

2010-01-01

Dominant Discourses Embedded In Popular Culture: An Analysis Of Brazilian Teachers' Consciousness

Luciene Soares Wandermurem

University of Texas at El Paso, lswandermurem@miners.utep.edu

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DOMINANT DISCOURSES EMBEDDED IN POPULAR CULTURE: AN ANALYSIS OF
BRAZILIAN TEACHERS' CONSCIOUSNESS

LUCIENE SOARES WANDERMUREM

Department of Teacher Education

APPROVED:

César Augusto Rossatto, Ph.D., Chair

Aileen El-Kadi, Ph.D.

Julio Noboa, Ph.D.

Maria Teresa de la Piedra, Ph.D.

Patricia D. Witherspoon, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School

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2010

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my dear husband, David, whose love, faith, and emotional support provided me with the strength and perseverance I needed to achieve this goal.

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BRAZILIAN TEACHERS' CONSCIOUSNESS

by

LUCIENE SOARES WANDERMUREM, B.A

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at El Paso

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Teacher Education

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

May 2010

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank all the members of my thesis committee. I thank Doctor César Rossatto for his guidance and support. I thank Doctor Aileen El-Kadi whose knowledge of Brazilian culture and politics helped to strengthen this study. I also thank Doctor Julio Noboa and Doctor Maria Teresa de la Piedra for their patience and support. Finally, I would like to thank my husband, David, my parents, José Carlos and Therezinha, and my sister, Nara Aline, for their love and encouragement.

Abstract

Many scholars believe that popular culture is part of students' identity and a symbol of subordinated groups' resistance to cultural domination, therefore they support the use of popular culture in the classroom as a way to value students' identity. However, scholars also recognize that often times popular culture is manipulated by elites so as to convey discourses that oppress people of color as an strategy to maintain the status quo. In Brazil, country where this research was conducted, white male individuals are the ones who have historically held power and money, utilizing the media as an instrument of social control. Given the contradictions surrounding the production of mass culture, this qualitative case study proposes an examination of Brazilian teachers' critical consciousness of dominant discourses in popular media. I argue that the uncritical use of popular culture in class contributes to the perpetuation of dominant discourses that reinforce stereotypes, prejudices and even racism.

From the analysis of data collected through participant observations and interviews two categories emerged: the inert critical consciousness and the active critical consciousness. Teachers characterized by inert consciousness are aware that racism is an issue in the Brazilian society. However, they have difficulty in identifying sources of racial discrimination such as dominant discourses that subjugate people of color conveyed through popular media. Because their critical skills are more limited, teachers under the inertia category emphasize the use of popular culture as a tool for motivation rather than for critical analysis. On the other hand, teachers characterized by active critical consciousness not only are highly critical of the role popular media plays in conveying oppressive discourses but they also act to deconstruct such discourses in the classroom. Active critical consciousness means to engage in praxis, which involves critically reflecting on the sources of oppression and acting on deconstructing them in

order to transform reality. With this in mind, the use of popular culture by teachers under the inert critical consciousness category is likely to contribute to the perpetuation of dominant ideologies whereas the use of popular culture by teachers under the active critical consciousness can truly empower subjugated groups.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The History of western societies shows that elites have always utilized either overt or covert strategies to disseminate discourses that ensure the maintenance of the status quo. In the process of colonization in western societies, for example, whites not only enslaved the bodies of blacks, but they also attempted to enslave their minds by imposing the idea that their race and culture is superior to any other. As Brazilian sociologist Elizabeth Souza (2001) points out, “To justify domination, whites reinforced the idea of their superiority over marginalized peoples. For the Europeans, ‘other peoples’ were uncivilized and comparable to animals” (p. 41). The manner in which the notion of whites’ superiority was spread at colonial times is clearly an overt strategy the dominant group used in order to remain in power.

After slavery was abolished in western countries, which did not exactly mean the end of open racism, whites started using more covert strategies to maintain their hegemonic position. Borrowing from Antonio Gramsci, Henry Giroux’s (1981) definition of hegemony elucidates how covert strategies function to perpetuate unequal power, “Hegemony refers to the successful attempt of a dominant class to utilize its control over the resources of the state and civil society, particularly through the use of mass media and the educational system, to establish its view of the world as all inclusive and universal” (p.23).

Because schools and the media are the most effective means to convey culture and values, elite groups have largely used them to reinforce certain types of ideologies that ensure their position in society. In schools, dominant ideologies are embedded in the curriculum, daily discourses, and practices. Studies of scholars such as Basil Bernstein (1964), and Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron (1977) reveal how the school system privileges the middle class language and culture while other language codes and cultural values are underestimated. In this scenario, the imposition of dominant

culture benefits middle-class students who are already familiar with it and excludes disenfranchised students. As a consequence, the status quo is maintained.

In the case of mass media or popular culture which includes certain types of movies, reading materials and TV programs, music and so on, sexist and racist messages as well as stereotypes of people of color are commonly conveyed. In the United States, individuals have raised criticism to oppressive messages related to women and men of color in hip-hop and rap songs. As these music styles are generally performed by black men, critics have pointed out that blacks have been subjugating their own race. Regarding this issue, African American scholar known by the pen name bell hooks (1994) stresses that white men are the ones in power of the music industry. They manipulate the music content as they wish. As white male producers see black women as exotic and sensual, they will “sell” this stereotypical image through popular culture. For hooks, the media portrayal of black women as exotic sex objects and black men as violent gangsters is more than a business. It actually reflects white men’s attempt to widespread the white supremacist ideology which consists of the idea that whites are superior to other “uncivilized” races.

While in the U.S the discussion on how elites maintain their hegemony through popular culture surrounds rap and hip-hop, in Brazil samba and carnival have drawn the attention of some scholars (Augras, 1998; McCann, 2004; Werneck, 2007). Samba and carnival, the most popular type of Brazilian music and celebration respectively, usually convey ideologies and oppressive discourses related to people of color, however, many Brazilians are not even aware of some of them which have been turned into elements of national identity.

1.1 Carnival and the celebration of dominant discourses

Both carnival and samba have their origins in the African culture. Throughout history, samba, the type of music people dance to when samba schools parade during carnival, suffered discrimination

for coming from African traditions; however, it not only resisted but gained the status of the most representative cultural manifestation of Brazilian identity. Although the purpose of carnival would be the valorization of Brazil`s cultural heritage, dominant ideologies and stereotypes are often unconsciously celebrated as part of the country`s identity. Samba lyrics frequently reinforce ideologies introduced in the Brazilian society by the sociologist Gilberto Freyre. The extensive work of Freyre entitled *Casa-grande e Senzala*, or *The masters and the slaves* in its English version, aimed to provide a deep analysis of the formation of the Brazilian society, however, Freyre`s narrative romanticizes the process of colonization in Brazil as well as relations between people of color and the Portuguese colonizer. As a result, people of color are depicted in an oppressive stereotypical manner, while the colonizers are very positively portrayed in certain ways.

Some of the stereotypes found in the work of Freyre are the the exoticization and sexualization of people of color, especially black women. Other stereotypes include the view of blacks as more suitable for work than indigenous people, who were *molengos* or “sluggish people,” and a positive view of colonization in Brazil. Regarding the Portuguese colonization, Freyre (1987) claims that, “The unique type of colonization in Brazil promoted the mixture of races and agriculture. This was the foundation needed for the country to establish itself as a great and stable agricultural colony in the tropics” (p.25). This statement clearly shows Freyre`s positive view of whites` colonizing skills.

Besides exalting the benefits of colonization for the development of Brazil, Freyre claims that the Portuguese colonizers were able to develop a harmonious relationship with the colonized and other foreign people in the country due to their “flexible personality.” By “flexible personality” the author means a complete absence of racism which led the Portuguese colonizer to have children with women of color and open the country to any foreigner as long as he or she was Catholic. Although miscegenation among whites and people of color, and the acceptance of free foreign workers in the country are historical facts, equating them with complete absence of racism is either very naïve or purposefully

biased because the author himself acknowledges that one of the biggest challenges the Portuguese had to face was the lack of people to work in the colony. In Freyre's own words, "Miscegenation was the process utilized by the Portuguese to compensate for the shortage of people to inhabit and labor in these vast areas" (p.12). Thus, the miscegenation between whites and people of color was the solution the colonizers found to solve the problem of labor scarcity.

Among all ideologies conveyed by the work of Freyre and reinforced through the media and Carnival in particular, the "racial democracy" discourse is certainly the most harmful of them. Because miscegenation started being celebrated as an evidence of lack of racism, many Brazilians and foreigners still believe that Brazil is a racially harmonious country which is not true. Research shows that blacks' personal income is always inferior to whites even when individuals have the same educational level. Also, the unemployment rates are higher among blacks (Kilsztajn, Do Carmo, Sugahara, Lopes & Petrohilos, 2005).

In this regard, the idea that Brazil is a racially harmonious country is an ideology that not only implies the passivity of people of color to white domination at slavery times, but it also has been used to stifle racial debates in the country. It is worth noting that, even though the racial democracy ideology was popularized by Freyre in the mid-thirties, its dissemination and large acceptance were facilitated due to the political context of that time. As will be discussed in chapter 3, in 1930 nationalist leader Getulio Vargas became president, and in order to stabilize his government, he invested in the creation of a Brazilian cultural identity (McCann, 2004). Vargas, just as other dictators, believed that boosting the population's nationalistic sentiment would positively affect his image. Thus, since the 1930's the racial democracy discourse has been so reinforced through the media that it has become a symbol of national pride. While most Brazilians are still oblivious to the ideology of racial harmony, the dominance of white groups remains unchallenged.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Because popular culture may contain dominant ideologies and stereotypes that are harmful to subjugated groups, teachers may avoid using it in class as research conducted by Jackie Marsh (2006) indicates. Nevertheless, as scholars Diane Leard and Brett Lashua (2006) point out in their research about the use of popular media in class, “creative engagement with popular culture allows youth a sense that they are controlling their own representation, that they are in control of their own cultural identity, and are creatively shaping and molding language, style, and self into something new” (p. 247). For Leard and Lashua, the use of popular culture in class is empowering because students are able to express their identity creatively.

Having in mind that popular culture needs to be valued as part of who students are, but at the same time it may limit subjugated groups` identity to stereotypes, Brazilian researchers Antônio Moreira and Michelle Câmara (2008) conducted fieldwork in a public elementary school in Rio de Janeiro with the aim to examine to reconstruct students` perception of race, gender, and sexuality. The six-month research project consisted of reading and discussing texts about racial relations, the role of men and women in society, and homosexuality. As expected, students` opinions on these issues were very much influenced by popular culture. At first, students demonstrated prejudices against blacks, roles of men and women, and homosexuals due to the stereotypical views they had internalized through popular culture. Nevertheless, the intensive reading and discussion of texts that presented those issues through the perspective of the oppressed helped students change their misconceptions. The six-month research project led Moreira and Câmara (2008) to conclude that questions of identity are complex to be discussed in class; however, teachers need to do so in order to deconstruct stereotypes and prejudices.

1.3 Need for the study

Much research has been done to examine the use of popular culture in class as well as to investigate how people's perception of themselves and others are influenced by popular media, however, very little research has been done to address teachers' consciousness of dominant discourses and ideologies in popular culture. As previous research has demonstrated (Leard & Lashua, 2006), popular culture is part of students' identity, therefore it needs to be included in the curriculum. Nonetheless, if teachers use popular culture uncritically, they will be contributing to the perpetuation of oppressive messages that lead to prejudice.

1.4 Purpose of the study

In this research, it will be argued that popular culture has historically proven to be a form of resistance to elite's domination and, therefore it needs to be used in class. However, in order to be empowering, popular culture needs to be analyzed through a critical perspective because it is often manipulated by dominant groups to convey discourses that oppress people of color. In this regard, the purpose of this study is to examine Brazilian teachers' critical consciousness in relation to dominant discourses in popular culture. It will be argued that, in order to truly empower students, teachers need to be able to identify oppressive discourses in popular culture and also engage in *praxis*, which Paulo Freire (2005) defines as "The action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it" (p. 77). In other words, this research aims to find out if teachers are critical of dominant discourses, and if they apply critical pedagogy in order to deconstruct them.

Because samba is one of the most representative expressions of Brazilians' identity, but usually conveys ideologies that mask racism and discourses that subjugate people of color, it was chosen as object of analysis for the purpose of this research. Thus, teachers' critical consciousness will be investigated based on their ability to identify dominant discourses and ideologies that became deeply

enrooted in the Brazilian society by means of samba. As this study will show, samba went through moments of submission to dominant groups' impositions in order to survive. However, the early history of samba demonstrates that this music genre is a symbol of Afro-Brazilians' resistance to cultural domination and, for this reason, teachers who use it critically in class will be able to empower students of color.

Although this study will focus on ideologies in Brazilian popular culture, it will be necessary to refer to the U.S context. As McCann (2004) explains, the racial democracy rhetoric predominantly present in samba lyrics gained force in contrast with the circumstances of segregation in America. In this sense, Brazilian elites who were interested in promoting the image of Brazil as a racially harmonious country were able to do so by evidencing emphasizing race relations in the United States where racism was blatantly overt in the mid-1900's.

1.5 Research question and explanation of operational terms

Seeking to find out if teachers are aware of ideologies embedded in Brazilian popular culture, or more specifically, in samba lyrics, this research focuses on answering the following question: How does teachers' critical consciousness or lack thereof, contribute either to the deconstruction or legitimization of dominant discourses that have been perpetuated through Brazilian popular culture?

At this point it is necessary to clarify the use of key terms within the research question. According to Freire (1973), the term critical consciousness relates to one's ability to understand the real source of a phenomenon or a problem. For Freire (1973), "The more accurately men grasp true causality, the more critical their understanding of reality will be" (p. 44).

The term discourse, which is very close to the notion of ideology, also needs to be clarified for the purpose of this research. As sociolinguist James P. Gee (1996) explains, discourses represent the way diverse groups of people (men and women from different socioeconomic backgrounds and

ethnicity) view and explain reality. For the scholar, discourses comprise “a usually taken for granted and tacit ‘theory’ of what counts as a ‘normal’ person and the ‘right’ ways to think, feel, and behave” (p. ix). Those theories, existent in every discourse, are known as ideologies. Discourses, then favor different groups, however, as power relations are unequal, some discourses are largely disseminated and accepted as the “truth” by most members of a society. Such discourses are called dominant discourses and they represent the elites` view of the world.

Finally, the term popular culture is defined by Brazilian scholar Monique Augras (1998) as, “values and expressions of groups who are underrepresented in the political arena (...) From the perspective of battle among social classes, popular culture opposes itself to erudite culture as a form of resistance to domination” (p. 8).

1.6 Hypothesis

Findings may suggest that teachers who have been using popular culture in their classroom uncritically are actually helping perpetuate dominant ideologies that have become part of Brazilians` consciousness.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

All data collected will be interpreted using the critical theory framework with special focus on the relationships among culture, power, and domination. According to Joe Kincheloe and Peter McLaren (2003), popular culture, which includes TV, video games, computers movies, music and dance, plays a key role in critical research on power and domination. The authors explain that globalization contributed to the fast proliferation of images and signs in the Western world through popular culture. Those images and signs are frequently used as mechanisms for cultural domination as individuals become unable to distinguish what is real and what is simulated.

In this regard, critical theory intellectuals such as Henry A. Giroux, Peter McLaren, Joe kincheloe, and David Scholle and Stan Denski, propose techniques to produce counter-hegemonic discourses: the first one involves raising awareness of the fact that the meanings conveyed through popular culture are related to economic and political interests of dominant groups; the second one involves the capacity to understand that those meanings produce a different impact on individuals depending on the society they live, their racial and economic backgrounds, and their gender (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2003).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 The role of schools in maintaining social and cultural hegemony: The theory of cultural reproduction

Understanding that dominant classes utilize educational institutions and mass media as mechanisms of social reproduction, many scholars have given significant contributions to the analysis of this phenomenon. Interested in explaining how ideologies in schools contribute for the maintenance of the status quo, French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron (1977) elaborate on the theory of cultural reproduction, created by the Bourdieu.

According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), “schools are institutions for the reproduction of the legitimate culture” (p.101). The authors’ statement expresses their structuralist perspective on the educational system. For them, the aim of schools is to inculcate students with the middle-class *habitus*. The concept of *habitus*, very much utilized by the authors, can be defined as “system of dispositions that result from social training and past experience. It is the disposition to act in a certain way, to grasp experience in a certain way, to think in a certain way” (Bourdieu, 1977, as cited in Lee and Bowen, 2006, p. 197). In other words, the way individuals perceive what surrounds them, their way of thinking and acting, are highly influenced by who they interact with and the sources of knowledge available to them.

In the school context, students whose *habitus* is more similar to the middle-class, tend to succeed while students from low-income families need to make great effort to adapt to the dominant culture. British sociologist and linguist Basil Bernstein (1964) also believes that the environment children grow up in will certainly affect their success in school. The author explains that children from educated families acquire an elaborated code which includes a wide range of syntactic structures and sophisticated vocabulary. On the other hand, children from low-income and less educated families are limited to a restricted code which relies on extra-verbal channels such as gestures, facial expressions and intonation

in order to supply their lack of refined language skills. Bernstein points out that if a child expects to succeed in school, he or she needs to be oriented towards an elaborated code.

In support of the view of schools as sites where the middle-class culture is inculcated, researchers Lee and Bowen (2006) found that children from educated families have advantage over low-income students in various aspects. The authors' investigation of school achievement among children from different socioeconomic backgrounds indicated that children from educated and higher income families succeed in schools because they can count on parent support to help them with homework completion and closely monitor their performance by keeping in contact with teachers.

Thus, Lee and Bowen's study demonstrates how schools, intentionally or not, function as a system of exclusion in which relation between culture and power is evident. As schools overvalue the dominant class culture, students from highly educated families tend to repeat their parents' successful life stories. In doing so, the status quo is maintained. This is how the dominant class uses schools to transmit their ideologies and remain in power.

