. When facilitating the change from understanding themselves through the popular discourse to the black movement discourse, the movement uses different narratives as well as a 'folk pedagogy' based on ideas by Paulo Freire (1997). They do this by offering the position of 'black' in a narrative of *quilombola* resistance to white oppression. This history is constructed around the Quilombos sidestepping slavery – as it is too passive to be considered part of their history – and abolition – considered false. Thereby the black movement creates a historic line of resistance leading from the first enslaved Africans in Brazil to their present struggle for racial quotas.

In the organization Steve Biko positioning in this collective narrative is done through three different (interrelating) narrative genres. The first is the collective narrative mentioned above, which is supposed to reclaim the students' pride of their ancestry and help them counter the effects of whitening such as low self-esteem. Next is a conversion narrative, where the students are expected to express the personal change (or 'rebirth' Freire 1997) they have experienced when shifting from the perspective of the popular discourse to that of the black movement. This conversion narrative is expected to be incorporated in a wider life story - the last structure used in Steve Biko. This is done through suggestive life stories by black role models intentionally relating their experiences

and life story to those of the students, to create a relation of identification. The successful rectification of experiences into these narrative structures is expected to lead to a well-established 'black' performance. This performance includes hairstyles ('natural' as in 'African' dreadlocks, spikes, or plaited, contrary to straightened or shaved), clothing (shirts and tunics in bright 'African' colours), language (calling oneself 'black' in stead of a variety of words for mulatto) and behaviour (being active and confrontational rather than passive and docile).

These performative and narrative expectations are not simply met (or not) by the students. Some expectations are used to appear competent while having ambivalent meanings as when referring simultaneously to other discourses and narratives as well. Others are considered and used with ambivalence by the students due to partial knowledge and incomplete understandings of the black movement discourse. Others again are used to account for deviation from canonical narratives associated with other discourses. Thereby the different elements of the black movement discourse, as well as elements from other discourses serve as resources for people to narrate a sense of agency and progress in their lives.

I started out in chapter one by phrasing my overall argument as:

- Relative to, and in combination with, other discursive understandings of race in Brazil elements of the black movement discourse can, when knowing the performative and narrative expectations associated with it, be used to construct a sense of agency in life stories and thus create hope for the future.

In applying this to my central question of why some Brazilians chose to call themselves 'black' I shall attempt to make a long story short. When Brazilians refer to themselves as 'black' it should be seen as part of a performance of black consciousness as competence in the black movement discourse. Thus positioning themselves within this discourse, they become capable of using the elements associated with it, in accounting for their experiences. Within the black movement discourse there are several such elements. 'Racism' is one which may account for a lack of expected progress. 'Citizenship' is another, through which one can gain the same moral high ground as 'racial democracy', while claiming to struggle for it. The discourse also provides an empowered and active position as *quilombola* warriors in a narrative of black resistance against oppression.

These are all reasons why people may choose to call themselves 'black'. They should however always be viewed relative to other discourses, as their strengths lie not only in their competition but also in their combination. All these elements can be used to account for experiences as a way to rectify them into a narrative structure, leading to success and a sense of agency. This strategy is not entirely deliberate however, as it is as much a way to

make sense of experience to yourself, as it is a way to explain this 'sense' to others. Partial knowledge and the urge to understand is a human precondition both with regards to others and oneself.

BRAZILIAN PERSPECTIVES

Inherent in Anderson's life story were three positions of agency. There was a position of free agency in the popular and liberal discourse, a position of limited agency in the discourse of the black movement, and a position of determined agency in a fatalistic discourse of religion or destiny. I have conducted my fieldwork in a particular time and place, talking to particular people. This section will serve to situate my findings by relating them to what Roberto DaMatta (1991) has termed "the House, the Street and the Other World". With these 'moral spaces' and a Weberian inspiration he attempts to create an analysis of Brazilian society, and I use them to look outward and situate my local findings in a globalized Brazilian context.

DaMatta does not concern himself with race explicitly. He constructs a relational theory, where an event can be 'read' or interpreted from any of the three moral spaces, which also mark changes in clothes, social roles, attitudes, and schemes of evaluation (1991: 53). The spaces are segmentary as when the Other World is opposed to this world. Within this world are the two spaces: "The Street and the House - which will dominate is a matter of negotiation.

