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REPRESENTATIONS OF BLACK MASCULINITIES IN THE WORK OF

KENDRICK LAMAR

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REPRESENTATIONS OF BLACK MASCULINITIES IN THE WORK OF KENDRICK LAMAR

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Abstract

The present study is an analysis on how black masculinities are represented in modern hip hop, analyzing the multimodal discourse of the videoclip *ELEMENT* by the American rapper Kendrick Lamar. The theoretical background used to the analysis was the theory of speech acts developed by Austin and later by Judith Butler considering the importance of the role of the body in conveying messages. The embodied speech acts present in the video and the lyrics and their connections were analyzed reaching the conclusion that the black masculinity stereotypes were both subverted and embraced exploring the contrasts present in the discourse.

Keywords: modes of representations; black masculinity; embodied speech acts; critical discourse analysis; hip hop.

Resumo

O presente estudo é uma análise de como as masculinidades negras são representadas no hip hop moderno, analisado o discurso multimodal do videoclipe *ELEMENT*. do rapper americano Kendrick Lamar. O arcabouço teórico usado para a análise foi a teoria de atos de fala desenvolvida por Austin e posteriormente por Judith Butler considerando a importância do papel do corpo na transmissão e mensagens. Os atos de fala corporificados presentes no vídeo e na letra as conexões entre eles foram analisados chegando a conclusão de que estereótipos de masculinidade negra foram tanto reforçados quanto subvertidos explorando os contrastes presentes no discurso.

Palavras-chave: modos de representação; masculinidade negra; atos de fala corporificados; análise do discurso crítico; hip hop

1. INTRODUCTION

During my studies at university, I developed a huge interest for subjects related to race. Of course, this interest is influenced by my own personal experiences being a black woman and the wisdom of black men and women in my family. Observing our experiences in the world from other perspectives became a natural process as I began to read more about the subject finding authors such as Abdias do Nascimento, Frantz Fanon, Angela Davis and etc.

Another huge passion in my life is music in its diverse manifestations. The power of music to convey messages and represent identities have always amazed me. This topic guided me to take part in outreach projects such as *Ouvindo Letras*, a project developed in Universidade Federal do Ceará which studied the relation between discourse analysis and music. Therefore, combining interests about black identities and discourses present in music seemed like a path to follow in my work.

This study is an analysis of how the identity of black males is represented in modern hip hop. For this, the concept of masculinity is discussed in this study in connection with the concept of race. In her book *We Real Cool*, Bell Hooks (2004) states that hip hop is a reflection of the patriarchal socialization of black males as it reinforces the stereotypes about black men:

“we can break the life threatening choke-hold patriarchal masculinity imposes on black men and create life sustaining visions of a reconstructed black masculinity that can provide black men ways to save their lies and the lives of their brothers and sisters in struggle.” (HOOKS, 2004, p. 13).

Having this in mind, I sought to analyze the work of the rapper Kendrick Lamar as he embraces or subvert those stereotypes already identified by Hooks (op. cit.). For the analyzes, the video clip *Element* was chosen as material for a critical discourse analyses based on the texts present in the videoclip, both in the images and in the lyrics, as a multimodal text.

Kendrick Lamar Duckworth was born in Compton, California on June 17, 1987. At 16 he released his first mixtape *Youngest Head Nigga In Charge (Hub City Threat: Minor of the Year)* calling the attention of the independent label Top Dawg Entertainment. He released several other mixtapes until the release of his first album *Section.80* in 2011. After this, Lamar began to reach a wider public and signed a contract with the Interscope/Aftermath record label in which he released his major label

debut *good kid,m.A.A.d city* (2012). The album brought an autobiographical narrative of a young black man growing up in the city of Compton. The album put Kendrick between the mainstream hip hop stars being nominated to four Grammy awards and selling over 242,000 copies. He released his third album *To Pimp a Butterfly* (*To Pimp a Butterfly*) on March, 2015. The album was a success of public and critics immediately. His fourth studio album, *DAMN*, was released on April 14th 2017. The album reached a huge popular success and was critically acclaimed receiving a Pulitzer prize, something that never happened to a hip hop album:

On Monday (April 16), the Pulitzer Prize Board awarded Kendrick Lamar the Pulitzer Prize for Music for his 2017 masterpiece *DAMN*. Not only is this a first for hip-hop, but it's a first for popular music in general – *DAMN*. is the first non-classical, non-jazz album to win the award in its 75-year history. (...) The important thing about this is the jury and the board just decided that the album is a work of vernacular avant-garde. It's a dense and sophisticated collage of hybrid sounds, polyrhythms, layered under what we would probably consider pulsing kinetic text. The brilliance of the music is what's shone through. (Billboard Bulletin, 2018 p.1)

As the concepts of masculinity and their different implications related with race, social features, age and etc, began to gain more attention in the spotlight, the discussion about the theme is to bring into light discussions about black masculinity and how these concepts are articulated with the life of black men. This discussion is of vital importance to inspire new ways of thinking about masculinity.