2.1.1 Postmodernism: A new perspective on hegemonic discourses

Seeking to deepen the analysis of culture, power and ideologies in the school system, authors such as Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, and Peter McLaren, to name a few, brought important insights into the field of education. In the first instance, all these authors, who became known as poststructuralists or postmodernists, agree with structuralists' view of schools as "ideological terrains for the dominant culture" (Giroux, 1997, p.133). According to Giroux (1981), the presence of dominant ideologies in the school atmosphere can be identified in classroom material, the organization of the school, the daily classroom social relationships, the principles that guide curriculum organization, the attitudes of the school staff, and finally "the discourse and practices of even those who appear to have penetrated its logic" (p. 22). Poststructuralists then recognize that all components of the educational system, from

school curriculum to teachers' practice, may be permeated with dominant ideologies which work for social inclusion or exclusion of individuals (Giroux, 1993). Nevertheless, these scholars raise two key criticisms against structuralists: first, they limit the analysis of cultural reproduction in schools to the aspect of class; second, they fail to recognize the role of human agency.

With regard to the first criticism, poststructuralists maintain that it is too reductionist to examine culture and power relations simply in terms of social class. They stress that even within a dominant group, one that is considered powerful for being affluent and educated, power relations are unequal due to issues of gender and ethnicity (McLaren, 1993). In this sense, a white and a black man who share the same socioeconomic status, most certainly have very different life experiences because society still privileges white males over people of color. For going through very different life experiences men and women from different economic backgrounds and ethnicity develop their own discourses to legitimize those experiences (McLaren, 1993).

The second criticism to structuralists relates to their passive view of students in the learning process. For Giroux (1997), assuming that schools are merely sites of cultural reproduction is too simplistic and fatalistic. Because it leaves no room for human agency, the theory of cultural reproduction places disenfranchised students in a dead end where they cannot find any way out of poverty. To support the counter-arguments to structuralists' theory, Apple (1993) stresses that:

Texts are not simply 'delivery systems' of 'facts'. They are at once the results of political, economic, and cultural activities, battles and compromises. They are conceived, designed, and authored by people with real interests (...). And what texts mean and how they are used are fought over by communities with distinctly different commitments and by teachers and students as well (p.195).

Apple's statement reinforces the point that ideologies are present everywhere because all "texts", it is that, all reading materials, classroom practices, or discourses in general, express one's perspective

of the world. Either in written or spoken language, male and female authors are constantly trying to lead the audience to see issues from the point of view they believe is the “right” or true” based on the experiences they have had as members of different social and ethnic groups. However, Apple sustains that meaning cannot be imposed on people for readers will interpret texts according to their lived experiences.

In this way, readers are subjects who engage in dialogue with texts for the co-construction of meaning (Freire, 1987). As Freire emphasizes, “reading the world always precede reading the word, and reading the word always implies continually reading the world” (p. 35). Here Freire introduces a new definition of literacy which goes beyond the ability of de-coding texts and passively “absorbing” information. This new view of literacy is political in the sense that it recognizes individuals as agents of their learning and, as students perceive their active role in constructing meaning, they become aware that they are subjects of history (Giroux, 1993).

To summarize, structuralists` and poststructuralists` analyses of ideologies within educational institutions derive from their divergent standpoints of culture. While the former sees culture as knowledge, traditions and values that can be simply transmitted or imposed on people, the latter understands culture as:

a circuit of power, ideologies, and values in which diverse images and sounds are produced and circulated, identities are constructed, inhabited, and discarded, agency is manifested in both individualized and social forms, and discourses are created, which make culture itself the object of inquiry and critical analyses (Giroux, 2004, p.59-60).

If culture is understood as a static force, consequently individuals would simply be the product of it. On the other hand, a dynamic view of culture considers individuals as both product and agents of it. As people interrelate and identities intersect, culture continually changes. The mutability of culture is comparable to the dialogical relationship embedded in the new concept of literacy. As individuals

interact with the words and the world, they are changed and they are able to change others. In the ongoing process of reading various messages and producing new meaning, individuals become aware of the possibility to transform reality (Freire, 1973).

Besides stressing individuals' ability to produce meaning to support the question of human agency, poststructuralists have another strong argument in favor of it – the occurrence of cultural resistance. The theory known as culture of resistance or oppositional culture gained popularity with the African American scholar John Ogbu. Investigating African American students' low achievement at schools in comparison to other minority immigrants such as Asians, Ogbu (1992) concluded that blacks preserve their group identity by opposing the dominant or “white” culture. For the author, African descendants are part of an involuntary minority who came to America forcibly and, therefore refuse to assimilate the culture of their oppressors. In addition to that, many African Americans feel that the assimilation of the white culture is not rewarding because racism is still an issue in the United States as well as in other nations.

Culture of resistance or oppositional culture is a clear example of how ideologies cannot be imposed by the media or educational institutions. For this reason, Giroux (1981) argues that educators should see students' resistance as a contestation of the unjust social system. They should learn how to use the culture of resistance in benefit of oppressed groups because world history has shown that social changes only occur when collective resistance is employed. The next chapter will provide a deeper analysis of resistance to cultural and physical domination by focusing on the history of slavery in western societies.

2.2 The experience of slavery in the construction of African descendants' identity

Slavery was certainly an experience that left deep scars on people of color. Worse than physical wound, which heals over time, blacks were hurt in the soul, and this type of experience remains in their consciousness. As clinical psychologist Beverly Tatum (1997) points out, because colonizers

imposed their cultural and intellectual superiority, blacks became simply the “Others”, the “different” the ones who deviate from the norm of being white. Several scholars have attempted to explain the concept of Otherness, however, black psychiatrist and philosopher Frantz Fanon (1967) provides a distinctive description of what it feels like to be the “Other”:

I begin to suffer of not being a white man to the degree that the white man imposes discrimination on me, makes me a colonized native, robs me of all worth, all individuality, tells me that I am a parasite on the world, that I must bring myself as quickly as possible into step into the white world, that I am a brute beast, that my people and I are like a walking dung-heap that disgustingly fertilizes sweet-sugar cane and silky cotton, that I have no use in the world (p.98).

The words of Fanon express how black people`s consciousness was affected by the white supremacist ideology. By deeming themselves superior and imposing their way of speaking, thinking and behaving, whites became the pattern to be followed by African descendants whose culture is “uncivilized” and “worthless.” According to Fanon, cultural imposition kills the identity of subjugated people, causing them to develop an inferiority complex which finally leads them to feel a need to assimilate the oppressor`s culture. For the author, the most powerful way of colonizing the minds of people is through the assimilation of the oppressor`s language because language is the representation of one`s culture and it carries ideologies.

It is important to point out that, even though Fanon (1967) provides a deep analysis of how black people`s consciousness was harmed by white colonizers, the author transmits empowering messages of human agency. In Fanon`s own words: “The body of history does not determine a single one of my actions. I am my own foundation. And it is by going beyond the historical, instrumental hypothesis that I initiate my cycle of freedom” (p. 231). The author`s message is certainly a way to encourage blacks` resistance. In fact, resistance to both physical and cultural domination has always been present in black

History, and real life stories of black people who fought oppression can be as empowering as Fenon's words.

2.2.1 Resistance to oppression: Slavery and black resistance in the U.S

The horrors of slavery were experienced by blacks from different parts of the world, and in each place successful stories of resistance occurred. Resistance, as explained in chapter 1, is an evidence of human agency and functions as a springboard for social changes. In this regard, it is a mistake to attribute any social change to the dominant classes' "good intentions" because World History has proved that major changes could only be achieved whenever dominant groups felt pressured by subjugated groups. Thus, a more accurate version of historical facts needs to take into account the perspective of the oppressed. In relation to that, Apple (1993) asserts that: "All too often, 'legitimate' knowledge does not include the experiences and cultural expressions of labor, women, people of color, and others who have been less powerful" (p. 201). The little emphasis on oppressed people's participation in significant historical events transmits misconceptions such as the passivity of the oppressed to domination. Teachers need to commit to the deconstruction of such ideologies by focusing the role of resistance as the trigger of transformation.

Telling the history of slavery from the oppressed people's point of view can be very empowering for disenfranchised students. For this purpose, teachers of U.S history could rely on resources such as *Slavery and the Making of America*, a documentary produced by Danté J. James (2005). In this documentary, slavery is told through the perceptions of the colonized, drawing particular attention to their active role in the fight for freedom and human dignity, instead of portraying them as passive victims of domination. In this way, viewers feel empowered by the experiences of enslaved people such as Robert Smalls and Harriet Jacobs.

Robert Smalls became famous for his strategy to free himself, his family and 12 other slaves during the Civil War when he was a pilot of a Confederate transport ship. As a free man, he made his

way into politics, serving in both the South Carolina State legislature and the United States House of Representatives. Viewing to improve the lives and participation of African Americans, Smalls convinced President Lincoln to accept African American soldiers into the Union army and fought to ensure legal protection of children of mixed racial background (James, 2005).

As for Harriet Jacobs, her life story is really inspiring for the fact that it reveals the ordeals black enslaved women had to go through. Despite the law that prohibited the teaching of reading and writing to slaves, Harriet's owner helped her to become literate and she was the first African American woman to write a slave narrative. In the autobiography *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Harriet describes the suffering of being a twelve-year-old girl tormented by her old master, Dr. Norcom, who desired her sexually, "My master began to whisper foul words in my ear. He peopled my young mind with unclean images, such as only a vile monster could think of. He met me at every turn, reminding me that I belonged to him, and swearing by heaven and earth that he would compel me to submit to him" "(as cited in James, 2005).

This passage illustrates that for the white male colonizer was not enough to have the power over his slaves' body. He was also eager to dominate their minds. As a master, Dr. Norcom could force Harriet to have sex with him any time he wanted just as any other slave owner used to do because the enslaved black body was a commodity that could be bought, sold, and exploited by white people. Nonetheless, Dr. Norcom fantasized to have her consent to sexual intercourse. For this purpose, he tried to control Harriet's mind by stating his ownership over her in an attempt to make her understand that, as a slave, she had to humbly submit to his desire.

The harassment continued for years, even after Harriet became pregnant for the second time with a lawyer with whom she was sexually involved. In 1835, after years tolerating psychological abuse, the young girl escaped and went to live in a tiny dark room built by her grandmother and her uncle. Harriet

lived in that place for seven years and escaped to Philadelphia where she could feel what freedom was like.

Robert Small's and Harriet Jacobs's stories were just two examples of resistance to physical and mind domination. In reality, there were several other stories that demonstrate oppressed people's agency. According to James (2005), blacks usually used strategies such as arson activities, poisoning, and escapes to defy their master's authority. In Brazil, the same strategies were used by rebellious slaves who were tired of being abused.

2.2.2 Slavery and black resistance in Brazil

Contradicting sociologist Gilberto Freyre's (2001) idea that the process of colonization in Brazil was softer than in other countries, contemporary sociologist Jesse Souza (2000) argues that "There was domination and systematic subordination in Brazil (...) the relationship of the Portuguese male with native and black women was sadistic; even the relationship between Portuguese males and their white wives was sadistic" (p. 6). Souza, then, deconstructs the image of the Portuguese as men of "flexible personality" (Freyre, 2001). For the author, the Portuguese colonizers were "barbarians without any internalized notion of limits to their primary impulses" (p.6). Souza's perception of slavery in Brazil seems to be more attuned to the suffering of the oppressed people. In any parts of the world, slavery was violent and dehumanizing; however, as in any other colonized county, blacks in Brazil did whatever they could to escape domination. Historians usually agree that the *quilombos* also called *mocambos* were the greatest symbol of collective resistance from Brazilian black slaves.

Quilombos were communities formed by Africans who refused to submit to the exploitation and violence of the slave system. According to Afro-Brazilian activist Abadias do Nascimento (1980), these type of communities were formed in different countries in the American continent, "In Mexico, they were called *cimarrones*; In Venezuela, *cumbes*; in Cuba and Colombia, *palanques*; and in Jamaica and

the United States, maroon societies” (p.152). In Brazil, the *Quilombo of Palmares* was the largest fugitive community that ever existed, sheltering thousands of slaves. For its size and organization, this quilombo became known as Republic of Palmares which was ruled by a king elected by the community members based on leadership criterion. Besides its political organization, Palmares was also economically and socially structured as the inhabitants of the community cultivated their own foods, and had freedom to practice religion and cultural traditions. Palmares, then, was not only a symbol of physical resistance because it managed to defeat Portuguese and Dutch armed groups about 30 times in 80 years, but it also represented cultural resistance (“A decadência da escravidão”, 2010).

The Afro-Brazilian Zumbi, who was the leader of the Palmares, became a hero in Brazil. As in 1694 the Portuguese army managed to nearly destroy the entire quilombo, Zumbi and other slaves escaped but one year later the black leader was caught and beheaded on November 20. Recently, the Black movement in Brazil chose the date of Zumbi’s death to celebrate the “Day of Black Consciousness”. On that day, black culture and resistance is celebrated nationwide (“A decadência da escravidão”, 2010).

2.2.3 The end of slavery and new challenges

The abolishment of slavery was a significant achievement for African descendants. Because of their escapes and organized rebellions and movements, the slavery system could no longer be sustained. In America, by the year of 1865 all slaves had already obtained their freedom, however, in Brazil, it would not happen until 1888 when Princess Isabel signed the *Lei Aurea* or “Golden Law” (“A decadência da escravidão”, 2010). It is worth noting that Brazil was the last country to abolish slavery and it only occurred because of factors such as the already mentioned collective black resistance and the high cost of illegal slave trade (The New York Public Library, 2010).

Although freedom was the realization of a dream for blacks, another challenge loomed: what to do with freedom. Without lands or any other possessions, most blacks were still trying to understand what it meant to be free. In America, ex-slaves started travelling from state to state searching for relatives who had been sold away (James, 2005). In Brazil, a great number of ex-slaves decided to start a new life in Rio de Janeiro, the capital of the country at that time. According to historian Cabral (1996) the concentration of ex-slaves in the hills of Rio contributed to the extension of the *favelas*, shanty towns formed by the troops who had fought the *Canudos war* in the state of Bahia. Cabral stresses that *favela* inhabitants, who were mostly blacks, were very susceptible to epidemic diseases such as smallpox and yellow fever due to the lack of proper hygiene in those fast-growing illegally formed communities.

Among all the new challenges that emerged after slavery, racism was undoubtedly the greatest of them. Race discrimination is a persistent issue and cause of social inequality in Brazil and the United States, however, it has been distinctly configured in each of these countries. While Brazil is characterized by covert racism, the U.S has a painful history of overt racism. In the Brazilian context, sociologist Jessé Souza (2000) ascribes the population's lack of racial consciousness to the racial democracy ideology originated by the well-known sociologist Gilberto Freyre.

Souza (2000) goes on to explain that, although that ideology was created in the 1930's, it is perpetuated by three crucial factors. Firstly, Brazilians recognize blacks as contributors to the foundation and development of the nation as well as indigenous people and Europeans. Secondly, the racial democracy ideology boosts Brazilians self-esteem because major elements of the black culture such as certain types of music, the way of dancing or playing soccer became famous all over the world as elements of the Brazilian culture. Thirdly, interracial marriage is more likely to happen in Brazil than in some other countries such as the U.S. Indeed, all the three factors seem to contribute for the perpetuation of the racial democracy ideology, especially the third one which has been analyzed by other researchers.

Interested in the question of interracial relationships as a proof of lack of racism in Brazil, Goldstein (1999) conducted a thirty-two-month field research in a favela (slum) located in Rio de Janeiro. While living inside a favela for six months, Goldstein interviewed more than 300 women and collected relevant life stories to her research. The author focused on analyzing one particular form of interracial sexuality in Brazil – the one in which low-income black women use their bodies to seduce older, rich, white men.

Her findings indicate that in the Brazilian society, where racism is masked and racial discourses are embedded in daily interaction, people usually equate blackness with ugliness, however, *mulatas*, or black and white mixed women, are the ideal representatives of sensuality. The author explains that this conception is fomented by carnival which eroticizes mulatas, provoking the desire of men, especially white men. Perceiving themselves as objects of desire, mulatas find it easy to seduce older, rich, white men and this becomes a gendered, racialized, and class-oriented sexual game. Goldstein (1999) highlights that in this fantasy relations of power are legitimized and constrained on the part of both characters – for the male character gender and social status grant him authority; on the other hand, being sexually desired puts the woman in charge of the game.

Even though Goldstein`s research focused in just one type of interracial relationship in Brazil, her findings were very illuminating because they deconstruct the belief that Brazil is a non-racist society where interracial relationships randomly occur. On the contrary, in her study the relations between a white man and a black woman were constructed over the sexual desire of the mulata`s body as a commodity. It is necessary to emphasize that the white men wish to consume the body of the mulata rather than the body of a pure black woman because mixed race women, who are characterized by light skin tone and white features, are considered the icon of sensuality.

Besides representing beauty and sensuality, black women who look “whiter” usually have more social advantages than pure black women. As Goldstein (1999) explains, lighter-skinned women have better job opportunities and more chances for upward mobility. To prove this point, the scholar tells the story of the forty-year-old black woman Graça and Robson, her black nephew, both residents of the favela where her research was conducted.

According to Goldstein`s account (1999), Graça was very disappointed in her nephew because he had impregnated a dark-skinned girl in the favela. Graça had high expectations towards her nephew`s future therefore, she did not like the fact that he was dating a black from the shanty town. Her dissatisfaction with the situation was expressed in the forms of jokes that referred to black babies as monkeys, a very offensive racially discriminatory term in Brazil. When confronted about the use of these types of racist terms, Robson`s aunt would explain that she was just joking. Graça seemed to perceive blackness as ugly and a hindrance to upward mobility, thus Robson should seek for a light-skinned partner in order to be successful. This life story exemplifies how blackness is viewed in Brazil. Even though racism is repeatedly conveyed through daily discourses and attitudes, the members of a so-called racial democratic society will interpret those discourses as innocent jokes. This type of consciousness is typical of places where racism has always been covert (Goldstein, 1999).