'The House' is associated with naturalized family hierarchy and a personalistic moral world, where people are known by their position in networks of friends and family, and expect to be treated accordingly. The House is a controlled space of rest and harmony with a legitimizing base in intersecting hierarchies of gender, age and race. Societies may be 'read' through the House, as when populist politicians refer to 'the great Brazilian family', the leader as a 'father' and the population as 'brothers'.

'The Street' on the other hand, is egalitarian and individualistic. This is where people are anonymous and universal individuals who form a horizontal structure with unpredictable and continuous movements. Here people are 'individuals', equal under the law, with no personal bias or network, and can only show their merits by competition. It is a place of rigid rules, discipline, and the 'hard letters of the law'. If society is 'read' through the Street, it will be seen as a place of anonymous processes such as industrialization, urbanization and social classes.

The 'Other World' is a cosmic, moral order given by God (1991: 54). It is eternal and synthesizes the two others when it promises a radically different place than the miseries, falseness and struggles of this world. Here hopes and desires can be realized (1991: 162),

and thus it is inclusive and creates a radical equality of humans confronted with forces larger than any of them/us.

DaMatta claims that whenever Brazilians are confronted with a universal law, they will attempt to negotiate it. On every occasion where laws determine a certain kind of conduct by positioning someone in a role, Brazilians have "rituals of recognition" which serve to humanize the formal situation by hierarchizing the people involved (1991: 87). One such ritual is the question: "Who do you think you are talking to?" which he claims is normal in Brazil. One situation in which this ritual could take place would be when being pulled over by a police officer for speeding. The question would then draw attention to the person's position in hierarchical network, and thus serve to move the situation from the egalitarian world of the Street to the hierarchical one of the House. The result intended is to position the traffic offender in a hierarchy above the police officer and thus escape punishment for the violation.

When relating DaMatta's theory to my findings, there seems to be no straightforward correspondence. The Street and the House do not seem to relate to the popular and black movement discourse, yet the fatalistic discourse can be equated with the Other World as they both make promises of radical human equality, and a place where dreams can be realized despite the realities of this world. The militants in chapter three talked about this fatalism when opposing the view that the system was 'given by God'. Anderson also narrated his dreams to be achievable, if not by his actions in this world then by interference of God from the other – it was a question of faith.

To understand how DaMatta's spaces relate to the popular and black movement discourse, we cannot look at them as static. DaMatta's spaces are negotiated and come to be strategically applied to different situations. I understand the key to lie in the intentional negotiation from one moral space to the other. The popular and black movement discourses are both negotiations of how to understand Brazilian society and the social world, struggling to change it from one to another. That is, the discourses are intentions for negotiation from one space to the other.

This understanding can best be illustrated by the example about the traffic offender above. "Do you know who you are talking to?" is a ritual to re-establish hierarchy and thus go from the egalitarian space of the Street to the natural hierarchies of the House. As the black movement discourse works to establish equality for all citizens, it would be 'anti-discursive' (not impossible) to do within this discourse. They would insist on the equality of all citizens despite race or skin colour and therefore cannot use a ritual of recognition as a position in a hierarchy. The ritual question as described by DaMatta is therefore placed within the popular and liberal discourse, where it serves to negate the ideal of equality. DaMatta further aids me in the comparison when he writes that moving the reading of

Brazilian society from the Street to the House is the intention of populist politics. That is, the very political system the black movement works to oppose.

BROADENED HORIZONS

DaMatta shows convincingly how my findings can be understood as part of a greater negotiation between different moral spaces in Brazilian society. He does, however, also point the way for a more global contextualization when referring to Weber's Protestant versus Catholic ethics and their relation to capitalism (Weber 1995). DaMatta argues that the moral space of the House is related to the Catholic sense of hierarchy and the Protestant ethics to the equal workmanship of the Street (1991: 23). He argues that in many countries (such as the United States) the logic of the Street has become hegemonic in its reading of society by allowing the role of citizen to contaminate all other social roles (1991: 76). Thereby he echoes Stanley Tambiah's critique of scientific 'rationalization' (1990).

Tambiah insists that the discourse of scientific 'causality' is only one "ordering of reality" among many, only one of numerous possible ways of "world making" (1990: 152). He refers to Weber's distinction between *Zweckrationalität* as "this worldly relativistic form of consequential rationality" and *Wertrationalität* as the "absolutist rationality" of ultimate ends (1990: 144), which is not far from DaMatta's House and Street. Tambiah also quotes Weber for insisting on a continuous tension between these two rationalities, and Habermas in arguing that the 'rationalization' is really a form of political domination (1990: 146). Thereby I can situate my limited and particular study of race in a sociological and anthropological debate over reason and rationality from Malinowski and Evans-Pritchard (1976) to Weber (1995) and Habermas.