I believe that the American black experience is not so distant from the Brazilian black experiences. The process of colonization and slavery, the struggles to achieve basic rights and the persistent fight against racism are points in common between this two realities. US is the country where hip hop was born. The artistic manifestation only arrived in Brazil some years later carrying the same characteristics of critic against racism.

Therefore, this research seeks to explore the connection between the discourses of the lyrics and the video and analyzes the context in which it occurs and how it influences the way the discourse is built in the video clip. The main objective of this study is to analyze how the linguistic features present in the song connects with the video and contribute to form a discourse that reinforces or subvert the concepts of black masculinity. As specific objectives, this study seeks to analyze: (i) how the perspective of gender and race is brought in the song; (ii) how the artist connects his discourse with

the video; and (iii) to explore the representations of the black masculinity reinforcing or subverting stereotypes.

As it was mentioned before in this section, this study may be characterized as critical discourse analysis based on text, where text here is understood as the multimodal text of a videoclip, and where both speech acts and embodied speech acts are seen as linguistic categories to investigate the representations of black masculinity.

In the following sections I discuss the hip hop movement, the relations between masculinity, race and hip hop, the speech acts and embodied speech acts, the analysis of the embodied speech acts in Kendrick Lamar's videoclip and the conclusions.

2. THE HIP HOP MOVEMENT

Besides being a mechanism of entertainment, music is also a powerful tool to carry cultural and ideological messages. Inside a song many traces can be found such as philosophical thoughts, criticism about a social problems and reaffirmation of certain identities.

Hip hop is a musical genre which was born in the United States in the 1970's. The style was created by African Americans and it is often referred to as Hip Hop culture because it consists of many artistic manifestations such as the graffiti, the dance of the b boys and the rap (rhythm and poetry). One of the main characteristics of rap is the discourse over a musical background where the words are rhythmically spoken in rhymes. The musical style gained a huge popularity during the 80's. Rap music is known for its strong lyrics with subjects such as social problems, discrimination and the violence in the suburbs as the main theme (HILKENS, 2017).

Hip hop has established itself as one of the main narratives of the black youth around the world, being a way by which young black people create their own representation of themselves:

Hiphop, as an art form, is part of a long historical tradition within African American history. The black experience in the United States has been underrepresented and misrepresented in school systems globally, but it has been shaped by artists, scholars, politicians, and preachers, aiming to take control over their own narratives. These expressions have in turn been channeled and translated for larger publics through different media ranging from journalism to scholarship to literature. The African American experience has been

discussed through lenses of Black stereotypes, shaping these public stereotypes, influencing perceptions on the African American experience, as well as the African American experience itself. Hip hop, currently being a prominent manifestation of Black culture, stands in a long tradition of expressing and representing the African American experience, however selective or distorted it may be, and U.S. media stands in a long tradition of portraying and shaping the African American experience in one-dimensional ways. (HILKENS, 2017. p 48).

Hilkens reflects about how hip hop established itself as an important representation of African-American experiences. Its importance stands in the fact that it is a way of the young black community to take control of their own narratives instead of having their stories told by someone else.

3. ON MASCULINITIES, RACE AND HIP HOP

It is difficult to talk about masculinity as something singular, since the experience of being a man, as with any gender, is considerably diverse because of many factors such as race, age, profession, level of education, nationality, economic and social position etc. So the expression "masculinities" is more accurate since it considers the plurality of experiences as states Page in *Masculinity in crisis? - A study on the Threat to Masculine Identities through Unemployment (1999)*.

Modern theorists no longer speak of masculinity in the singular, but of masculinities in the plural sense. Connell suggests that a single notion of masculinity and a 'male role' miss the complexities within masculinity and the multiple forms of masculinity (Connell 1995:72). Brittan (1989) further reiterates this view when he suggests that masculinities needs to be conceptualized in relation to their class, sexual and ethnic locations. Therefore one needed to theorize masculinity in terms of multiple masculinities and the multiple dimensions they embody. (PAGE, 1999 p7).