Differently from Brazil, the United States has a long history of overt race discrimination. After slavery was abolished and blacks` struggle to insert themselves into the country`s political, social and economic spheres aggravated racist groups that did not accept the idea of equal rights for blacks (James, 2005). In this context, the white supremacist group called Ku-Klux-Klan started their acts of outrageously explicit violence against blacks. In 1871 the KKK Act, designated to control racial conflicts in the country, was signed and the Federal Court was given the power to jail the terrorist organization`s leaders.

Even though the Act was a significant expression of human rights observance in America, it was not enough to put an end to the KKK's activities. The group continued threatening and exterminating blacks, mainly the ones who dared to participate in the country's politics. In 1876 other white supremacist groups gained force due to the enactment of the Jim Crow Laws which legalized racial segregation ("The reconstruction", 2010). From that moment on, racial segregation would be more explicit and violent than ever, and African-Americans would be victims of sadistic torture methods including burnings, dismemberment, and being dragged to death behind trucks.

Amid the challenges and bloodshed in the period of the post-slavery era, African-Americans never gave up on their fight for dignity. Their determination to win back the civil rights they had lost led them to acts of individual and collective defiance of the segregation law. Knowingly risking their lives, African Americans often spoke out in condemnation of racial atrocities, and actively engaged in political organizations such as the NAACP or National Association for the Advancement of Colored People ("The rise and fall of Jim Crow", 2002). In addition to individual and collective resistance to Jim Crow, African Americans also opposed the white supremacist ideology by preserving their cultural identity. The sophistication of the blues and Jazz defied the stereotypical view of blacks as conveyed in the popular coon songs. Alongside the musical innovation, blacks also formed a literary movement of resistance known as Harlem Renaissance. Located in Harlem, New York, which was the "New World" for thousands of black migrants from the South, the Renaissance featured a "New Negro" poetry and literature that emphasized self-respect and defiance ("The rise and fall of Jim Crow", 2002).

Resistance and determination were characteristic that not only helped blacks survive through racial discrimination but also led them to achieve their goals. In 1965, the long period of segregation would be over due to the efforts of the Civil Rights Movement, led by Martin Luther King ("The rise and fall of Jim Crow", 2002). The 60's were a time of great transformations in the American society

because blacks finally obtained equal rights by law, however, the racism that remained gained a new form. Similarly to Brazil, racism became covert in the United States (Bonilla-Silva, Lewis & Embrick, 2004).

2.2.4 The impact of the color-blind ideology on the fight against racism

The civil Rights Act was the beginning of a new era for African-Americans. After so much struggle, they could finally envision a bright future for themselves and their children in a nation where supposedly no one would be “judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character” (Martin Luther King, as cited in “American rhetoric”, 2001). African Americans dreamed of living in a society where people would be treated with respect, regardless of the color of their skin. They dreamed of living in a true “color-blind” society.

Color-blindness is a term that stemmed from racial- equality activists during the Civil Rights Movement. Nowadays it is seen from two different perspectives. Advocates of color-blindness believe that individuals from different racial background should have no privileges over others. On the other hand, critics maintain that the color-blind perspective hinders minority groups` progress because it overlooks the fact that, just for being born white, one has advantages over people of color. For sociologists Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Amanda Lewis and David Embrick (2004), the post-civil rights area is actually marked by a “color-blind racism” which is a covert type of racism. The authors argue that color-blind racism is a modern ideology supported by dominant groups so as to create an illusion that racism does not exist anymore and, as a result the status quo is maintained.

Aiming to explain how the color-blind racism ideology is sustained in the United States, Bonilla-Silva, Lewis and Embrick (2004) conducted research involving white college students and black and

white residents of the Detroit metropolitan area. The researchers found four main discourses used by whites that helps sustain the color-blind ideology and reinforce the current racial order.

The first and most common discourse was the one the authors entitled “The past is the past”. This story line was used by whites who believe that discrimination is no longer a current issue, therefore affirmative action would be a type of reverse discrimination. The second most common discourse, “I didn’t own any slaves”, is related to the first one is the sense that it frees the present generation from the guilt of a past event. The third most popular story line, “If Jews, Italians, and Irish have made it, how come blacks have not?”, suggests that blacks as any other historically discriminated group should be held accountable for their own success or failure. In counter argument, the authors rely on Stephen Steinberg’s theory of involuntary immigration to explain blacks’ disadvantage in relation to other races.

Similarly to John Ogbu, Steinberg believes that the situation of blacks differs from other minorities in essential aspects. While Africans were brought to America involuntarily, members of other minority groups came to this country willingly and many of them had some formal education, economic resources or social capital to rely on. Moreover, Steinberg argues that the great flow of immigrants who came to America was able to obtain jobs in the industrial sector, while blacks were only allowed access to those jobs after the First World War when immigration to the U.S became restricted (as explained in Bonilla-Silva, Lewis and Embrick, 2004).

Finally, the last discourse identified in Bonilla-Silva, Lewis and Embrick’s research, “I did not get a job (or promotion or was admitted to a college) because of a black”, once more suggests the notion of reverse discrimination as qualified whites believe they are losing opportunities to less qualified minorities. In this respect, the authors point out that the research participants who relied on this story line not always had solid evidence to prove they are more qualified than their black counterparts. Besides, participants seemed to deny historical reasons for blacks’ possible shortcomings. To conclude

their research, Bonilla-Silva, Lewis and Embrick`s (2004) argue that all the four story lines are dominant discourses because they used by whites from different socioeconomic backgrounds in support of the color-blind ideology.

To the discussion of color-blindness, the scholar Zeus Leonardo (2009) adds that this is a discourse whites are taught by their families and educational institutions since childhood. While people of color are led to critically analyze historical facts, power relations and their own position in society, whites learn a color-blind discourse that prevents them from questioning their privileges. Leonardo explains that, in fact, it is convenient for whites to close their eyes to difference because “all whites benefit equally from race and racism” (p.121). Then, even though some whites may recognize systems of oppression, they are comfortable with the privileges they acquire just for being white. In this regard, racism, as Tatum (1997) clarifies, functions as “a system of advantage based on race” (p.10). To exemplify this system of advantages that currently benefit whites, Leonardo cites the cultural imperialism that reinforces the white culture as a model of civilization, moral development, and rationality; the exploitation of third world labor; the tracking practices in American schools which limits the progress of black and Hispanic students; the military installation of naval and army bases intended to give “protection” to third world nations, but in reality compromises the autonomy of those countries; and housing segregation.

All those measures among others ensure white domination in the political, economical and social spheres, but the last one, housing segregation, is identified as the most harmful to African Americans because it has imprisoned them in the cycle of poverty. According to Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton (1994), the implications of growing up in ghettos may curtail the advancement of people of color in a variety of ways. Research has shown that children who live in ghettos are more likely to drop

out of school, not be able to attend college or obtain a well-paid job. Furthermore, they are more prone to drug use and unplanned pregnancy.

Massey and Denton (1994) assert that, over decades, whites have managed to maintain the racial housing segregation by using several conscious actions. Starting from the industrialization period which attracted blacks from the southern rural areas to work in the northern cities, blacks were pushed into recognized Negro areas, or ghettos, due to the intolerance of whites. Fearing violent attacks by whites, even middle-class and educated blacks felt compelled to leave predominantly white neighborhoods.

Later on, in the 1920's, middle-class whites started using institutionalized methods to form ghettos. The "Improvement Associations" which supposedly meant to promote the security of neighborhoods and the increase of property values were nothing but a means to prevent blacks from entering white neighborhoods. Some of the various strategies the Improvement Associations used to "protect" white neighborhoods included pressuring city authorities for high investments in neighborhoods so that blacks could not afford to buy houses in those areas; collecting money to buy houses owned by black residents; and offering bonuses to black renters who agreed to leave the neighborhood.

Massey and Denton (1994) emphasize a particular discriminatory strategy the neighborhoods associations usually made use of – the restrictive covenants. The restrictive covenants were contractual agreements among home owners stating that they would not allow black individuals to buy, lease or rent their property. These documents were valid for a pre-determined period of time and, in case the house owner violated the restrictions imposed by the document, he or she could be sued by the other parties of the agreement.

Massey and Denton (1994) assert that, even after the passing of the Fair Housing Act in 1968, systematic housing discrimination continued. Recent studies conducted in the end of the 1980`s have shown that real estate agents practice “racial steering” which consists of leading blacks to buy houses in poorer areas closer to neighborhoods with high numbers of black residents. On the other hand, white buyers would only be shown houses located in predominantly white neighborhoods unless they openly requested to see houses in integrated neighborhoods. Another example of how the process of ghettoization is maintained is the discriminatory actions of financial institutions. The authors point out that federal banks would classify any area within or near a black neighborhood as not worthy of credit. Thus, residents of those areas were denied mortgage and home improvement loans. Housing segregation, then, is a clear example of how institutionalized racism benefits white Americans.

Considering the issue of institutionalized racism in the Brazilian context, economists Samuel Kilsztajn, Manuela do Carmo, Gustavo Sugahara, Erika Lopes and Sonia Petrohilos (2005) analyzed the distribution of wealth in Brazil in 2001 and found out that, although Brazil has the largest black population outside Africa, blacks personal income was always inferior to whites even when individuals had the same educational level. Also, the unemployment rates were higher among blacks. For the researchers, these numbers prove that Brazil has never been a racial democratic country. Instead, the idea of racial democracy is a myth that has been sustained by dominant classes, and consequently racial tensions are avoided because individuals tend to perceive the exclusion of Afro-Brazilians as a question of social inequality.

In this way, the racial democracy myth has the same function as the color-blind ideology – to mask racism. And, as those ideologies become dominant discourses in a society, even people of color internalize them. To prove this point Leonardo (2009) refers to Jonathan Warren`s research findings

which reveal that black Brazilians as well as white Americans share a color-blind perspective even though both groups differ in structural position.

With this in mind, Leonardo suggests that educators confront the color-blind paradigm in their classrooms so as to uncover institutionalized racism and its effects on the lives of blacks. However, the author highlights that this is not an easy task. He states that, when confronted about racial inequality, whites tend to steer the conversation towards the progress black people have made, instead of analyzing racism as a historical fact with present implications. As Bonilla-Silva, Lewis and Embrick (2004) also found, whites refuse to consider the impact of slavery on the current society claiming that it has been a long time since slavery was abolished. Although slavery indeed ended years ago, Brazilian scholar Souza (2001) emphasizes that racial inequality has its origin in colonial times when black slaves suffered heavy exploitation and, later on were freed without any resources to meet their basic needs.

All in all, educators need to encourage their students to reflect on the roots of racial inequality and have them analyze how institutionalized racism helps maintaining the *status quo*. In doing so, students will not only be able to understand blacks' historical struggle to gain back their dignity but also their fight to be seen and heard in "color-blind" societies such as the U.S and Brazil where racism definitely exists, but is veiled.

2.3 Agency and identity in black popular culture

As a deeper analysis of the western history has shown, African descendants have never been passive to white oppression. On the contrary, they have used collective and individual forms of resistance to liberate their bodies from physical exploitation, and most importantly they have been able to preserve their identity by opposing cultural domination. Although it is true that the notion of "pure" culture or identity is a false one due to processes of cultural hybridization, as observed by Brazilian scholar Vera Candau (2008), the influence of black culture is obvious in western countries.

In Brazil, one of the best representations of black resistance through culture is samba. According to Brazilian historian Sergio Cabral (1996), the word samba originally refers to “many types of music and dances introduced in Brazil by black slaves” (p. 19). The author explains that samba started gaining popularity by the end of the XIX century during carnival in Rio de Janeiro, former capital of Brazil. At that time, there were two distinct types of carnival: the “big” and the “small” carnival.

The “big carnival”, meant to entertain the middle class, was celebrated in a very organized European style – the masquerade balls would take place in fancy clubs and elite groups would dance to the sound of the central European polka music. On the other hand, the disorganized “small carnival”, predominantly celebrated by blacks, would take place on the streets of Rio while people would sing and dance to the sound of the drums. It would follow the style of *congadas* and *ticumbis*, which are popular festivals characterized by a syncretism of African and catholic traditions (Cabral, 1996).

The Afro-Brazilian cultural influences combined with the disorganized manner of celebrating the “small carnival” originated the music style known as samba. Although samba has established itself as the most popular musical rhythm in Brazil, it did not easily achieve such status. Because this type of music derives from African culture and slavery had been recently abolished, prejudice against blacks and their traditions was still very blatant in Brazil. As Cabral (1996) points out “samba, as well as any other cultural or religious manifestation of black origin, suffered prejudice” (p. 26). Thus, in the beginning of the XIX century, cultural manifestations of African origin such as the *candomble* and *macumba* rituals, the *capoeira* which combined martial arts and dance, as well as the samba itself were highly reprimanded by the Brazilian authorities who associated that musical rhythm to people from the lower classes and criminals (Cabral, 1996; Souza, 2000). As samba composer Donga highlights, the simple act of singing samba while playing the guitar in public could cause one to go to jail.

The *sambista* samba singer and player, Joao da Baiana validates Donga's account by narrating his own experiences. Joao declares he was arrested many times for playing samba in public. In his recollection, Joao gives particular emphasis to police chief Meira Lima who hated both samba and the way sambistas would dress. According to Joao, Meira Lima would not only arrest but humiliate sambistas, by cutting their white bell bottom pants and sewing them with tight to their body using black thread (as described in Cabral, 1996).

Given the repression from authorities, sambistas had to search for different alternatives to preserve their musical tradition. Taking advantage of the fact that the practice of African religions had been legalized and the police was not able to distinguish samba music from African religious music, sambistas would meet in macumba and candomblé houses and wait until the end of the religious rituals to start playing their songs (Cabral, 1996). This became a common practice in Rio de Janeiro and lasted until the "small carnival" became progressively more popular.

Although the rise of samba also involved submission to certain impositions which will be explained later in this chapter, Afro- Brazilians' resistance to authority and dominant groups' discrimination was inherent to the survival of their traditions. In the U.S context, rap music exemplifies how African-Americans draw on their own culture to resist the dominant ideologies and institutionalized racism that oppress them.

Considering gangsta rap as the most representative African American popular culture, scholar Theresa Martinez (1997) conducted an analysis of political song lyrics within this music genre. The author's findings revealed four main themes expressing African Americans' concerns: the distrust of the police; fear of a corrupt system; disillusionment with the health care system; anger at racism and lost opportunities. Martinez sees political gangsta rap as oppositional culture and goes on to say that it "does not emerge in a vacuum or without cause" (p. 266). In this sense, all the political messages conveyed in

political gangsta rap oppose the power of the groups who have historically subjugated African Americans. Such messages denounce the experiences of violence, social exclusion and racism of those who live in the American ghettos.

Then, both samba and rap are the major expressions of black culture and resistance in Brazil and the U.S respectively. While samba fought dominant groups' prejudice against African cultural heritage, rap denounces racial prejudice itself and social exclusion. Both cultural manifestations represent oppressed groups' opposition to the control of dominant groups.

2.3.1 Black popular culture: resistance or subordination?

The previous section focused on the analysis of black popular culture as resistance to dominant groups' oppression; however, some authors point out that, often times, blacks subordinate their cultural expressions to the requirements of dominant groups as a way to keep their traditions alive. Samba, for example, might not have become so popular among all social classes if sambistas had not complied with certain rules which can be better understood after a brief examination of the Brazilian political setting from the 1930's until the beginning of the 50's.

The year of 1930 is considered a remarkable moment in the Brazilian history due to Getulio Vargas' rise to presidency after taking part in the revolution that overthrew president Washington Luis. Vargas' government was characterized by strong nationalism and centralization of power, particularly between the years 1937 and 1945, when a new regime called Estado Novo was implemented in order to save the country from the communist influence ("Era Vargas", 2010). As scholar Bryan McCann (2004) explains, the need to consolidate his dictatorial power led Vargas to use similar strategies Germany and Italy were applying for the heightening of a nationalistic sentiment among the population. Among the

main strategies used to this aim was the creation of the Departamento de Imprensa e Propaganda (DIP), or Department of Press and Propaganda.

The DIP viewed to boost Brazilians` nationalism by both controlling the means of communication for the projection of a positive image of the government, and shaping a national popular culture that represented the country`s identity. For this purpose, the DIP saw no better tool than the radio which was the most effective means of communication at that time, being able to transmit intended messages to people of all classes and ages, literate and illiterate (McCann, 2004). The endeavor to create a national identity with the support of the radio gave sambistas the opportunity to promote the Afro-Brazilian music that had been so discriminated in the beginning of the XIX century.

According to McCann (2004), Rádio Nacional played a key role in transforming samba into the most representative cultural manifestation of Brazilianness. Rádio Nacional, which had always been committed to popular culture, strengthened its support to samba after the implementation of the Estado Novo regime, leading this type of music to achieve a respected status. Another factor that contributed to the promotion of samba was its endorsement by intellectuals such as educators, historians and sociologists who maintained that samba, a rhythm rooted in the African descendants` traditions and cultivated by them in favelas, represented the genuine Brazilian popular culture.

Then, the ascension of samba did not happen naturally. Instead, it resulted from collective efforts of government, intellectuals and the media to build a cultural identity. In addition that, sambistas had to comply with certain regulations in order to be able to have their songs commercialized. McCann (2004) draws attention to the fact censorship prohibited sambas that celebrated the lifestyle of *malandros*, or individuals who demonstrate a disdain for work but cunningly find ways to survive. As malandragem was a very common theme in sambas, some composers were forced to change the lyrics of their songs so

that they could be recorded and played on the radio. Most sambistas would simply avoid the theme while only few others would refuse to change the lyrics and still play their samba with friends.

In order to obtain sponsorship from the government for carnival parades, sambistas also had to follow a set of rules imposed by the City Council. Perhaps the regulation that most affected the shaping of samba and carnival was the one that restricted the parades to national and patriotic themes (McCann, 2004). As a result, samba went through an extremely patriotic phase – the phase of *samba-exaltação* which was crucial for its projection nationwide.