Within these broadened frames of reference, my study of why some Brazilians choose to call themselves 'black' can be understood in terms which refer to different globalized rationalities. Thereby my study might have relevance for any study of people experiencing the paradox of being trapped in a context with the ideal of individualized egalitarian equality while implicitly being hierarchized into positions out of their control – where equality, although celebrated, seems only skin deep.

The analysis of life stories and collective narratives has promising potential for a wide array of future fields. Besides race these include, immigrants and refugees, people with a 'different' sexuality, the physically handicapped, religious, ethnic and other group denominators. If so, this paper have taught me that there exists many pitfalls to be aware of, and I shall list some of them here. Where this section has amounted to my relevance for the broader empirical field, the next will serve to point in the directions of more general anthropological relevance for the future.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Having looked outwards in the previous section to situate my findings in a broader Brazilian and globalized framework, I now wish to look forward. That is, I want to formulate certain pitfalls for theories grounded in my approach and findings as well as my reading of the literature about race in Brazil. I will write these pitfalls in a generalized form for them to be applicable in studies not concerned with race in Brazil. Thereby I hope that they can serve as a constructive critique of the literature as well as a direction of further studies and what these might contribute, with regards to race in Brazil, minority studies, and anthropology in general. They are in some sense what I have learned and will be able to use in the future regardless of my area of study. As I have come to believe in these guidelines, please allow me in the following to be normative.

USING PRE-ESTABLISHED NARRATIVE STRUCTURES

I have mentioned Bruner's narrative argument earlier. He writes that many ethnographic studies are guided by implicit narrative structures. When situating the present in a time sequence "we begin with a narrative that already contains a beginning and an ending, which frame and hence enable us to interpret the present" (1986: 142). I understand Hastrup (2003: 414) to be voicing the same concern when she warns not to mistake historical irreversibility with historical necessity. Nevertheless, I find much of the literature on race in Brazil to reproduce pre-existing structures.

Most clearly it is the case of Florestan Fernandes, when he argues that racism will decline with industrialization. He is interpreting the present through a narrative of modernization, making racism a left-over from slavery to vanish with the coming of a more rational order. It is also the case with what I have called 'the Freyrian historical tautology'. Here the present is interpreted as through a narrative about Portuguese racial tolerance which in turn is invented to fit this interpretation. The same can be said of the black movement's inversion. Here the narrative structure of the tautology is kept while the content is changed from racial tolerance to racism. Again the present is understood according to pre-established narrative structures in stead of being interpreted 'in its own right'. Interpreting the past through different narrative structures leads to radically different readings of the present.

CREATING DICHOTOMIES

The use of comparisons has been criticized in the literature on race in Brazil (Domingues 2005). The reason is that it easily reproduces dichotomies. This is particularly the case when comparing nation-states. Here the countries tend to be portrayed as radically different. The case of race in Brazil demonstrates that the US and South Africa made

racism synonymous with Apartheid and Jim Crow, whereas the racism in Brazil was not only overlooked, but celebrated as a racial democracy. This became what writers have called the Brazilian exception, uniqueness, and specificity. By doing so they constructed Brazil as radically different from the rest of the world - in an orientalist fashion (Said 1978; Sjørslev 2004). The danger is comparisons resulting in radical binary opposites.

The orientalism also has a national foundation. It is the *Brazilian* exception, uniqueness and specificity, and it is opposed to the United States and South Africa as nation-states. Thereby researchers fall into a pitfall of nationalistic essentialism imposing national borders on ideas and social phenomena. This is the case with the arguments of 'importing foreign logics or ideas' (Segato, Freyre). This critique can be equally directed at the black movement as it can to the popular discourse. The narrative structure of the Freyrian historic tautology and its inversion are equally nationalistic. Whether Brazil is a racial democracy or characterized by structural racism, it is still the Brazilian nation-state which is at the centre of attention and scrutiny.

The same dichotomy is present in talk of interracial sex in Brazil. Where the popular discourse perceives it to be the manifestation of racial harmony and tolerance, the black movement uses it to prove the power relationship, as when calling it 'systematic rape of black women'. The dichotomy is about the presence of power in sex. Either sex is the manifestation of equality, or the proof of discrimination. It is an orientalist logic.