From the citation by Page (1999), it is possible to conclude that the complexity of experiences give masculinities this dimension of plurality and the multiple factors that influence it are always important to be taken into account. The *Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children (2005)* confirms the previous statements in the citation and also mentions the relations between masculinity and femininity since one is strongly dependent on the other and both are culturally constructed terms:

Masculinities: conveys that there are many socially constructed definitions for being a man and that these can change over time and from place to place. The term relates to perceived notions and ideals about how men should or are expected to behave in a given setting. Masculinity and femininity are relational concepts, which only have meaning in relation to each other. Masculinities are configurations of practice structured by gender relations. They are inherently historical; and their making and remaking is a political process affecting the balance of interests in society and the direction of social change. (Available at *Womens Commission for Refugee Women and Children. Masculinities: Male role and Male Involvement in the Promotion of Gender Equality. September 2005*)

Since the rise of feminism, the discussions about masculinities gained more space. In the academic field the subject of masculinities is one of the main interests of the researchers. As mentioned before, masculinities are influenced by many factors, one of them being the culture. In fact, masculinity cannot be seen as something separated from culture:

If 'maleness' is biological, then masculinity is cultural. Indeed, masculinity can never float free of culture: on the contrary, it is the child of culture, shaped and expressed differently at different times in different circumstances in different places by individuals and groups (Berger *et al.* 1995). What can be said with undeniable certainty is that as we embark upon the twenty-first century masculinity is being placed under the microscope as never before, magnifying the fissures of which we may not have previously been fully aware. This examination is, of course, itself a product of our times, in part a consequence of **feminism** and in part a reaction to it. (BEYNON. 2002. p 13)

As mentioned before, the concept of masculinities is highly influenced by factors such as social status, race, age and sexual orientation. When analyzing specific groups such as black males, one must take into account factors such as race. Scholars (WADE&ROCHLEN, 2012) have already mentioned the importance of these factors in the reflections about masculinity between African-American men. The study *Masculinity, Identity, and the Health and Well-Being of African American Men* from the American Psychological Association analyses the factors that make the socialization of black men singular and their definitions of masculinity different from the definitions of masculinity from other races:

According to Franklin (1987), African American men are subject to a different set of socializing influences than are White men. They live in a different social reality and actually have a different masculinity. Franklin articulated the ways men may vary in their experience of the male role according to one's reference group. He provided descriptions of three reference groups that African American men typically live in and interact with, each having its own definition of

appropriate male role behavior. The *Black man's peer group* is marked by a hypermasculine and misogynist adaptation that some African American men have made to a racist American society. Norms include sexist attitudes, antifemininity, aggressive solutions to disputes, antagonism toward other Black men, and contempt for nonmaterial culture (i.e., the nonphysical ideas that people have about their culture, including beliefs, values, rules, norms, morals). The importance of this group to African American men is inversely related to their socioeconomic status. The more influence the peer group has, the less likely it is that the larger society will play a role in defining male role norms. (WADE&ROCHLEN, 2012 p2)

It is possible to read in the citation above that the work of Wade and Rochlen (2012) discusses the conceptions and behavior patterns that black males are taught on society about how a man is supposed to act. It concluded that the definitions of African-American masculinity in men gender roles evolve around the ideas of "being a provider, aggressive, competitive, ambitious" and also other aspects such as "self-determinism, family, pride and spirituality".

Another reference for African-American masculinity in men gender roles can be found in the work *We Real Cool: Black men and Masculinity*, a book written by Bell Hooks (2004) containing 10 essays criticizing the way black males are marginalized and dehumanized by the racist and sexist culture. The book explores how the socialization of black males is strongly influenced by the myths and stereotypes and how these stereotypes are sometimes embraced by black males.

Bell Hooks (2004) criticizes the way masculinity is portrayed in hip hop as well. In the book, Hooks states that she believes that hip hop as a whole strongly reflects imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy:

While I do not think hip-hop is any more sexist or misogynist than other forms of American culture, I do think it is the most explicit form of misogyny around today. What folks don't understand is that hip-hop was created on the heels of civil rights era by impoverished black men and Latinos, who literally made something out of nothing. But in making that something out of nothing, many of us men of color have held tightly to white patriarchal notions of manhood—that is, the way to be a man is to have power. Patriarchy, as manifest in hip-hop, is where we can have our version of power within this very oppressive society. (POWELL, apud HOOK, 2004, p.71-72).