In the late 1930`s, the white middle-class composer Ari Barroso strengthened the samba-exaltação trend with his new composition *Aquarela do Brasil* (Brazil Watercolor). Although Barroso`s patriotic lyrics was a manifestation of his true feelings towards Brazil rather than a mere attempt to please the Estado Novo leaders, *Aquarela do Brasil* became the perfect expression of the national sentiment Vargas and his supporters were seeking for. International recognition soon came after Walt Disney included the song in the soundtrack of the movie *The Three Caballeros*, and singer Carmen Miranda started performing it in New York and Los Angeles nightclubs. Around the same time, Gilberto Freyre`s *The masters and the slaves* was published. The fact that a well-known intellectual depicted Brazil as a non-racist country where different cultures co-existed in harmony was crucial for the dissemination of the nationalist ideologies promoted by the Estado Novo. As a result, the racial democracy ideology became a dominant discourse proudly reproduced by most Brazilians who had internalized it. In the same way, foreigners were led to believe that racial relations in Brazil were uniquely harmonious (McCann, 2004).

As history shows, sambistas helped to spread the ideologies of the Estado Novo government and, in exchange, samba gained respect and was hastily commercialized in and outside the country. As Brazilian scholar Monique Augras (1998) puts it, in order for samba to achieve recognition, sambistas

had to resist certain impositions and also submit to some regulations. The author stresses that some characteristics of samba and carnival were lost in the process she calls “the whitening of samba”. Augras cites, for example, the fact that the *blocos*, or groups of people who would parade on the streets in a disorganized manner, were transformed into *escolas de samba*, or samba schools, which are distinguished by strict organization. According to the rules of the contests created by the City Council in Rio de Janeiro, organization was one of the essential qualities a samba school must have so as to win the money prize. Augras points out that even the name “escola” de samba implies the discipline elites required from carnival groups. Although, Augras (1998) underscores the compliance of sambistas to dominant groups’ rules, she sees it as a strategy that enabled samba to survive through the severe restrictions imposed by the Estado Novo.

With respect to the commercialization of samba, Brazilian scholar Jurema Werneck (2007) argues that the way women were depicted in samba lyrics of the mid nineteenth century is an evidence of sambistas’ subordination to the culture industry. Viewing to become prominent in the samba business, sambistas adapted their songs to the patriarchal European values and, as a result, women were most often portrayed as passive and submissive to men. For the author, the devaluation of women in samba lyrics represents the subordination of black male composers to the power of the white men who are in charge of the political, economic and cultural productions in Brazil and other countries.

Taking this discussion into the U.S context, hooks (1994) shares her views on the image of women in some gangsta rap songs. Equally to Werneck (2007), hooks understands the sexist and misogynist content of gangsta rap as the subjugation of black men to the power of white male music producers. In the author’s own words, “when the young black males labor in the plantations of misogyny and sexism to produce gangsta rap, white supremacist patriarchy approves the violence and materially rewards them” (hooks, 1994, p. 123). Hooks goes further to say that gangsta rap lyrics do not express

black males` manhood; in reality, black popular culture is used by white males to convey messages of domination over women. The author explains that white men feel the need to maintain their dominance but are too “civilized” to deliver sexist and misogynist messages.

In essence, black male sambistas and rappers` compliance with the requirements of the music industry cannot be simply classified as an act of subordination. The relationship involving black male composers, white male producers and women reflects the battle for power Giroux (1981) discusses about. In this regard, neither sambistas nor rappers are being passively controlled by white businessmen to disseminate particular ideologies. Instead, those composers, viewing their own profit, agree to follow the rules of the market, however, often times this attitude will be deemed submissive by some intellectuals.

2.3.2 Black popular culture and identity in the classroom

In their fight for recognition, participation and freedom of expression, blacks have made enormous advancements. Black movements, with the support of other marginalized groups, have fought for participation in the social and economic spheres. Multicultural education in America, which stemmed from the Civil Rights Movement, can be considered one of the most significant achievements of oppressed groups who have longed for inclusion and respect of their identity (“The rise and fall of Jim Crow”, 2002).

In Brazil, a multicultural perspective in education started with the implementation of the PCN`s (National Curriculum Parameters) which are guidelines to assist teachers all over the country in the task of forming critical and engaged citizens (Abreu, Ribeiro, Soares & Nogueira, 1996). Although some teachers have raised criticisms in relation to the PCN`s, most of them recognize its value in the

educational field especially because the theme of cultural diversity underpins this document (Candau, 2008).

In 2003, as scholar Nilma Gomes (2008) points out, Brazil took another step towards respect for diversity – the teaching of African history and Afro-Brazilian culture was included in the PCN's and became mandatory in all schools. Although this measure of affirmative action is in theory very beneficial for black students, it could produce unintended results in case educators are not prepared to put it into practice. Gomes warns that, because the great majority of teacher education programs in Brazil do not offer any course addressing African heritage and the participation of Afro-Brazilians in the current society, educators tend to overemphasize the pieces of African's history they are familiar with such as the poverty in African countries and slavery.

Gomes (2008) sustains that the consequences of reinforcing negative fragments of Africans' history may lead students to build an image of blacks as passive people who did not fight domination. This is a negative stereotype about blacks in Brazil that is perpetuated through the media and the fragmented style of teaching. In the same way, most white Americans rely on the stereotype of blacks' laziness to justify African Americans' poverty (Massey & Denton, 1994).

To elucidate the danger of limiting a people's life story to painful incidents, Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Adichie (2009) shares a personal account in which she describes the experience of coming to study in the United States and discovering how white Americans picture Africans. The novelist reveals that the assumption that she had a life of struggle in Nigeria would lead the white people to express pity towards her, however, Adichie claims to have lived a very happy childhood as she came from a tight-knit educated middle-class family. Understanding that whites' first reaction to her derived from their fragmented view of Africans, Adichie (2009) advises about the risks of being exposed to a single story. The author goes on to say that the insistence on negative aspects of a people's life is to

“flatten their experiences and overlook the many other stories that form them” (Adichie, 2009). In addition to that, Adichie explains that the repetition of a single story to depict a social group creates stereotypes. She highlights that, “the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make the one story become the only story” (Adichie, 2009). Stereotypes then are the result of telling a story from only one perspective.

Besides the risks of limiting people to a static and homogeneous identity, Tatum (1997) draws attention to another danger related to stereotypes: internalized oppression. According to the author, internalized oppression happens when members of a stereotyped group internalize the stereotypical categories about themselves to a certain extent. In other words, members of stereotyped groups may start acting as they are portrayed by the larger society.

With this in mind, educators who are willing to adopt a multicultural perspective must be aware of the need to expose students to empowering stories of historical resistance and achievements of oppressed groups in various societies (Gomes, 2008). Also, they must open spaces for students to express their identity which is not formed by isolated stories, but by a variety of experiences (Adichie, 2009). As Brazilian educators Antonio Moreira and Michelle Camara (2008) state “identities are constructed by our daily practices and by the discourses we are exposed to” (p. 57). For this reason, identities are not fixed or single entities and even though some individuals may be part of a same social group, they are unlikely to share exactly the same experiences. Then, the advantage of allowing students to speak for themselves is that they will be able to validate their identities by providing more complete stories rather than single ones. This will help to deconstruct stereotypes or misconceptions about their culture.

Aiming to transform their classroom into democratic spheres where students can express their identity, multicultural educators Diane Leard and Brett Lashua (2006) included popular culture in the

curriculum of the low-income schools where they worked in Canada. Each educator chose a different approach to critical pedagogy in their classrooms. While Leard chose to explore popular theater and photography, Lashua opted for music-creation. Taking into account that the conditions of posed a difficult challenge for the residents of the area where the schools were located, the educators` main goals were to empower students by valuing their identities, including their culture and way of speaking, and also lead them to question the relations of power in the Canadian society.

Leard and Lashua`s democratic curriculum seemed to produced very beneficial outcomes. According to the authors, the use of popular culture engaged and motivated students as they were able to creatively express their beliefs and concerns through rap songs as well as understand whites` privileges in the society by applying critical pedagogy to media analysis. The educators also point out that the use of critical pedagogy helped them to question their own position as White, educated, middle-class women in society. The authors explain that, after reading the lyrics of a rap song one of the students composed, they could better understand the effect of the White power on disenfranchised individuals. They could empathize with minorities` feelings. Although, Leard and Lashua`s experience proved the effectiveness of using popular culture in schools, some educators are still reluctant to use it in their classrooms.

In 2006, scholar Jackie Marsh conducted research to find out about the beliefs of student-teachers (pre-service teachers) on an undergraduate course in the U.K in relation to the use of popular culture in the primary literacy curriculum. Marsh was interested in knowing if the pre-service teachers used popular culture in their teaching placements and if they did not, the author investigated their reasons for that. Marsh`s findings indicate that the pre-service teachers see popular culture as a way to motivate students; however, none of them recognize the value of popular culture as a means to improve critical literacy skills. Some of the participants referred to popular culture as “too trivial” and “ephemeral” (p.168). Some other participants seemed to worry about sexist and racist content of some types of popular culture, and for this reason they avoided using popular media in class. In relation to

that, Marsh argues that teachers failed to recognize that controversial issues can be a fruitful resource for classroom discussion as part of a critical literacy curriculum.

According to David Scholle and Stan Denski (1993), instead of perceiving the media as source of alienation and silence, educators should start seeing it as a source of collective voice and agency. Similarly to Leard and Lashua (2006), Scholle and Denski maintain that educators should use popular culture as the background for any teaching theory for two main reasons: first, to give “voice” to students; second, to identify ideological discourses that represent different groups’ interests. In this sense, Brazilian teachers must include samba and other forms of popular culture in their classes for the same reasons that American teachers cannot avoid working with rap and hip-hop which are major popular culture expressions in the U.S society; nevertheless educators need to be critical themselves in order to be capable of helping students to develop their own language of critique. If educators are not well prepared to adopt a multicultural perspective with a critical view, stereotypes and ideologies will be perpetuated in society.

Chapter 3: Methodology and methods

3.1 Choice of methods

The methods chosen for answering the question proposed in this case study are all qualitative. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), qualitative researchers generally seek for answers to *why* and *how* questions to shed light on the meanings of social interactions in a given context. The authors associate the term *qualitative* to “the quality of entities and on the processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 13). As the intention of qualitative researchers is to understand and describe individuals’ standpoints and behaviors according to socially construct meanings, their most effective data collection methods are participant observation and in-depth interviews. On the other hand, quantitative researchers, who depart from a value-free framework, utilize mathematical methods, statistical tables, and graphs to measure and analyze relations between variables. Although qualitative researchers may also utilize such methods for positioning research participants within a large group, their research findings usually do not rely on complex statistical measures.

The inherent differences between qualitative and quantitative inquiry has been the cause of discussion between advocates of each of the two research paradigms. Opponents of the qualitative research approach often contend against its non-scientific or subjective nature in contrast with the quantitative analysis which values empirical observation and methods for testing hypothesis. In response to this argument, qualitative researchers maintain that reality is dynamic, and for this reason it cannot be objectively measured as if it were the only ‘truth’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

Considering that the goal of this research involved features that could not be objectively measured the choice for qualitative methods seemed to be more appropriate. In order to examine both educators’ consciousness of dominant discourses conveyed through popular culture as well as educators’ attitude towards the deconstruction or legitimization of such discourses, participant observations

followed by in-depth interviews were used as the main data collection tools. Robert Bogdan and Sari Biklen (1992) describe these two methods as the best-known representatives of qualitative research because they permit the researcher to enter the world of the research participants enabling him or her to get to know them better. As a result, a relationship of trust is established and the researcher will be provided with rich descriptive material of what is observed or heard.

With respect to observation, Marilyn Lichtman (2006) highlights that examining humans in natural settings helps researchers to better understand “the complexity of human behavior and interrelationship among groups” (p.139). The author argues that, although the researcher may choose to be either an unobtrusive or a participant observer, the latter is more aligned with the goals of contemporary studies involving power relations and privileges. The role of participant observer implies regular interaction with research subjects and, in consequence researchers are able to better understand how individuals` positioning leads to certain attitudes towards others.

In the case of interviews, which comprise another fundamental data-collection instrument, Lichtman (2006) stresses that this type of interviewing is a process rather than only a list of pre-elaborated questions. According to the author, this process involves developing rapport and getting the interviewees to trust the researcher so that views and experiences will be openly shared. In-depth interviews are usually semi-structured or open-ended. In semi-structured interviews researchers have a set of questions to ask, however, they are free to investigate any relevant issue that may emerge at the time of the interaction. The open-ended interview mode is the one that gives the most freedom to researchers. In this type of interview, researchers do not follow any set of questions; however, they are able to achieve their goal by keeping an informal conversation with the participant. For qualitative researchers, who are interested in examining individuals `perspectives, open-ended and semi-structured interviews seem to be more suitable than rigidly structured interviews.

In addition to participant observations, which helped me familiarize with research participants so that I could obtain rich data from the in-depth interviews, other three types of data collection were used: self-completion questionnaires, official documents and photographs. According to Louis Cohen and Lawrence Manion (1989), self-completion questionnaires have the advantage of being bias-free once research subjects are expected to respond the questions by themselves. On the other hand, the disadvantage of this research tool is that it tends to suffer from low-response rates. To avoid setbacks, Cohen and Manion suggest that self-completion questionnaires be short, simple and straightforward.

In relation to documents, they are divided by Bogdan and Biklen (1992) into two categories: personal and official documents. The authors explain that personal documents are the ones research participants write themselves, therefore they provide valuable insights about one`s experiences and standpoints. This category of documents includes intimate diaries, personal letters and autobiographies. As for official documents, their importance lies in the fact that they provide clues about the leadership style inside the school, regulations, and the participation of teachers, staff and community in decision-making.

Finally, photographs, also used as instrument for data collection in this research, are seen as a source of richly descriptive data for qualitative inquiry, even though scientific researchers usually disagree with that (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 137). For empirical researchers, photographs may distort reality and, as a result the “truth” is not captured in them. Nonetheless, as qualitative investigators do not pursue a single “truth,” photographs are used for analysis of details encompassing activities and interactions among subjects. Furthermore, photographs of the fieldwork including the classroom layout, postings in the bulletin board, the contents of a bookcase and the writings on the blackboard can be very meaningful if analyzed after a period of participant observation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

Having explained the most common methods for qualitative data collection and justified my choice for participant observation, in-depth interviews, self completion questionnaires, official

document analysis and photographs, the following section is intended to provide a detailed description of how this research project was conducted. To ensure confidentiality, the school where the research took place and the participants will be given fictional names.

3.1.2 The research site and data-collection procedures

This research project was conducted at Hope Middle School, an underprivileged public state school located in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, mostly attended by black students. As the purpose of this investigation was to examine the critical use of popular culture in the classroom as a means to empower students, I believed that it was appropriate to conduct the study in a context where popular culture plays a central role in students' lives.

In underprivileged locations individuals hardly ever have the chance to get familiar with cultural expressions other than popular culture. In the area where Hope school is located, for example, students do not have access to a public library. Although there is one theater and two movie theaters in the whole city, ticket prices are not affordable for low-income students. Because of money constraint residents of impoverished places are most likely to be exposed to popular culture only.

Another reason that led me to choose a school located in a low-income district is that popular culture, the Arts in general as well as sports, have been proved effective means of preventing youth from getting involved in illegal activities (Leard & Lashua, 2006). In fact, Hope school teachers reported that some of their students were involved in drug dealing and recently one student was murdered for this reason. In face of this reality, having young people engage in creative and healthy activities, would help students visualize new possibilities for their future.

3.1.3 Approaching the research participants

My first step towards the initiation of the study was to obtain authorization from the school principal and the participants, the teachers. Before signing the consent, the teachers were properly informed about their right to withdraw from the project at any time. They were also informed about confidentiality issues, length of the project and how data would be collected. As for the topic of the research, I limited myself to explain to them that it involved culture, but I did not tell any details about my investigation otherwise results would be compromised. All teachers agreed to the terms and signed the authorizations that later on were sent and approved by the UTEP review board.

After all bureaucratic procedures were completed I was ready to start the fieldwork. At first, I intended to attend the classes at Hope school for a whole month, however, due to the swine flu pandemic schools were closed and my participant observations were restricted to the period of two weeks. For the last two weeks of August 2009 I focused on collecting data from 4 individuals: a Geography teacher, Marcos, a Portuguese/Literature teacher, Lucy, a History teacher, Sylvia, and an Arts teacher, Yvonne. As I returned to the U.S and started the process of data analysis I felt that if I increased the number of participants I would probably obtain more substantial information. Therefore, in December 2009 I went back to the research site with the purpose of collecting data from 2 more Portuguese/Literature teachers Ana and Maria, who formally agreed to participate in the research on the same terms previously proposed to their colleagues.

The choice of participants was primarily related to the disciplines they teach and secondarily, the participants' ethnicity. Considering that this research intended to examine teachers' critical consciousness of dominant discourses in popular culture, and often times such discourses oppress people of color, I believed that racially diverse individuals whose teaching subjects are related to culture would bring enlightening contributions to this project. In this manner, this study brings the perspectives of

Marcos, Lucy, Maria and Sylvia who classify themselves as Afro-Brazilian teachers, and Ana and Yvonne who identify themselves as whites.

3.1.4 First week: Assuming the role of participant observer

As a participant observer, I interacted with students and teachers whenever appropriate. Nevertheless, in the first two days attending classes I spend most of the time only observing and taking notes once in a while so that neither teachers nor students would feel uncomfortable with my presence. Particularly in the classroom context, I was interested in grasping meaning from teachers` and students` perspectives, relations of power, and dominant discourses embedded in daily interactions.