When criticizing the literature about race for creating dichotomies, I have to mention the bipolar discourse on race in the black movement. The discourse orientalizes on the basis of black and white skin colour. This is the case when using its terminology of black/white, as well as when constructing the black history of resistance opposite of the official white history. It is also the case when talking about 'appropriation of black culture' or criticizing white people for not knowing the meaning of dreadlocks (Jussara, Acareggae, in chapter three).

When analyzing ideas and social phenomena it is important to remember what is abstraction and that any abstraction could be constructed differently. My informants might call it a discourse or use it as such, and so might I, but it is still an abstraction which could be constructed differently and most likely will some day. Therefore it cannot be said to belong anywhere or have boundaries other than its application to make sense of experience. Ideas change and are understood differently at various times as shown with the concept of race in chapter two. This is also the view of Daniel (2006), when he claims that the understandings of race in North America and Brazil are converging. At least some of them are. But can a discourse or an idea be national as suggested by Marx (1998)? Can a nation be constructed around some set of ideas and thereby monopolize them?

The idea of a nation is always imagined through ideas about what it means to belong to that nation (Anderson 1984). These ideas are, however, not national. When considering

that knowledge is always partial, it becomes easier to conceptualize ideas not as *present*, but *thought* or *applied* to understand experience. An understanding of a given phenomenon is always contested and it is vital that we see this contestation and recognize that different options co-exist. These options are equally applicable depending on the context and offer various solutions to peoples problems. If we do not recognize that people have their reasons for using a certain understanding, we fall into the next pitfall I mean to describe.

MISTAKING ANALYSIS FOR EVALUATION

When analyzing social phenomena it is important to conceptualize co-existence instead of just evaluate alternatives. When reading the literature on race in Brazil, it seems certain that some authors conclude which discourse is right instead of analyzing their use and impact or the world they create. Mistaking analysis for evaluation thus gives way for a positivist social science 'weighing' different *truths*, according to their probability or coherence. Thereby it misses the point of attempting to understand why people do what they do. In effect, this is equal to academic arrogance; believing that the analyst knows better than the informant what is best for him or her. It thereby infantilizes the locals and takes away their authority of knowledge. This criticism might seem obvious, simple even, but much of the literature about race in Brazil falls into this trap more or less explicitly when evaluating the merits of racial democracy versus racism.

There is another level to it as well. When talking about what Bruner calls 'folk psychology', focus is on the limited nature of our knowledge as both human and researcher. This goes for both informant and fieldworker. 'Folk psychology' is the transformed version of social science as it is absorbed into a cultural account of what makes people tick (Bruner 1990: 13) – their common sense. These are standard ways of creating meaning and thereby legitimize actions, and as such they serve for us all to organize our experience in, knowledge of, and transactions with, the social world (1990: 35). If, in fact, theory is absorbed into local folk psychology and used by people to explain their actions and those of others, then analyzing these actions and their explanations in terms of the same theory can only bring about one kind of knowledge. It can only point to a gulf or a correspondence between the actions and their theorized explanations. That is, it can only come to one conclusion: Some degree of hypocrisy. As the project is to fit the actions to their (folk) theory, finding this gulf equals an evaluation, *not* an analysis. An example could be that had I analyzed Steve Biko in chapter four working with Paulo Freire's ideas, I would only have been able to conclude some degree of correspondence. I would not have been able to contribute anything analytical.

It is important to understand that all knowledge, academic and local, is necessarily partial, and to recognize that our ways of understanding are fundamentally of the same kind. Thereby we can re-conceptualize hypocrisy as a fundamental human struggle to

understand through different means. With the concept of 'folk psychology' Bruner places theory in the hands of the locals and not as a solely academic way of thinking. He thus, in effect, takes away the academic authority of knowledge and equals the researchers' monographs with people's own explanations of their actions. Therefore an analysis should not stop short of answering 'why' people do what they do. We can all supply endless explanations for doing what we do, but by in addition answering why we supply one explanation instead of another, is quite another analytical task.

When Brazil lost the World Cup soccer game to France, I took a bus downtown with Anderson. As the bus was leaving Santa Cruz he stuck his head out the open window and shouted "I am African" in a desperate voice. Upon asking myself 'why?', I thought that maybe by calling himself African as opposed to Brazilian, Anderson used the black movement discourse to avoid identifying with the national defeat. He traded the stigma of race for a sense of agency.

Seven

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