She talks about the representation of black men in music, making a parallel between the blues and the hip hop, music genres which are very popular between black men of different generations. While the blues expresses feelings and vulnerability, the

hip hop brings the representation of a black masculinity that shows strength and struggles to hide their emotions and vulnerability:

Just as today's gangsta rap invites black males to adopt a cool pose, to front and fake it, to mask true feelings, the blues was an invitation to black men to be vulnerable, to express true feelings, to break open their hearts and expose them. Black males have helped create the blues, more than any other music, as a music of resistance to the patriarchal notion that a real man should never express genuine feelings. Emotional awareness of real-life pain in black men's lives was and is the heart and soul of the blues. (HOOKS, 2004, p. 155)

The concepts of black masculinities discussed above serve as theoretical foundations for this research about black masculinities in hip hop in the work of the rapper Kendrick Lamar, more specifically the videoclip *Element* (2017).

Many journalistic and academic studies have been carried out on this same subject. Hilkens (2017), for example, discussed Kendrick Lamar's representations and self-representations inside the hip hop culture analyzing how he puts himself inside the discourse of this culture. He concludes that Kendrick Lamar is "a uniquely sane and innocent voice in a culture that has been deteriorating because of increased commercialism, sexism, and expressions of violence." (HILKENS, 2017, p. 2)

In *Kendrick Lamar, street poet of mental health*, Akeen Sule and Becky Inkster (2015) analyzed how the mental health issues are approached in the work of Kendrick Lamar and how this discussion can help to understand mental health patients' struggles. Another study worth to mention, *We Gon' Be Alright': Kendrick Lamar's Criticism of Racism and the Potential for Social Change Through Love*, by Courtney Julia Heffernan (2016), analyzes the concept brought in the song "i" from Lamar's album *To Pimp a Butterfly* highlighting the proposal of changing the racist American system through love.

In my study, I will look at the representations of masculinity in the videoclip *Elements*, using a theory from the Linguistics Pragmatics to study both the lyrics (verbal text) and the image (visual text), as I will explain in the next section.

4. SPEECH ACTS AND EMBODIED SPEECH ACTS

When defining pragmatics, Levinson (1983) brings us many concepts emphasizing the complexity of the term. One definition brought by him is that "Pragmatics is the study of the relations between language and context that are basic to

an account of language understanding" (LEVINSON, 1983, p. 21). It is important to mention that understanding an utterance is more than knowing the grammar and the meaning of the words, it is necessary to connect what is being said to what was said before making inferences.

Therefore, pragmatics is a field of knowledge interested in the relations between a semiotic system (language) and the context in which it takes place. Things that are left unsaid, implicit meanings and the dynamics of language structure in relation with what can be presumed or inferred in a discourse are all concerns of pragmatics. Pragmatics is interdisciplinary and can count with contributions from many areas such as linguistics, psychology, philosophy and sociology of language.

Inside the field of linguistic pragmatics, the numerous relations between meaning and context are studied. Some of these relations are: deixis, presupposition, implicatures, conversational structure and speech acts. The last one will be our central interest in this work. In the analysis of sentence meaning, during the 1930's emerged the doctrine of logical positivism, which considered that a sentence was meaningful only if it could be verified in terms of truth and falsity. Later, Wittgenstein (1958) showed that language cannot be reduced to the linguistic code and it has influence of many social conventions. He developed the notion of language games, which compares the rules of a language with the rules of a game, showing that the meaning will depend on the use of the words and the intentions of the players. With this, language started being seen not as a representation of reality but as a part of it and by being so, the conditions necessary to the understanding an utterance are much more complex than just knowing the meaning of the words. He included in his research, simple forms of language used by children and fictional languages.

It was in this period that Austin launched his theory of speech acts in which it is possible to note some parallels with Wittgenstein in the ideas of usage and language-games, although the theory by Austin is considered autonomous. He verified that utterances are not built with the intention of making true or false statements. These utterances are made with the intention to perform actions. Austin classified these utterances as *performatives*.

From there, we can define a speech act as the production of an utterance, linguistically functional, in a given context of interaction to perform an action: inform, promise, give an order, ask, etc. A speech act is simultaneously a speech and an action.

The speech acts make use of propositions and other semantic objects to produce a certain effect.