After two days, my participation became more intense as interacted more with teachers and also students who were curious about the fact I was living in the U.S. Students would often ask me questions about the American culture and lifestyle and I would take the opportunity to ask them about their cultural preferences. Some of them, especially girls, were interested in reading novels, and both boys and girls seemed to be very interested in movies and music, samba, *pagode* - a variation of samba, and funk. This last type of genre, although derived from American black music, gained particular characteristics in Brazil due to the fact that it was popularized by blacks residing in favelas or slums. Besides collecting as much information as possible in the classroom, I would also spend time in the teachers` room where took notes of significant remarks or complaints teachers made.

Spending time in the teachers` room was a good opportunity for me to interact with the school principle who provided me with a copy the CONAE or National Educational Conference guidelines (Fernandes, 2010), which is a document that consists of federal government`s suggestions for reformulating some aspects of the Brazilian public education. It is important to point out that, although the base part of this document was elaborated by the federal government, it was sent to schools so that teachers and community members could include their own suggestions or critique. After teachers from

all over the country have given their contributions to the elaboration of the document, there will be a four-day conference in Brasilia, capital of Brazil, where final decisions will be made.

During the first week of fieldwork, I also asked the teachers to answer the self-completion questionnaire containing questions about the teachers' academic formation, teaching experience and their evaluation of school administration and pedagogical advisors (see appendix A). Some of the teachers took the questionnaire to answer at home whereas some others did it after their classes. Although the questions asked were simple and straightforward as Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggest, I noticed that the teachers who took the questionnaire to their home gave more complete and informative responses than the others who did it in the school.

3.1.5 Second week: Interviews and closing

The interviews took place by the end of the two-week class observations. As previously arranged with each teacher, the one-hour interviews were conducted in the school library, which unfortunately was a place where only teachers and school staff had access to. Thus, although the library had a good supply of books, students could only use them with the permission of the school administration.

The interviews were divided into four sets of questions (see appendix B for semi-structured interview sheet). The first set intended to examine teachers' perception and use of popular culture. The second aimed to investigate teachers' critical consciousness of dominant discourses and stereotypes derived from them in samba lyrics. For this purpose, teachers received two samba lyrics containing dominant discourses such as the view of colonization as positive because it contributed not only to the miscegenation among whites, blacks and indigenous people, but also to the formation of the Brazilian culture. From this perspective, both samba lyrics used in the interviews express a positive appraisal of white colonizers, who are depicted as adventurous explorers, and even a certain level of gratitude to Europeans because if it were not for them, Brazil would not have become a racial and cultural diverse

country. In addition to that, the lyrics contained stereotypes such as the portrayal of blacks as passive to domination (samba No 1 and samba No 2), limitation of blacks` contribution to art, culture and samba (samba No 2), as well as exoticization of mulatas or interracial women (samba No 2). (See appendix C and D for samba lyrics, and appendix E for samba coding).

In this phase of the interview, teachers were given some time to analyze the song lyrics. I told the teachers to pay particular attention to the way each race is depicted in the samba lyrics. Then, I asked the following questions:

1-If you chose to use this samba lyrics as a teaching tool, what would you discuss with your students in relation to the way each race is depicted in this lyrics?

2-This samba lyrics highlights the process of miscegenation in the formation of Brazil. What would you have to say to your students in relation to miscegenation in the current Brazilian society?

At this point, my aim was to find out if teachers would be able to critically examine the samba lyrics so as to identify dominant stereotypes embedded in them, and also make a critical comparison between the lyrics and the Brazilian society in order to unveil dominant discourses that support the perpetuation of racism. As the lyrics exalted miscegenation in a romanticized manner, the ideology conveyed is exactly the one of racial democracy. Therefore, I was interested in knowing if teachers would be critical about the relationship among the three races as portrayed in the lyrics and bring up the issue of racism in Brazil.

The third set of questions in the interview directly addressed racial discrimination. My aim was to examine teachers` critical consciousness of racial oppression in the Brazilian society. In this section, teachers were asked to answer questions about how racism shapes people`s lives, the contrast between social and racial discrimination, and the difference between the way racism is configured in Brazil and the U.S. Finally, the fourth set of questions were intended to find out if teachers apply critical pedagogy

in class to discuss polemic issues such as racism and to deconstruct dominant discourses conveyed through the media.

The interviews with the six teachers were recorded using a digital audio device and fully transcribed. To facilitate analysis and interpretation under the critical theory framework, coding categories were developed following the procedures recommended by Bogdan and Biklen (1992). As I carefully read the interviews several times, I found patterns and topics the data covered. I then turned these patterns and topics into words and phrases which became my coding categories. Finally, the comparison of data collected through questionnaires, classroom observation notes, documents and photographs led to the results.

Chapter 4: Analysis

4.1 Teachers' perception and use of popular culture

In the first part of the interview, which aimed to identify what teachers think about popular culture and whether they use it in class or not, 5 participants, Lucy, Maria, Yvonne, Marcos, and Sylvia, reported either using or being willing to use popular culture, including samba, with the purpose of motivating students or because it is part of the students' world. As Lucy states:

I use popular culture as motivation (...) In general music is the type of popular culture I usually use in my classes because I think students like it. I think that children, adolescents, and adults like music. I can't say that I use it all the time because there isn't much time to do it, but I have used music in my classes.

Although Lucy does not use popular culture in class very often due to lack of time, she seems to use it only for motivation. Maria has the same opinion and she also complains about not having much time to use popular culture in class:

Popular culture motivates students because it is part of their daily lives. Then, whenever possible, I try to use popular culture in my class before teaching something new to them. I believe it will motivate and facilitate their learning because they will be able to associate the culture they already have to the new content. The problem is the lack of time to do these activities.

Lucy and Maria do not see popular culture as an inherent component of the class, thus they use it whenever they have time. For Scholle and Denski (1993) teachers should see popular culture as a teaching approach to critical pedagogy, therefore it should be deemed an essential part of the curriculum. Participant Ana seems to be aware of that. The teacher stresses that she uses popular culture very often in her classes because it facilitates students' learning and helps them develop critical thinking. Ana provides an example of classroom activity in which she used a popular song as an approach to teach a poem that was difficult to interpret:

There was a poem by Camões in the textbook we use to teach in the municipal school. I thought: these children don't even know how to read properly, then they cannot interpret

complex texts. What am I gonna do about it? This is complicated for them. How will they understand? Then, I used a song by Renato Russo *Amor Sublime*, which is basically the whole poem sung. I played the song, and the students sang along and enjoyed it. After that it was easy to teach.

Ana was able to successfully teach the poem by using a popular song students were familiar with as a teaching approach. It is important to observe that, even though Ana knew that her students had basic reading skills, she searched for an alternative to overcome the problem instead of opting for an easier solution such as substituting the classic poem for a simpler one. As a critical teacher who is aware that students need to be exposed to all levels of literature, she searched for a strategy to bridge the knowledge students already have and the formal knowledge students need to have in order to succeed in life.

Considering samba specifically, Lucy, Yvonne and Sylvia reported having used it in a class as part of the first project Hope school teachers developed in commemoration of the Afro-Brazilian History week. Lucy describes the project:

The project was about African culture, so we used the lyrics from Grande Rio samba school, which is the samba school that represents our city. The lyrics is cool because it is about the foundation of our city by people from other regions of Brazil such as the Northeast, blacks, and whites. There is a reference to Joãozinho da Golméia, an Afro-Brazilian who was known as “the king of candomblé” here in our city. We did research about the people referred to in the song, and to close the project, we made a flag of the samba group and the students brought carnival costumes to wear and dance to samba songs. It was really cool.

The focus of the project developed by History and Language and Arts teachers (except for Ana who was absent from work due to health problems) was to value blacks` contribution to the foundation of the city of Duque de Caxias, in the state of Rio de Janeiro. As I analyzed the lyrics used in the project, I realized that it did not contain the ideologies and dominant discourses samba lyrics usually convey. In this sense, the teachers seemed to have done a very good job by using the lyrics of a song that associates black cultural contribution to the History of Duque de Caxias. On the other hand, it would also have been appropriate to analyze the participation of blacks in Brazil in the social and economic spheres with the

intent to bring issues of inequality and racism into discussion. Perhaps the teachers involved in the project did not encourage these discussions because they are not used to apply critical pedagogy in their classes.

4.2 Teachers' critical consciousness of dominant discourses in popular culture

In the second part of the interview my aim was to examine teachers' critical consciousness of stereotypes related to people of color and ideologies conveyed by samba lyrics. Although teachers were explicitly asked to analyze the way different ethnic groups are portrayed in the songs, only Ana proved to be very critical of oppressive discourses embedded in samba lyrics. She pointed out that the Portuguese colonizer, differently from how the samba lyrics depict, were cruel exploiters who viewed to impose their culture as a way to dominate people of color. From Ana's point of view:

The white man arrived here and tried to impose his language, culture and religion. That is how many indigenous dialects were lost. It is that old story: if I want to dominate, I will start by imposing my language because the people will lose their identity (...) you can see that in Brazilian literature. In *O Guarani*, the Indian Peri embodies the European culture. He behaves like a medieval knight.

Although Ana highlights the role of colonizers as oppressors who viewed to dominate people of color's bodies and minds, she understands that the colonized were not passive to whites' exploitation. While analyzing the samba lyrics, Ana argued that the view of blacks as passive to slavery is wrong and students need to know that:

My co-workers and I were discussing if we should show the movie *Amistad* to our students. Some teachers were against showing the movie because they think it is too violent. I told them I think we should show it because it is the reality and some students don't know about it. The movie is very realistic because it shows how blacks suffered from being separated from their families, put into a dirty slave ship, and brought to the American continent. But the movie also shows that blacks were not passive to the cruelty of whites. They fought for freedom.

Ana's statement reveals that she is conscious of viewing historical facts from another the oppressed perspective. However, she also knows that exposing students to "one single story" helps to reinforce

stereotypes (Adichie, 2009). Thus Ana proposes reviewing history in a realistic yet empowering way by exposing students to enslaved people's resistance to the cruel domination of whites.

As for the other five participants, they did not make any reference to the passivity of blacks to white domination in the samba lyrics. On the contrary, one teacher, Marcos, even reinforced the wrong idea of the passivity of blacks by stating: "The European dominated this country for quite some time. This domination only came to an end when Princess Isabel abolished slavery here in our country. Thanks God!" This statement indicates that, even though Marcos sees the white colonizers as exploiters rather than adventurous explorers as portrayed in one of the samba lyrics, he did not take into account that the abolishment of slavery in Brazil is related to external and internal pressures. As slavery had already been abolished in other parts of the world, abolitionists from other countries and also from Brazil were pressuring Brazilian authorities to put an end to slavery. In addition to that, the increasing number of successful escapes among blacks was a problem that must be acknowledged ("A decadência da escravidão"). Therefore, Marcos's attribution of abolishment solely to a white woman's decision is naïve, and even implies some gratitude for her good deed.

If the gratitude for whites is subtly implicit in Marcos's statement, another teacher made her appreciation for whites very clear. The following excerpt from Lucy's interview illustrates this point:

Usually, when I teach History in primary school, I make one thing very clear: when the Portuguese arrived here, the Indians already inhabited this land. Then, we cannot deny that this merit is theirs [the Indians']. However we need to recognize that, if the Portuguese hadn't arrived here, despite all their cruelty, we would be living on this land eternally unknown to the other people in the world. Portugal discovered Brazil and shared this knowledge with the rest of the world. We need to be thankful for that (...) People don't value that [the discovery of Brazil by the Portuguese]. They say: "The Indians were the ones who discovered Brazil. The Portuguese came here because of their greed". They did come here because of their greed, and there were some bad consequences of it, but we cannot forget that if they hadn't arrived here, we would be here... actually we wouldn't even exist and Brazil would be inhabited by Indians only. Maybe another nation would have found us and done the same things the Portuguese did, because there is no victory without bloodshed (...)

Lucy's statement not only demonstrates a lack of critical view on the process of colonization, but also shows that she sees historical events from the white male colonizer perspective. For Lucy, all the suffering imposed upon people of color was a necessary evil because if it had not happened, Brazil would be an "uncivilized" country inhabited by indigenous people. The teacher's point of view is in accordance with the first samba lyrics which presents the suffering of the colonized as "worth it". According to the lyrics, "the tears that were shed", or colonization itself, were necessary for the economical growth of the country and its racial composition. It is important to point out that this gratitude for the colonizers stems from Gilberto Freyre's (1987) work *The masters and he Slave*, in which the Portuguese are praised for being able to develop the Brazilian economy despite the difficulty of having to adapt themselves to the tropical climate of the country.

With respect of the image of the mulata in samba lyrics, Ana was once again the only participant who noticed the stereotypical portrayal of people of color. In Ana's own words:

The lyrics says that "The samba didn't come from there [Portugal], but the miscegenation originated our sensual mulata..." This is something serious, isn't it? Unfortunately, Brazil is known all over the world as "the country of the mulatas, samba, and soccer". Poor mulata! The idea conveyed is that she has no intelligence. She is only "a body". She is totally sexualized. I think that the composer of the song was not conscious of this sexual connotation, but we perceive it. Is it the only thing Brazil has to show in relation to the black culture? Don't we have anything more relevant to show?

Ana's words demonstrate that she is aware of different issues concerning the image of the mulata. The teacher understands that samba lyrics exoticize black women, turning them into commodities. Black women, as Goldstein (1999) explains, become a sexual object, only a sensual "body" that is being advertised all over the world to attract tourists. In this sense, exoticization and commodification are not only an offense to black women but also, maybe more indirectly, to all black people because even though the black culture is very rich, it is not deeply known and appreciated by Brazilians. Ana also points out that samba lyrics composers are not aware of all these issues surrounding the image of the mulata, and she seems to be right about it. For McCann (2004) some dominant discourses were

purposely turned into an element of Brazil's identity in order to boost Brazilian's self-esteem. For this reason, most Brazilians, including some people of color, are oblivious of the messages implicit in such discourses and thus, they take pride in them. Perhaps, this historical fact explains why the other five participants did not make any comment on the image of mulata in the samba either.

As a whole, the second part of the interviews suggests that teachers, except for Ana, are not prepared to use popular culture in their classroom for deconstructing dominant discourses for two main reasons: first, teachers themselves were not able to identify certain oppressive discourses and in the songs; and second, teachers' biased views of historical events, which may be a product of the education they received, reinforces dominant discourses. Nonetheless, teachers' uncritical analysis of popular songs cannot be interpreted as total unawareness of social and racial issues in the Brazilian society. The third part of the interviews provides evidence to prove this assertion.

4.3 Teachers' critical consciousness of racial oppression in Brazil

In the third part of the interview which intended to examine teachers' critical consciousness of racial oppression in the Brazilian society, data collected reveal that all of them are aware that a covert type of racism exists in Brazil. For Marcos: "Even though Brazil is a very miscegenated country, there is the mixture of blacks, Indians and Europeans, the issue of racism, which is masked, still exists. So, it is not something that we can immediately notice, but it is masked." Marcos' response demonstrates an understanding that interracial marriages cannot be interpreted as absence of racism in Brazil (Goldstein, 1999; Souza, 2000).

Maria also recognizes that racism in Brazil is veiled. She argues that: "Racism in Brazil is not blatant. It is not something that you see all the time and everywhere, however, there is always something happening in relation to racism. In our society, racism is subtle, therefore difficult to notice, but it exists." Maria emphasizes the difficulty in identifying racism in Brazil because it is subtle. For Bonilla-

Silva, Lewis and Embrick, (2004) this is a characteristic of color-blind racist societies, which discriminates people of color with a “smiling face”. In other words, in order to avoid racial tensions, color-blind racist societies use particular strategies to hide racism. Participant Ana is also conscious of that. In her opinion: “Brazil is a racist country. People try to hide it by saying that such thing does not exist in Brazil, but it does.” Thus, participants’ classification of racism as “masked” and “hidden” suggests awareness of the color-blind ideology that regulates Brazilian society (Bonilla-Silva, Lewis, & Embrick, 2004; Leonardo, 2009). Nevertheless, when inquired about how racism is manifested in people’s daily lives, most teachers, even the black ones, could only provide either very explicit, or overly repeated evidences of racial discrimination. Lucy, for example, told me a story she had seen on TV about a violent act against a black man. According to her:

There was this black guy who went shopping with his white wife. He parked his BMW in front of the store and went inside the store with his wife. As he realized he had forgotten his wallet in the car, he went back to pick it up. At that moment, two security guards approached him and beat him really bad. Because the guy was black, the security guards assumed he was trying to steal the car. The guy said: ‘This car is mine’, but no one would listen to him and the two men continued beating him. I almost cried when I saw that on TV. Just because he is black he is not allowed to have a nice car? What is this? His wife and son cried a lot and I felt really bad.

While Lucy told a story of explicit and violent act of racism, Yvonne, Marcos, Maria, and Sylvia used widely known discourses to exemplify the configuration of racism in the Brazilian society. All the examples those teachers provided reflects the view of blacks as criminals. According to Yvonne:

We always see racism in the bank. You go in and if there is a black person behind you, do you know what happens? The revolving door locks. Sometimes the person doesn’t have anything in particular that caused the door to lock, but the security guard comes, makes the person take off the sweater. It is common to see that.

Marcos also provides a very common example of racial discrimination: “Often times when the police are searching for a criminal, they go to the streets to stop and interrogate black people.” It is important to point out that, although the excerpts above focus on Brazilian authorities’ view of blacks, the perception of blacks as criminals is shared by many other Brazilians. Three participants, Marcos, Maria, and Sylvia

cited a famous Brazilian “joke” that corroborates this assertion. The sentence “If you see a white person running, he or she is an athlete. If you see a black person running, he or she is a thief” is a widely known “joke” that people repeat and laugh at, regardless of how offensive it is. Often times, even people of color contribute to reinforce the negative view of themselves. This was the case of Graça, the main research participant in Goldstein (1999) ethnographic research in Rio de Janeiro. Despite the fact that Graça was Afro-Brazilian, she referred to black people as “monkeys” in one of her “jokes”.

Regarding discourses that subjugate people of color, Ana seems to be aware of the need to deconstruct them. The participant told me about a project concerning black culture which aimed to raise students’ consciousness of racial discrimination in Brazil. The project took place in the municipal school where she works and it was organized by an Afro-Brazilian teacher, Rodrigo. Ana describes one of the activities within the project:

In one of the activities, the teacher [Rodrigo] and the students built an exhibition of derogatory words for black people. Students found about 200 words! The teacher named the exhibition “what is so funny about it?” His intention was to show people that there is nothing funny about discrimination. If you use these words to refer to a black person, you are actually hurting his or her feelings.

This activity within a major project mentioned by Ana can be very beneficial for students because it helps to develop students’ critical thinking in relation some of the ways racism is manifested in Brazil. Students need to understand that the use of derogatory words and offensive “jokes” perpetuates the negative view of blacks which reinforces racial discrimination. In addition to that, students need to know that discourses may have a particular impact on each black person. As Tatum (1997) points out, black people may internalize the negative image of themselves. This seems to have happened to Graça, the main participant in Goldstein’s (1999) research. In fact, in her six-month experience living in a favela in Rio de Janeiro, Goldstein noticed that discourses such as “he is black *but* he is a nice person” was repeated by people of all skin colors. When a black person makes this type of statement, he or she is suggesting that being black and a good person is a rare exception.

As a Brazilian person, I have also heard these expressions even among people of color. On my recent trip I visited an old lady, Ms. Fatima, who has been my family`s friend since my teenage years. When I arrived at her house she told me she had just finished washing the whole kitchen floor. Ms. Fatima turned to me and said: “See, I am black but I am clean” and she laughed at her own statement. This is a true example of what Tatum (1997) calls internalized oppression. Ms. Fatima might have heard discriminatory statements such as “blacks are not clean” and she started believing it is true. Then, she seemed to be proud of being an exception to the rule. She is black *but* clean.

4.3.1 Racial versus social discrimination

Although the analysis of teachers` responses reveals that all of them agree that veiled racism exists in Brazil, opinions diverged when they were asked if racial discrimination is greater than social discrimination. Neither Yvonne nor Ana could tell me which of the two types of discrimination may have a heavier impact on a one`s life. Yvonne argues that: “Discrimination happens all the time. If you are white but wear simple clothes, you are discriminated in certain places. If you are black, you are discriminated because of the color of your skin. So if you are poor and black you face more discrimination.” Ana shares the same opinion: “I can`t say exactly if racial discrimination is greater than social discrimination, but one thing is true: if a person is poor and black, he or she suffers a lot.” Thus, Yvonne and Ana agree that poor black people in Brazil are very discriminated because they carry both social and racial stigma.

On the other hand, Marcos and Lucy believe that people are more discriminated in relation to their social status. Marcos states that: “People who have money are seen differently. Because of the money, the color of their skin is ignored and they start to be seen as ‘people who have money’. They are seen as a whites or Europeans. Society forgets they are black.” Lucy concurs with Marcos` statement: “In the Brazilian society, a poor black person is seen in a certain way, but a rich black person is seen

differently. A black person who is a doctor or an actor, for example, is more respected. So, I think that racial discrimination exists, but the social factor counts more.” In this way, both Marcos and Lucy seem to agree with the famous Brazilian expression “money whitens” (Goldstein, 1999).

In opposition to Marcos and Lucy, two other participants, Maria and Sylvia, believe that racial discrimination is greater. Nevertheless, for Maria racial discrimination is more blatant among affluent groups: “If the person is black, his or her socioeconomic status does not matter. There will always be discrimination against the person. What draws people’s attention is the color of one’s skin, his or her race.” As an Afro-Brazilian teacher, Maria perceives race as a greater source of discrimination than the social factor.

Sylvia also believes that Brazilians discriminate more due to skin color: “I think racial discrimination is greater. There are laws against it, but I don’t think they have been used. The law is created, but it is kept somewhere. Once in a while we hear about a case in which the law was used; however, people do not take the law very seriously.” In her statement, Sylvia, an Afro-Brazilian teacher, raises concerns about the inefficiency of the Brazilian law against racism and she seems to have reasons for that. In an article published in *Folha de São Paulo*, one of the most respected newspapers in Brazil, journalist Iuri Dantas (2001) uses data from the United Nation’s third conference against racism to bring the inefficiency of the law into discussion. According to Dantas, despite the fact that the law against racism was created in 1989, by the year 2001 there were only 142 racial discrimination lawsuits being brought against people who discriminate by race. Judge Flavio Dino de Castro, president of the Federal Judge Association in Brazil, believes that this small number of lawsuits is related to the racial democracy myth. For the Castro, most judges’ decisions are still influenced by the misguided idea that Brazilians only discriminate by social status (as cited in Dantas, 2001).

4.3.2 Teachers' thoughts on Brazilians' consciousness about racism

In this part of the interview I was interested in knowing whether participants believed that the Brazilian people are conscious of race issues in the country or not. In this respect, most teachers maintain that Brazilians are aware of racism in the country. For Yvonne, more discussions about racial discrimination have helped to raise Brazilians' awareness of the topic: "People know about racism. They read newspapers, watch TV, listen to the radio... Nowadays racism has been more discussed in the media, so Brazilians know about it. However, there are Brazilians who choose not to acknowledge the existence of racism." Yvonne seems to be right about the contribution of the media to racial discussions. Nevertheless as Thomas Skidmore (2003) points out such discussions only started gaining serious attention in the Brazilian society in the mid-nineties, when Brazilian sociologist and former President Fernando Henrique Cardoso officially recognized the existence of racism in the country. Similarly to Yvonne, Sylvia also thinks that Brazilians are aware of racism. The teacher argues that:

Both whites and blacks are aware that racism exists in Brazil because of the law, but people keep on discriminating others because they know that nothing will happen. And people who suffer discrimination do not report because they are afraid or they know that the law doesn't work. Then, people choose not to do anything about racism. They prefer to let it go.

Although Sylvia believes that the creation of the law helped raising people's awareness of the existence of racism in the country, she once more expresses a distrustful view of Brazilian regulations. In reality, the law against racial discrimination by itself cannot change people's misconceptions about blacks. However, enforcement of the law could at least be a solution to avoid the so-called jokes and derogatory references that are essentially racist and highly offensive. According to Dantas (2001), since the year 1997 the use of derogatory words such as "monkey" to refer to people of color has been considered crime, however, as a participant observer at Hope school I heard black students referring to their black classmates as "monkeys" several times. This event leads to two hypotheses: either students lack

consciousness of what is considered racial discrimination, or maybe Sylvia is right about Brazilians being indifferent to the law against racism. The participant Lucy supports the first hypothesis.

In Lucy's opinion, mean jokes and derogative words to refer to people of color are so often reproduced in the Brazilian society that people do not even realize how offensive they are. As an Afro-Brazilian she told me how much she had suffered for being target of mean jokes in school. The participant shared a personal account to support the idea that even people of color lack awareness of racism in Brazil:

I think that most Brazilians are not conscious of racism, because once in a while someone cracks a sarcastic joke and people don't realize. Yesterday, the lady who cleans my house, my mom and I were talking. The lady was telling me that her son is rebellious because when his father and him go shopping together, people think they don't have money to pay because they usually wear flip-flops and also for them being black. Then I said: 'I have gone similar situations. I have suffered a lot from discrimination'. Then, my mom surprised me with her question: 'What type of discrimination did you face?' Then, I asked her: 'Have you forgotten already? Have you forgotten all those racist jokes people used to make at school?' Before I told her that, she hadn't perceived those jokes as discrimination. She surprised me... but after I told her, she started remembering everything. The truth is that racism does not affect everybody in the same way. Then, many people who do not realize it end up thinking that there is not racism in Brazil.

In Lucy's account, her mother who is black, was not very critical of racial issues in Brazil. Perhaps, because most Brazilians have internalized the color-blind ideology (Leonardo, 2009) they may not directly associate derogatory expressions and jokes to racism. As a result, offensive discourses are naturally reproduced even by people of color. Participant Ana provides more evidence to support this idea:

One guy who lives in my condominium always refers to our black neighbor as *neguinha* [little black]. He does it so naturally. He does not see it as discrimination because, for him, she is in fact *neguinha*. I think that everybody should be aware that this type of thing is discrimination, and discrimination is a crime. However, discrimination has become so natural for some people that they don't even realize what they are doing. What I find strange is that even black students call their classmates *neguinho*. This is something I don't understand and I have already talked to my students about it. I don't understand how people so naturally discriminate others. As I see it, Brazilians are not very conscious of racism...

Ana's draws attention to the fact that the law against racism does not help much in a context where people are not aware of the different ways racism is configured. For the participant, some types of racial discrimination are so enrooted in the Brazilian society that they are seen as natural. Goldstein (1999) corroborates Ana's point. In her six-month experience living in a favela in Rio de Janeiro, Goldstein noticed that people of all skin colors would use expressions such as *aquele escurinho* or *aquele neguinho* (that little dark one or that little black one) to refer to others. Besides, Goldstein noticed that the research participants of different racial backgrounds usually associated blackness with negative characteristics such as being a bad character or being ugly.

In sum, although most teachers (Yvonne, Sylvia, Marcos and Maria) believe that Brazilians are aware of racial discrimination, evidence suggests that people are only conscious of more blatant types of discrimination, which are more discussed in the media. Conversely, more subtle sorts of discrimination such as the "jokes" and derogatory expressions I heard from Hope students and other Brazilians seem to go unnoticed, and therefore they remain unchallenged.

4.3.3 Views on affirmative action

To close the third part of the interview, I asked teachers if they are for or against affirmative action such as the university quota system for blacks, implemented in Brazilian public universities after President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, former Brazilian president, acknowledged the issue of racism in Brazil (Skidmore, 2003). Data revealed that most teachers are against affirmative action for different reasons. Maria provides a personal account to justify her opposition to that:

You see, many people don't agree with me when I tell them I am against affirmative action. I studied in a public university and when I was admitted, the quota system hadn't been created yet. But thanks God, I managed to graduate and later on I got a post-graduate degree from the same university. In my opinion, many people nowadays are being admitted to public universities through the quota system and it may cause discrimination because your classmates may think: 'Ah, he was admitted through the quota system.' I think that everybody has the same intellectual capacity because I was admitted to a public university after having studied in public elementary and high schools

(...) Then I proved that a black person who has always studied in public schools is able to enter a good university. I proved that I don't need extra help to get into a public university. Everybody is able to accomplish that. People just need to make an effort.

Maria used her personal story to make generalizations. She believes that if she managed to enter a public university despite being black and poor, then everybody can do it. However, in her statement, Maria does not take into account that she majored in Latin and Portuguese languages, which is not a competitive undergraduate program in Brazil. Maria also raises the issue of reverse discrimination to justify her opposition to the quota system. Lucy corroborates with Maria in this respect: "I am against the university quota system. In my opinion it is a way to say that blacks are not competent. Besides, the university quota system may cause problems with whites..." For both Maria and Lucy, affirmative action underestimates blacks' capacity of succeeding on their own, and they also believe it is a type of reverse discrimination. Reverse discrimination is part of a major story line Bonilla-Silva, Lewis and Embrick (2004) call "The past is the past" and it is commonly used by whites to justify their opposition to affirmative action. People who rely on this story line claim that past events have no relevance nowadays and, therefore, everybody should be treated equally. Even though reverse discrimination is part of whites' discourse, Afro-Brazilian teachers Maria and Lucy seem to have internalized it.

In the discussion about affirmative action, the participant Ana also condemned the implementation of quota systems in public universities. However, the teacher provides more consistent argument to justify her point of view. Her argument goes as follows:

On one hand, I think that the university quota system is cool because we need to give opportunity to blacks and Indians, but on the other hand it is also hard for a poor white person who has always studied in public schools to get accepted into a good university. Then, I think that the most important thing to do is to give children quality education since the first school years. Public elementary and fundamental education should have the same quality as public college education. I have a 6th grade student who still cannot read. What is gonna happen if he enters university because of the quota system? He might make an effort to succeed, but he won't. Besides, poor students need to work too, so they will not have as much time to study as their classmates while in college.

Ana's argument against the university quota system is plausible if one considers the disparity in quality between the public fundamental education and the public higher education in Brazil. While the first

suffers the consequences of low budgets for resources and low-paid demotivated teachers, the latter are recognized as the best universities in Brazil which leads thousands of students to fight over a spot each year. Unfortunately, most of the times, the students who are accepted to public universities are the ones whose parents could afford paying for the best fundamental schools. Thus, poor students regardless of their skin color are not given a chance to get out of the poverty cycle.

While most of the teachers were against affirmative action for the reasons discussed previously, Marcos was the only participant who had a favorable opinion on the issue. Nevertheless, he does not seem to understand the meaning behind the quota system policy. He goes on to say that:

Nowadays, in the 21st century, our authorities started to pay more attention to people of color. Nowadays we have more opportunities. The university quota system gives opportunities to blacks and Indians. I think that it [the quota system] is a type of gift our authorities are giving to the people who worked hard but were never recognized throughout history.

In Marcos' understanding, affirmative action is a "gift" for people of color rather than restitution for years of slavery and discrimination. By viewing affirmative action as a "gift" from dominant groups Marcos once more suggests the idea that people of color should be grateful for whites' kindness. As the teacher does not recognize activist groups' effort for the implementation of the university quota system, he once again implies the passivity of blacks in the Brazilian society.

The fact that Marcos was the only participant teacher that supported affirmative action is not surprising because, as Skidmore (2003) explains, Brazilians do not feel as guilty for the history of slavery as white Americans do. As the myths of mild colonization and racial democracy were fully embraced by Brazilians for decades, conversations about race were stifled. As a result, many Brazilians currently do not see the purpose of affirmative action. In addition to historical facts, Skidmore points out another reason to explain Brazilians' resistance to affirmative action. The scholar argues that, while in the U.S one's race is determined by the "one drop rule", Brazilians usually define one's race by the color of his or her skin. Considering that identifying race by skin tone can be very controversial, the Brazilian

government in the 1990`s decided to adopt the “one drop rule” to determine which students could be included in the quota system, however, this idea fomented criticism by intellectuals (Skidmore, 2003).

In face of this predicament, Brazilians are divided about maintaining or eliminating the quota system. According to a BBC article published by Gary Duffy (2009), Brazilian researcher Simon Schwartzman is against the quota system not only because racial identity is difficult to define but also because Brazilians do not want to be forced to choose a racial classification. In fact, Goldstein (1999) found different terms Brazilians use to refer to one`s racial identity. Some of the terms include *preto/negro* (black), *moreno/mulato* (brown or mixed), *escuro* (dark), *claro* (light), and *sarará* (freckled). The variety of expressions found by Goldstein may confirm Simon Schwartzman`s assumption that Brazilians dislike specific racial categorizations. The questions that remains unanswered is why Brazilians seem to oppose racial identification. Perhaps this fact can be ascribed to the color-blind ideology that still misleads great part of the country`s population.

4.4 Use of critical pedagogy

In the fourth and final part of the interview I wanted to find out if teachers apply critical pedagogy in their class. Considering critical media literacy specifically, all teachers acknowledge the importance of developing students` critical thinking by discussing what is in the media, however, only Lucy, Maria and Ana claim to do this type of activity in class. Lucy admits that she does not have enough classroom time to use for “extra activities”, thus she does not use critical media literacy very often. Maria also complains about the lack of time to do “extra activities”, however, she reported having used propagandas as critical literacy tools: “I have used propagandas in my class. We analyzed the meaning behind them. Students enjoyed it, and I think it is interesting because students become more critical of what they see or hear.” While Lucy and Maria consider critical media literacy as “extra activities” teachers should propose when they have extra time, Ana reported using it very often. The

teacher told me that she asks students to critically analyze texts, music lyrics, films and propagandas. To exemplify her use of critical pedagogy in class, Ana mentioned an activity she proposed to her students in the municipal school where she works. As Ana was taking part in a school project to celebrate the Afro-Brazilian History and Culture in 2008, she proposed a critical analysis of the poem *Slave Ship* by Brazilian abolitionist poet Castro Alves. Ana describes how she carried out the activity and what she learned from it:

We analyzed the poem in class because I wanted them to understand what a slave ship was. I wanted them to know what happened on the ship. I wanted them to analyze it critically, you know? Then, I realized that students don't know our own History. Most of them got really angry. I remember when student saying: 'These whites were sons of a ...' Students were extremely angry because most of them are black.

This passage shows that the critical analysis of *Slave Ship* was enlightening for both students and the teacher. While the first were able to see slavery from the eyes of the oppressed, the latter was surprised to find out how little Brazilians know about their own history. For Gomes (2008) people's limited knowledge about the subjugation of people of color is a result of the racial democracy discourse that has been nationally and internationally disseminated. Since the 1930's, dominant groups have been concerned about promoting the image of Brazil as a racially harmonious country, and the process of miscegenation is largely accepted as a proof of absence of racism (McCann, 2004). In this context, History is learned in a superficial, and often times biased manner so as to avoid racial tension (Gomes, 2008). Thus, Ana's class provoked students anger because it was probably the first time students examined slavery from the perspective of the enslaved people.

Besides the critical analysis of the poem, Ana told me that she intended to show the movie *Amistad* to her students as part of the Afro-Brazilian project. However, she reveals that some teachers opposed to the idea of exhibiting the movie which they deemed too violent:

My co-workers and I were discussing if we should show the movie *Amistad* to our students. Some teachers were against showing the movie because they think it is too violent. I told them I think we should show it because it is the reality and some students don't know about it. The movie is very realistic because it shows how blacks suffered

from being separated from their families, put into a dirty slave ship, and brought to the American continent. But the movie also shows how Africans resisted until they end. They fought for freedom.

The previous passage reveals that Ana's had two purposes of exhibiting the movie to her students. The first one was to raise students' awareness to how dehumanizing the process of slavery was; the second was to help students understand that African descendants were not passive to white domination. In fact, it is necessary that teachers provide students with empowering examples of black resistance and Ana seemed to be very conscious of it. She acknowledged the efforts of her co-worker Rodrigo who organized the project, investing much of his time doing research about African slaves who encouraged collective acts of resistance. According to the participant, the task was strenuous because more detailed information about African History can only be found in specialized libraries. Ana believes that Rodrigo's effort was worth it because students got to know other icons of African resistance besides the well-known rebellious leader Zumbi.