One view, most clearly expressed in Stenius (1967) but already present in Frege's distinction between thoughts and judgements (Frege 1879), considers speech acts as communicative actions. They make use of semantic objects like propositions, but transform them to something of a different nature (KRIFKA, Manfred, 2009, p. 5).

The speech acts can be divided in:

I - locutionary act: the act of uttering a message

II - illocutionary act: the act performed by the speaker when uttering the message

III - perlocutionary act: the effects the illocutionary act produces in the receiver of the message.

When saying the sentence "You are blocking my view." we can see different speech acts. Firstly, the locutionary act of saying the sentence. Secondly, the illocutionary act performed in the sentence: by saying this, we do not want to simply confirm the situation, we want the other person to stop blocking our view. Also, we have the perlocutionary act, which is the act of causing a certain effect in the other person. In the case, convince he/she to stop blocking our view.

It is important to say that speech acts depend on the context in which they are taking place. We can see speech acts as operations on the context, denying, adding or requesting propositions to the context. So the interpretation of a speech act is completely context dependent. For example, if there is a permission, it probably contrasts with a prohibition that could be in force.

Many discussions and researches define what makes a speech act effective. The linguistic structure, the intentionality, the context are all a factors that can interfere. But none of them can actually delimitate what constitutes an effective speech act. This limit of the speech acts goes, then, besides the illocution and we find the discussion of the speech act connected with the body who performs the illocution as Judith Butler (1997) states "the speech act is a bodily act, and that the "force" of the performative is never fully separable from bodily force" (BUTLER, 1997 p. 145)

The pragmatic theorists looked for a theory which could take into account the participation of the individual in the performativity of the action of speech. Some researches were conducted about the body as a fundamental force in the speech act,

such as Judith Butler in *Excitable Speech: a politics of the performative* (1997) and Rothenberg in *The Excessive subject: A new theory of social change* (2010)

Judith Butler in her book *Excitable Speech: a politics of the performative*, investigates the fluid characteristic of language which is entangled with bodies and many cultural relations. Her work is fundamental in the study of the relation between language and the body. Butler is a theoretical mark in the studies of Austin. Her approach to the performative acts includes the connection between linguistic and political factors. In *Excitable Speech*, Butler emphasizes that language is not something rigid or fixed. The meaning is always constructed by many cultural relations. The interpretation can often exceed the intentions of the speaker.

Rothenberg (2010) in her book *The Excessive subject: A new theory of social change*, discusses the performative force of the embodied speech act with the influence of Butler. Concerning the reason why speech acts exceed the speakers intentions, she criticizes the lack of social aspects in Butler's analysis. She points out that speech acts exceed the speakers intentions "because other people interpret them according to their own lights in ways that are not predictable or governable in advance." (ROTHENBERG, 2010, p. 106).

According to the authors above, a speech act needs the body because it is, in essence, a bodily act. To define or discuss the action of saying something, it is necessary to analyze the relation between language and the body. So one can only understand the real meaning of an utterance when analyzing the context and the message conveyed by the body. This is clear for example, in a speech act which has the effect of a threat. Here is an observation made by Butler:

That the speech act is a bodily act means that act is redoubled in the moment of speech; there is what is said, and then there is a kind of saying that the bodily "instrument" of the utterance performs. Thus a statement may be made that, on the basis of a grammatical analysis alone, appears to be no threat. But the threat emerges precisely through the act that body performs in the speaking the act (BUTLER, 1997, p11)

So, the message of the body can change or reinforce the linguistic utterance. The speech act transcends the language system in the sense that it can convey much more meaning than what it is being said by the words.

In this analysis of the threat, she argues that the true significance of the speech act is guaranteed by what the speaker's body expresses nonverbally. Consonant as this account may be with a psychoanalytic conception of the unconscious, in the sense that "body language" may reveal unconscious motivations unacknowledged in the speaker's words. (ROTHENBERG, 2010, p.103)

This connection body/language is not meant to be seen as a dichotomy. Instead, it is possible to analyze the speech acts through multiple aspects. The linguistic system, the context and the body language are all components that construct the message of an utterance.

What transforms the speech act into an action is reinforced by the illocution force and by action force of the body who performs the illocution. Thus, the material and symbolical presence of the body when performing the act is a mark which imposes itself in the linguistic effect. A threat materializes itself by the performative utterance which it operates, but also by the effect of the body movement which performs the utterance. This statement do not create, as one could expect, a dichotomy body/language, but, on the contrary, show that the effect of the speech act is generated at the same time by what is said, by who says it, and by how it is said - how the body says it, how the utterance is said. The elements which leave their mark in a speech act perform an irreducible imbrication. The body says more than the utterance? The utterance says more than the body? Both say always the same? Or they never say the same?¹ (PINTO, 2002, p.6).