Ana talked about the project with excitement and showed me some pictures of it she still had in her cell phone. She told me she actively participated in it and that she felt happy for doing so. Nevertheless, Ana expressed disappointment in most of her co-workers who did not support the project at all. According to the participant, on the closing date for the project, Rodrigo invited his friends, immigrants from Congo, to give a talk at the school and play some traditional songs from his country. Although all the activities were carefully planned, and students and teachers were invited in advance, only few people went to school on that Saturday. Ana expresses her disappointment:

Do you know how many people showed up on the closing date for the project? Just a handful. These people here [she shows me a photograph on her cell phone] are from the Republic of Congo. They gave a talk and sang traditional songs for us. It was very emotional, but I felt sorry for Rodrigo. Only few people helped him. I think that if he put so much effort into this project, all teachers should help him somehow. I did some activities in class with my students. We analyzed the poem, and created a mural with the flags of African countries. It was beautiful. But I was upset because not even the History teacher engaged in the project.

Although Ana, just as the other participants interviewed for this research, believes that Brazilians value blacks' contribution to the foundation of the country, she argues that people are not very interested in African culture. For her, the municipal school teachers' indifference to the project is a clear evidence that Brazilians do not know much about the richness of African culture and History, and they are not interested in learning more about it either. As a consequence, most people are oblivious of certain forms of racial discrimination. Brazilian scholar Gomes (2008) also identifies the lack of knowledge about African culture and history as one of the reasons racial discrimination is so enrooted in the Brazilian society. For Gomes, as history is told from the white male colonizer perspective, stereotypes of blacks are reinforced and racism is perpetuated.

Given the consequences of superficial understanding of African traditions and history, Gomes (2008) acknowledges the enactment of the Law 9.394/96 by President Luíz Inácio Lula da Silva in response to the Brazilian Black Movement request. According to this law, African History and Culture should be included in school curricula nationwide. For Gomes, even though the enactment of the law in 2003 was a great step towards a deeper understanding of Africans' contribution to the Brazilian society, some teachers limit their classes to a mere celebration of African culture. The scholar argues that teachers need to aware that the importance of the law lies in the possibility of changing people's misconceptions of Africans descendants by engaging in debates and critical reflection. In this regard, it seems that the Afro-Brazilian project in which Ana participated in is a good example of how teachers should include African culture and history in their classrooms.

My last question to the teachers viewed to find out if they discussed polemic topics such as racism in their classrooms. Some teachers reported discussing polemic topics whenever it is necessary. Maria goes on to say that: "When I see some type of racism in the classroom, I try to talk to my students and show them that this kind of thing is wrong. I think teachers should do that in their classrooms." Similarly to Maria, Marcos, Lucy, and Sylvia also reported discussing polemic topics whenever they

find necessary to do so. On the other hand, Ana told me that she not only enjoys discussing polemic topics with students but she also thinks it is her responsibility as an educator. In her own words:

I always do that (discuss polemic issues) because I think that education is not limited to teaching grammatical concepts, for example. It is important to teach values as well. That's why I like to bring polemic issues into the classroom. But I know it is difficult to do that. Some girls here at Hope have had abortions and they think it is very natural. Then, I talked to them about it. I think it is not a matter of being in favor or against abortion. The point is that these girls are too young to have abortion and I know that some of them have had it more than once. They don't know they are damaging their bodies. Then I take advantage of being free to discuss any topic I want.

Ana's statement shows that she is fully conscious that her role as an educator includes bringing students' problems and concerns into the classroom. Nevertheless, the teacher points out that discussing these topics is not easy task. Participant Yvonne seems to agree with Ana in this respect. Yvonne told me that she has been avoiding polemic discussions in the class since she first started teaching at Hope. According to her, when she was teaching a class about cultural syncretism in Brazil, a parent went to complain about it. The parent was extremely angry for assuming that Yvonne was teaching candomblé (African religion) to students. The teacher said that the more she tried to explain the objective of the class, the angrier the parent became. In her own words:

I was totally misinterpreted. The parent came here and made a big deal out of nothing. He thought I would teach about candomblé, and I tried to explain but he wouldn't understand. Since then I stopped discussing any polemic issues in class. It was my first year in this school when all this happened and it was scary. I simply eliminated any type of polemic topic from my curriculum.

This episode demonstrates that some Brazilians refuse to understand elements of the African culture, and this attitude leads to stereotypes and discrimination. Taking into account that the lack of substantial knowledge about a people and their culture perpetuates oppressive discourses, it is paramount that Brazilians develop a better understanding of the African culture. In addition to that, teachers should receive proper training on how to apply critical pedagogy in their classes. The participant teachers of this research, for example, revealed that they did not have any course specifically related to the use of critical analysis in college. Teachers also complained that the State Department of Education does not

offer as many seminars and workshops for teachers as the Municipal Department of Education does. According to Yvonne, “The State Department does not offer a great variety of seminars and workshops for us. I have a friend who works in a Municipal school and she told me about the courses she has taken. I wish we had the chance to take more courses to improve our practice.”

Some teachers also complained that the school where they work does not offer any activity that could enhance their practice. Sylvia, who has been working at Hope for fifteen years, claims that the school has never offered workshops or seminars. It seems that lack of proper training is a problem among educators in Brazil. As the findings of this research suggest, most teachers, except for Ana, lack the critical skills that would enable them to use critical pedagogy more often and more effectively in their classrooms.

Chapter 5: Interpretation

From the analysis of all the data collected, two major categories emerged to classify participants' consciousness of dominant discourses that subjugate people of color in the Brazilian society - the *inert critical consciousness* and the *active critical consciousness*. The "inertia category" was created by the author of this study in contrast to the "active category", which is a concept found in Giroux (1981). According to the scholar, active critical consciousness involves the ability to "examine critically the taken-for granted assumptions that shape discourse, actions, and consciousness" (p.17). Giroux goes further to explain that this level of consciousness can only be achieved when individuals are able to understand the roots of oppression and then, attempt to transform reality through *praxis*.

The concept of praxis, as elucidated by Freire (2005), consists of engaging in an ongoing process of reflection and action. For both Freire and Giroux, freedom from oppression depends on individuals' reflection on the causes of injustices and action to transform them. In the classroom context, freedom can only be achieved if teachers and students engage in the reading of the word and the world which relates to the practice of critically analyzing written texts, media, or the social environment in general in order to become aware of how power relations function.

Differently from the active critical consciousness category, the participants in the inert critical consciousness group do not act to deconstruct dominant discourses because their critical view is more limited. As teachers themselves have difficulty in identifying dominant discourses in popular media, they emphasized the use of popular culture in class as a tool for motivation rather than for critical analysis. Besides not being able to identify certain oppressive discourses conveyed in popular culture, the teachers under this category employ little or no effort to challenge racism in their classes. Even though racially discriminatory vocabulary is part of students' daily narratives, teachers seem to be in a state of inertia that prevents them from deconstructing such narratives. Thus, these teachers lack an important component of the active consciousness group: the praxis (reflection and action).

Teachers' passivity in relation to students' use of racially discriminatory words in class does not mean complete unawareness of racism in the Brazilian society. On the contrary, all teachers acknowledge that a covert type of racism exists in Brazil. However, their critique of racial discrimination is based on more explicit discourses or actions that have been repeatedly pointed out by the media or activist groups, for example, police discrimination against black people or mean jokes about people of color. Thus, these individuals are critical of more overt manifestations of racism but they have difficulty in identifying more subtle racially discriminatory discourses and ideologies such as the ones conveyed by popular media.

5.1 Inert critical consciousness

Five participants in this study are characterized by an inert type of critical consciousness. Marcos, Yvonne, Maria, Sylvia, and Lucy are not very critical of the function of popular media in perpetuating dominant discourses. As they seem to lack critical skills to deconstruct such discourses, when asked if they use or were willing to use popular culture in class, those teachers underscored the value of it as a way to motivate students. One possible explanation for the teachers' lack of criticism in relation to dominant discourses embedded in samba lyrics is that they have been so reinforced through the schools and the media that many Brazilians are unable to recognize and challenge them. The discourse of the passivity of blacks to white domination, for example, still survives because schools traditionally tell history through the perspective of dominant groups.

In face of this problem, the Brazilian Black Movement fought for the inclusion of Afro-Brazilian Culture and History in the curriculum. This goal was finally accomplished in 2003 when President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva signed the teaching of Afro-Brazilian History and Culture into law (Gomes, 2008). Although the law was a great step towards rewriting the Brazilian history and bringing racial issues into discussion, Gomes (2008) points out that the State and the Municipal Departments of Education still

resist the full implementation of the law. The scholar associates this resistance to the racial democracy myth. According to her, as many people still see Brazil as an example of racially harmonious country, they believe that discussions about race could lead to tension that never existed before. Fearing racial tensions, many teachers limit the commemoration of the Afro-Brazilian History week to typical dances, foods, vocabulary from African origin (Gomes, 2008). Another problem for the full implementation of the law is the little availability of material related to African Culture and History in schools. According to participant Ana, her co-worker, Rodrigo, had to do his own research in specialized libraries in order to be able to develop the project about Afro-Brazilian culture. As most teachers do not have time to invest so much time in research, dominant discourses are perpetuated in society through the school system. The participant Lucy, for example, is a product and an agent of dominant discourses- Lucy internalized the colonizers' view of history, and as a result she teaches her students that they should be thankful to whites for discovering and civilizing Brazil.

While educational institutions can be held accountable for the reproduction of dominant discourses by presenting historical events from only one perspective, the media bear a great deal of responsibility for disseminating other oppressive discourses that have become a source of national pride. With the Estado Novo concerns about creating a cultural identity, miscegenation among Brazilian people started being extremely celebrated by the media and, consequently interracial women or the mulatas were turned into the reference of beauty and sensuality. Maybe because the discourses surrounding mulatas have been excessively repeated, most Brazilians find them flattering. In this sense, issues such as the exoticization, sexualization and exploitation of interracial women remain unperceived even by women of color.

In this research, the fact that the three black female teachers in the inert category did not make any comment on the "sensual mulata" portrayed in samba #2 corroborates this point. Thus, as Giroux (1981) has argued, schools and the media are the most effective means for the dissemination of

messages that benefit hegemonic groups. By limiting interracial women to a “sensual body”, rich white male music producers sustain their power over people of color, especially women (hooks, 1994). Having this in mind, if teachers were more critical of oppressive discourses conveyed by the media, the use of popular culture in class would not only be a means to value students’ interests, but it would also be very empowering once students would learn how to identify and challenge the way they are depicted by the media.

Besides evidencing most participants’ lack of criticism to dominant discourses in popular music, data collected during class observations indicate that teachers under the inert consciousness category were not very critical of discriminatory vocabulary in their classes either. Students frequently referred to one another as *neguinho* (little black) and *negão* (big black), but teachers did not make any comment on that. A light-skinned student even referred to his black teacher, Marcos, in these terms. The student said: “Hey, *negão*, you look very stylish today”. Marcos smiled at the student and thanked for the compliment. In this situation, it would have been appropriate to explain to students that using such terms to refer to a person of color is discriminatory whether they intend to actually discriminate or not. Nevertheless, the use of *neguinho* and *negão* are so often used to refer to people of color (Goldstein, 1999), that both teachers in the inert category and students do not see anything wrong with it.

Another explanation for the participants’ inertia in face of students’ use of discriminatory vocabulary may be associated with the demotivation to teach. Although most participants reported having total freedom to make adaptations to the curriculum, the teachers under the inertia category, except the Arts teacher, would follow the same routine every class: students are expected to copy a text related to the topic of the class from the blackboard. After copying, they have to answer two or three multiple-choice exercises the teacher writes on the board. Three teachers, Lucy, Marcos, and Maria usually explained the content, gave examples, and answered students’ questions. In Sylvia’s class, however, there was no explanation about the topic of the unit. After copying the text on the blackboard,

the teacher would spend the remaining time sitting and reading her own books while few students actually copied the content. Most students talked to their classmates, listened to music, and some not even took their notebooks out of their backpacks. Sylvia told me she was looking forward to retire because most students are low-achievers and do not seem to be interested in learning at all.

When asked which book she uses to teach History, Sylvia told me that she uses different books in order to prepare a simplified summary of the content because “students do not like to read”. Other three teachers in the inertia category reported preparing their classes in the same way as Sylvia. As for Yvonne, the Arts teacher, her classes required more participation and creativity on the part of students. While I attended her classes, she taught students techniques for painting portrayals and students seemed to enjoy it. Although Yvonne’s classes were somewhat more engaging, I noticed that they were not planned towards developing students’ critical thinking. As she taught the techniques for painting, she would sit at her desk and write. I observed this same type of attitude on the first day of class after schools were reopened (schools had been closed for two weeks due to the swine flu outbreak). In that class, Yvonne showed a Brazilian movie called “Verônica”. Although the movie focused on polemic topics that are part of students’ reality, for example the drug dealing business and police corruption in Rio de Janeiro, there was no discussion at all about the movie. In fact, while students were watching it, the teacher spent time out of the classroom. It seemed that Yvonne did not have a clear purpose of doing this activity.

Taking all these facts into account my experience as a participant observer at Hope school made me realize that most of the participant teachers did not apply critical pedagogy in their classes and taught in a very traditional manner, not requiring much critical thinking on the part of students. Teachers taught the basics by assuming that students do not like to study (as I heard from Marcos, Lucy, Sylvia, and Maria).

Teachers' low expectation towards students is an issue that has been investigated by several scholars due to its serious consequences. According to Sleeter (2005), research studies conducted in the U.S consistently find that expectations of many teachers tend to vary depending on students' race and class. As African Americans, Latinos, and low-income students are considered at-risk, some teachers demand less from them for believing that they cannot go very far. Low-achieving students are basically trained in a repetitive and unchallenging style so as to achieve average scores in standardized tests. A cross-cultural study conducted by scholar César Rossatto (2005) confirms this theory.

In his research to examine how American and Brazilian students experience schooling in relation to their sense of time and optimism, Rossatto (2005) found that most low-achievers are characterized by *fatalistic optimism*. The scholar defines fatalistic optimism as “an immobilizing acceptance of an alienating reality and a dismal future, and the belief that such future is the best that can be expected” (p.85). Rossatto explains that students under this classification internalize a feeling of inferiority due to differentiated treatments such as tracking based on ethnicity or socioeconomic status. As a result, students either drop out of school or develop low expectations towards their future. For perceiving time as static and not productive, these students demonstrate a lack of motivation for planning for the future. They feel hopeless because they believe reality is unchangeable.

In brief, Rossatto (2005) argues that people's perception of time varies according to environmental factors. In this regard, in an environment where expectations are high and creativity is stimulated, students will perceive time as productive and, in consequence will develop more optimistic future aspirations. Conversely, students who come from contexts where expectations are low and time is invested in repetitive activities tend to develop a fatalistic view of the future because they do not believe their actions can produce any better outcomes.

At Hope School, most classes observed reflect the teachers' low expectations towards students. The contents were summarized, mechanically taught and teachers did not seem to be very concerned

whether students were leaning or not. For Jean Anyon (1980), the mode of teaching based on repetition which demands little creativity, decision-making and critical thinking from students is typical of low-income schools. In her one-year examination of 5 different schools, Anyon found that low-income schools were preparing students for low- paid jobs while affluent schools, which encourage critical analysis and decision making skills, are preparing students for high-status jobs. Anyon`s findings clearly exemplifies how schools, intentionally or unintentionally, may function as mechanisms for social reproduction.

Although most of the participants in the research seemed to be contributing for the maintenance of the status quo judging by what they told me and how they planned their classes, students were not passive to the unchallenging teaching style. As mentioned previously, in some classes students would not open their notebooks. Instead, they would talk to classmates, read magazines, or listen to music. These students` attitude can be interpreted as a type of resistance which is clearly not beneficial for them, however it may indicate that students know they are being denied a high quality education (Rossatto, 2005).

To conclude, data collected in this study reveal that most teachers at Hope school do not engage in praxis. The teachers included in the inert critical consciousness category were not critical of oppressive discourses in popular culture, and did not make much effort to deconstruct discriminatory practices in their classes either. There are two possible explanations for teachers` passivity in face of discriminatory language in their classes: either they did not recognize it as source of discrimination; or they are demotivated to fully assume the role of educator which includes providing quality education that will both enable students to pursue higher individual goals and prepare them for consciously exercising their citizenship with the aim to deconstruct systems of oppression.

5.1.2 Active critical consciousness

The analysis of the interviews suggests that the participant Ana differs from the other research participants in level of critical consciousness. The teacher`s critique of racism in the Brazilian society goes beyond blatant examples such as police discrimination against blacks and “jokes” that subjugate people of color. By identifying dominant discourses and stereotypes in popular media, Ana demonstrated that she is able to recognize sources of prejudices and racism. Equally to the other 5 participants, Ana has never taken any type of course specifically related to critical media literacy, however, the fact that she also works in a municipal school seems to help her to develop her critical skills.

As Ana explained, the work of municipal teachers is very integrated with school administrators and the school community. The curriculum revolves around two-month to one one-year projects created by teachers and other members of the school staff. Topics are always selected according to the needs of the school community, thus drug use, sexuality, and health are usually among the themes that guide the projects. The Afro-Brazilian culture and history project Ana told me about during the interview lasted for two months and its goal was to raise awareness of African influence in Brazil. Ana`s active participation in it seems to have sharpened her critical skills as she was the only teacher who argued against dominant discourses such as the passivity of blacks to white domination and the exoticization of women of color.

Besides Ana`s ability to identify subtle forms of racism as the ones conveyed by the media, she differed from the other 5 research participants in the sense that she really acts on deconstructing dominant discourses. Perhaps because Ana is characterized by a higher level of critical consciousness, she emphasized the use of popular culture to develop students` critical thinking. The Afro-Brazilian project the teacher actively engaged in is a very good example of her commitment to critical pedagogy. Furthermore, as a participant observer I realized that Ana`s teaching style was creative and interactive,

demanding students to express themselves and justify their opinions. First of all, she would provide students with photocopies of texts and exercises so that she would have to waste time writing them on the blackboard. The other participants could have done the same once Hope school has its own copy machine.

Ana also encouraged students to participate, helping them to analyze texts critically. Thus, she seems to view students as subjects of their own learning. Walking down the school corridor I noticed that part of a wall was decorated with Ana's students' work. Ana told me that the work was a project about the importance of being educated and polite as well. Her idea of developing this project came from teachers' complaint about students' behavior. Given this problem in the school, Ana started the project by discussing with her students what they considered as important elements to maintain a good friendship. The responses included not offend people, listen to what others have to say and respect their opinion, wait until the right moment to speak, etc. After the discussion, the most relevant responses were written on cardboards and displayed on the school wall.

All in all, data collected through interviews and class participant observation provided me with enough evidence to suggest that Ana is characterized by an active critical consciousness (Giroux, 1981), because not only she is able to identify sources of prejudices that may lead to racism in popular culture, but she also challenge oppressive discourses in her classes. Thus, she differs from the other participants for engaging in praxis which means acting and reflecting at the same time so as to transform the oppressive reality (Freire, 2005). Considering that education can only enable changes in society if students and teachers engage in *praxis*, likewise the use of popular culture in class can only be empowering if critical analysis is applied in order to challenge oppressive discourses.

5.1 Answer to research question

This study aimed to answer the following research question:

How does teachers' critical consciousness or lack thereof, contribute either to the deconstruction or legitimization of dominant discourses that have been perpetuated through Brazilian popular culture?

Analysis of data collected provided evidence to suggest that all teachers in this case study support the use of popular culture in class. This is an important finding because it demonstrates that teachers value popular culture as the expression of students' identity (Leard & Lashua, 2006; Martinez, 1997). Nevertheless, most of the participant teachers emphasized the use of popular culture as a means to motivate students rather than a tool for developing students' critical analysis skills. The explanation for that may be associated with teachers' lack of critical skills to apply critical media analysis in their classes. As the analysis and interpretation of the interviews show, the teachers under the inertia critical consciousness category were not able to identify certain dominant discourses and ideologies embedded in samba lyrics.

The uncritical use of popular culture in class may have serious implications. As discussed throughout this research, dominant groups make use of educational institutions and the media to convey oppressive discourses that perpetuate stereotypes, and sustain racism. As a result, the status quo is maintained. Given the consequences of the uncritical use of popular media in class, it is necessary that teachers develop a higher level of critical consciousness similar to participant Ana. The findings of this research demonstrate that Ana is critical enough to identify the sources of prejudices and racism. In addition to that, she is an agent of transformation because she helps students to develop their own language of critique.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In every part of the world, dominant groups utilize either overt or covert strategies to convey ideologies that help them maintain the status quo. As schools and the media are the most powerful means of delivering messages, they are often manipulated by elites, especially white male groups, to present their discourses to explain reality. These discourses that express the white male perspective on the world and subjugate people of color are so reinforced by schools and the media that they start being accepted as the only “truth”.

In the Brazilian society, the media, particularly popular culture, have played a key role in conveying oppressive discourses that remain unchallenged by many Brazilians, including 5 out of the 6 participants in this research. The teachers under the inert critical consciousness category are oblivious of dominant discourses embedded in popular culture, therefore they limit its use to motivate students. In contrast, only one participant proved to be very critical of those discourses in song lyrics. Her use of popular culture is empowering for students because she has necessary critical skills to help students liberate themselves from oppressive discourses.

Popular culture is the expression of students` identity; it reflects their perspective on the world, and for this reason it needs to be part of any school curriculum. Nevertheless, the uncritical use of popular culture contributes to the perpetuation of dominant discourses that have longed oppressed people of color. In this regard, it is crucial that teachers be critical of media and also fully conscious of their role as educators who need to be committed to social justice. As Giroux (2004) stresses,

If we do not want to repeat the present as the future or, even worse, become complicit in the dominant exercise of power, it is time for educators to mobilize collectively their energies by breaking down the illusion of unanimity that dominant power propagates while working diligently, tirelessly, and collectively to reclaim the promises of a truly global, democratic future (p. 77).

Giroux's (2004) statement is a call for reflection and action. Educators need to be aware that educating is a political act that leads either to the maintenance or the transformation of the social structure. The choice for assuming a neutral position is illusory and actually means compliance with the unfair social system. With this in mind, education for freedom from oppression is only possible through praxis, which means to critically reflect on the sources of oppression and collectively act to challenge dominant discourses that have been used to subjugate people of color.

6.1 Recommendations

This study brings valuable contributions to the field of education in the sense that it not only explained why popular culture should be used in class, but it also emphasized how it should be used. As discussed throughout this paper, popular culture needs to serve as background for school curricula because it represents students' voice (Sholle & Denski, 1993); it is part of their identity. However, teachers need to be aware of how to use popular media in class because often times it is used to disseminate ideologies that oppress people of color and help maintaining the status quo.

Taking these aspects into account, the use of popular culture can only be empowering if teachers have the necessary skills to identify ideologies and dominant discourses in the media. For this reason, it is paramount that teachers receive proper training to work with popular media in their classrooms. Although cultural studies has been a field of study in Brazil since the mid-nineties, most teacher education programs still do not offer any course related to critical media literacy. Having obtained certification to teach 1st through 12th graders in 2006 after attending two years of teacher education program at one of the most prestigious university in Brazil, I am sad to say that the curriculum of my school did not offer classes on critical media analysis.

With this in mind, I suggest that the Brazilian department of Education implement critical media literacy courses in all teacher education program curricula. In addition to that, the Estate of Rio de

Janeiro government should offer more self-improvement courses and workshops for teachers. As this research participants highlighted, neither Hope school nor the State of Rio Government provide teachers with many options of courses or training. In contrast, the Municipal Government offers more courses for teachers and require that educators and students develop projects together. This is certainly a means to raise teachers` and students` critical consciousness.

Finally, it is also important that teachers get to know African culture and African History more in deep so as to be able to engage students in critical discussions about the representation of blacks in the Brazilian society. By articulating past and present, teachers will help deconstruct dominant discourses such as the one of the passivity of blacks and the racial democracy. Students need to understand how racism has hindered the progress of Afro- Brazilians, but at the same time they need to become aware that blacks have actively fought for being treated with dignity. In this regard, my recommendation is that courses on African culture and History become mandatory in the teacher education curriculum. This type of course is already included in the CONAE (National Educational Conference, 2010) guidelines and I hope it is implemented.

6.2 Limitations and suggestions

Although this study provided significant insights into the consequences of uncritical use of popular culture, it had some limitations. First, I planned to observe each participant`s class for an entire month. However, it was not possible. Because of the swine flu outbreak, all Brazilian schools were closed for the first two weeks of August, 2009. A second limitation to this study is related to the data collection of two teachers in December, 2009. As the school year was almost over, students and teachers seemed to be more concerned about the finals, therefore most classroom activities consisted of reviews to prepare students for the tests. Some students were excused from attending classes in December as they had accumulated enough grade points for passing.

Finally, another limitation to this research is the number of research participants. Perhaps I would have been able to find even more consistent results if the number of participants were higher. Nevertheless, as explained before, time was a constraint to this study, thus it would have been extremely difficult to develop a good quality work within a two-week period. All things considered, future research on teachers' critical consciousness of popular culture could produce different findings if participant observations were conducted for a longer period of time and more participants were added. In addition to that, the scope of the study could be expanded to the analysis of culture and power relations in other Latin American countries which were also marked by the process of colonization. Researchers could investigate different types of cultural expressions in those countries in order to find out how racially oppressive discourses are disseminated and sustained via media and educational institutions.

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Appendix A

Self completion questionnaire

University of Texas at El Paso- College of Education

By answering this questionnaire you will be contributing to my Master`s research which is being developed at the university of Texas. Thanks for your collaboration!

Birth date:

Race/Ethnicity

1-Where were you born and raised

2-Which university did you attend?

3- Have you completed any postgraduate program? Which one/ which ones?

4-How long have you been teaching?

5- How long have you been teaching at Hope school?

6- How many times a year does this school offer workshops, seminars or training for teachers?

7- As a teacher in this school, do you feel free to adapt your classes according to what you believe is beneficial for your students` learning? (Ex.: Do you feel free to implement new ideas or use extra learning resources you find interesting?).

8- What is your evaluation of the pedagogic advising you receive in this school?

9-What is your main goal as a teacher?

Appendix B

Semi-structured interview

First part: Teachers` perception and use of popular culture

- 1- How would you define popular culture?
- 2- Do you believe popular culture enhances learning? How?
- 3- Have you ever used or would you ever use popular culture in the classroom? Why/Why not?
- 4- Have you ever used or would you ever use samba lyrics in class? Why/ Why not?

Second part: Analysis of samba lyrics

- 1- If you chose to use this samba lyrics as a teaching tool, what would you discuss with your students in relation to the way each race is depicted in this lyrics?
- 2- This samba lyrics highlights the process of miscegenation in the formation of Brazil. What would you have to say to your students in relation to miscegenation in the current Brazilian society?
- 3- Does this lyrics present any other issue you consider important to discuss with your students?

Third part: Analysis of the Brazilian society

- 1- Samba lyrics in general exalt our country, emphasizing the pride of being Brazilian. What makes you proud of being Brazilian?
- 2- Samba lyrics also emphasize the racial diversity to characterize Brazil, however, other countries such as the U.S are also very diverse. In your opinion, what distinguishes Brazil from the U.S in terms of racial relations?
- 3- Do you think there is racial discrimination in Brazil? (If you think there is racism in Brazil, can you give me examples of how it is manifested?).
- 4- Which one is worse in Brazil: Social or racial discrimination? Why?
- 5- Do you think most people are conscious of racial discrimination in the Brazilian society?

6- What is your opinion about affirmative action?

Part four: Use of critical pedagogy

1- Have you ever taken any course, either in college or after you graduated, that addresses the use of critical media in class?

2- Do you usually use critical media analysis in your classes? How?

3- Do you usually discuss polemic topics such as racism in class? Why/why not?

Appendix C

Samba lyrics Number 1 (original version): A Mangueira traz os Brasis do Brasil,

mostrando a formação do povo brasileiro –

Estação Primeira de Mangueira (2009)

Deus me fez assim filho desse chão
Sou povo, sou raça... miscigenação
Mangueira viaja nos brasis dessa nação
O branco aqui chegou
No paraíso se encantou
Ao ver tanta beleza no lugar
Quanta riqueza pra explorar
Índio valente guerreiro
Não se deixou escravizar, lutou...
E um laço de união surgiu
O negro mesmo entregue a própria sorte
Trabalhou com braço forte
Na construção do meu Brasil
É sangue, é suor, religião
Mistura de raças num só coração
Um elo de amor à minha bandeira
Canta a Estação Primeira
Cada lágrima que já rolou
Fertilizou a esperança
Da nossa gente, valeu a pena
De Norte a Sul desse país
Tantos brasis, sagrado celeiro
Crioulo, caboclo, retrato mestiço,
De fato, sou brasileiro!
Sertanejo, caipira, matuto... sonhador
Abraço o meu irmão
Pra reviver a nossa história
Deixar guardado na memória... o seu valor
Sou a cara do povo... Mangueira
Eterna paixão
A voz do samba é verde e rosa
E nem cabe explicação

**Samba lyrics No 1 (translation): Mangueira brings the Brazils of Brazil,
showing the formation of the Brazilian people
Estação Primeira de Mangueira (2009)**

God made me like this
I am people, I am race...miscegenation
Mangueira travels around the Brazils of this nation
The white man arrived here
He was fascinated by this paradise
There was so much richness to explore
The Indian, courageous warrior,
Didn't submit to slavery; he fought...
And a bond was established
The blacks, despite of being neglected,
Worked hard
To build my Brazil
It is blood, sweat, religion
Mixture of races in just one heart
It's a bond of love to my flag
Sing, Estação Primeira
The shed tears
Fertilized the hope
Of our people, it was worth it
From North to South of this country
So many Brazils, sacred soil
Crioulo, caboclo, an interracial picture
In fact, I am Brazilian!
Peasants... dreamers
I hug my brothers
To live our history all over again
To keep in the memory the value they have
I am the reflection of my people... Mangueira
Eternal passion
The voice of samba is green and pink
And there is no need to explain that

Appendix D

Samba lyrics Number 2 (original version): E o Borel descobriu... Navegar foi preciso –

Unidos da Tijuca (1990)

Por mares nunca dantes navegados
Meu Borel vem empolgado
Pra mostrar
Terras e eras tão distantes
Um passado emocionante
Vou contar (laraiá...)
Na Idade Média, quando tudo começou
O povo já pensava em ser feliz
Os lusitanos na guerra cristã
Contra os mouros defendiam o seu país
Salve o infante D. Henrique
A Portugal prestou serviços relevantes
Os portugueses desbravaram o oceano
Descobrimo novos horizontes
São caravelas
Ventos de liberdade e amor (bis)
E nessa onda
Seu Cabral nos encontrou
Heranças deixaram
Tantas em nosso torrão
Do idioma à religião
E essa miscigenação que originou
A nossa mulata sedução
Cá pra nós, o samba não veio de lá
Mas trouxeram o negro que, é arte, é cultura
Que nos ensinou a batucar
Terrinha boa, que saudade dá
O Borel em poesia
Hoje vai te visitar
Levar meu samba, vou cruzar o mar
Só gente bamba vai desembarcar
Vasco da Gama, bacalhau
Ouvir o fado, eu vou (bis)
Ficar mamado também
Bebendo vinho lá em Portugal

Samba lyrics No 2 (translation): And Borel found out... It was necessary to navigate-

Unidos da Tijuca (1990)

Navigating through undiscovered seas
My Borel is excited to show
Distant lands and eras
A thrilling past
I will tell you about it (laraiá...)
In the Middle Ages, when everything started
People already wanted to be happy
The Lusitans fought the Christian war
To defend their country against the Moors
Hail, the infantry officer D. Henrique
Who served his country
The Portuguese explored the sea
And discovered new horizons
These are caravels
Winds of freedom and love
In this wave Mr. Cabral found us
Our nation inherited
So many things
From language to religion
And this miscegenation
Originated our sensual mulata
Just between you and me
The samba didn't come from there
But they brought the blacks
Who are art and culture
And who taught us how to make samba
Nice country, I miss you
Today, people from Borel
Are going to visit you
Through poetry
We are going to take our samba
We are going to cross the sea
Only people from the samba will disembark
Vasco da Gama, codfish
I will listen to fado
And get drunk
By drinking wine in Portugal

Appendix E

Samba lyrics coding

Samba No 1: Mangueira

Samba No 2: Unidos da Tijuca

Depiction of each race:

Whites (colonizers)	Explorers “The white man arrived here He was fascinated by this paradise There was so much richness to explore”	Explorers, adventurous “The Lusitans fought the Christian war to defend their country against the Moors Hail, the infantry officer D. Henrique, who served his country The Portuguese explored the sea And discovered new horizons”
Blacks	Passive to domination “The Indian, courageous warrior, Didn’t submit to slavery; He fought... And a bond was established [between Indians and whites] Despite of being neglected, The blacks worked hard To build my Brazil”	Limited to art, culture, and samba “Just between you and me, the Samba didn’t come from there But <i>they</i> [the Portuguese] brought the Blacks, who are art and culture and who Taught us how to make samba.”
Black women	No reference to black women	Sexualized “And this miscegenation Originated our sensual mulata”

Samba No 1: Mangueira

Samba No 2: Unidos da Tijuca

Other dominant discourses:

Gratitude to colonizers	<p>Although colonization caused suffering, it was worth it because Brazil became a uniquely miscegenated country</p> <p>“The shed tears Fertilized the hope Of our people, it was worth it From the North to the South of this country</p> <p>So many “Brazils”, sacred soil <i>Crioulo</i> [black and white mixed people], <i>caboclo</i> [indigenous and white mixed people],</p> <p>An interracial picture.”</p>	<p>Pride of Portuguese contributions to the formation of Brazil: the language, religion, and miscegenation.</p> <p>“Our nation has inherited so many things [from the Portuguese people]</p> <p>From language to religion And this miscegenation Originated our sensual mulata Just between you and me,</p> <p>The samba didn’t come from there But they [the Portuguese] brought the blacks, who are art and culture and who Taught us how to make samba.”</p>
Racial democracy	<p>“It is blood, sweat, religion</p> <p>The mixture of races in just one heart</p> <p>It’s a bond of love...”</p> <p>“From the North to the South of this country</p> <p>So many “Brazils”, sacred soil</p>	<p>“Today people from <i>Borel</i> [name of the slum</p> <p>Where this samba school was originated]</p> <p>Are going to visit <i>you</i> [the Portuguese people]</p>

<p>Racial democracy (cont.)</p>	<p><i>Crioulo</i> [black and white mixed people], <i>caboclo</i> [indigenous and white mixed people], An interracial picture In fact, I am Brazilian! Peasants... dreamers I hug my brothers To live our history all over again”</p>	<p>We are going to take our samba, We are going to cross the sea Just the people from the samba will disembark [in Portugal]”</p>
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Curriculum vitae

Luciene Soares Wandermurem was born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on November 23, 1980. The first daughter of José Carlos Roncato Wandermurem and Therezinha Soares Wandermurem, she attended the Portuguese and English Language and Literature Program at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. While pursuing her bachelor`s degree, she worked as a teaching assistant in the English Literature Department for one year. After graduating in the spring of 2004, she attended the Certification in Portuguese and English Literature Program, graduating in the spring of 2006. She taught English as a Foreign Language at several language schools before moving to the United States. In the fall of 2008 she entered the University of Texas graduate school.

Permanent address: 601 South Mesa Hills Drive
El Paso, Texas, 79912

This thesis was typed by Luciene Soares Wandermurem