A frame created from the theory of Linguistics Pragmatics as discussed here, more specifically the layers of locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act in a speech act will be used as an analysis framework, as I explain in the next section.

5. EMBODIED SPEECH ACTS IN KENDRICK LAMAR'S VIDEOCLIPS

After I analyzed the videoclip with focus on the speech acts in the lyrics and the embodied speech acts in the videoclip, I could identify that the most recurrent representations found both in the lyrics and the video were of four types: representations

¹ My translation. In original: "O que faz do ato de fala uma ação está redobrado pela força da ilocução e pela força do agir do corpo que executa a ilocução. Assim, a presença material e simbólica do corpo na execução do ato é uma marca que se impõe no efeito linguístico. Uma ameaça se materializa pelo enunciado performativo que a opera, mas também pelo efeito do movimento do corpo que executa o enunciado. Essa afirmação não cria, como se poderia esperar, uma dicotomia corpo/linguagem, mas, ao contrário mostra que o efeito do ato de fala é operado ao mesmo tempo pelo que é dito, por quem se diz, e por como é dito – como o corpo diz, como o enunciado diz. OS elementos que impulsionam sua marca no ato de fala operam numa imbricação irredutível. O corpo diz mais que o enunciado? O enunciado diz mais que o corpo? Ambos dizem sempre o mesmo? Ou nunca dizem o mesmo?" (PINTO, 2002, p.6)

of violence, representations of victimization, representations of strength and autonomy and representations of childhood/vulnerability.

Representations of violence

Another speech act found is representing a violent black man, and the action of violence as being something learned in the performance of masculinities. In the video, a lot of images of violence can be found and in the lyrics many speech acts of threat or intimidation are repeated. This representation occurred in ten speech acts in the lyrics and nine embodied speech acts in the video. One example is the following:

Figure 1: Videoclip screenprint 1



In the video, it is possible to see a boy being taught how to fight by a man who is offering his face for him to be punched. As the illocutionary act, we may infer that he wants the boy to know how to defend himself. As a perlocutionary effect, he encourages the boy to fight.

It is relevant to mention that this image (as some others in the video) is a reference to the work by the American photographer Gordon Parks. Gordon Parks was an American photographer, musician, director and writer, who became very well-known by his works in photojournalism during the era of the civil rights movement, portraying African-Americans. Many of his iconic photographs were recognized with awards such as NAACP Image Award (2003). In the original photograph (*Ali and a young boy in Miami - 1966*) the boxer and activist Muhammad Ali teaches the young boy how to punch:

Figure 2: Ali and a young boy in Miami, 1966 – Gordon Parks



While in the video, we see the image in the figure 5, in the lyrics, we can hear: *"If I gotta slap a pussy-ass nigga, I'ma make it look sexy/If I gotta go hard on a bitch, I'ma make it look sexy."* With this statement, in the illocutionary act, he implies that if he has to perform violent actions, he is willing to do that in a way that makes him look cool. The perlocutionary act of self-affirmation and challenge can be implied in this utterance.

Figure 3: Videoclip screenprint 3



The video shows a group of black men fighting while some of them record the scenes on their cell phones. The illocutionary act that can be inferred is the violence glorified or praised and the perlocutionary effect is the initiation of violence, encouraging the actions by recording a video.

While that, in the lyrics, we hear: *"Goin' digital and physical on all y'all, ayy/ Bunch of criminals and money in my phone calls, ayy."* In the illocutionary act, he is willing to confront his enemy physically (in a fight) and digitally (in record selling). Again, we have a perlocutionary act of self-affirmation as he brags about digital streaming and physical record selling.

Figure 4: Videoclip screenprint 4



In this moment in the video a group of black men are standing in organized positions, wearing uniforms and practicing fight movements. The message that can be implied in the illocutionary act is that they are in an organized fight, using violence but with discipline. Considering that, the perlocutionary effect is advocating self-defense.

This analysis becomes clearer when we consider the fact that this image is also a reference to the work by the photographer Gordon Parks, mentioned before. In the original photograph, it is possible to see a group of black Muslims training self-defense. The black Muslims, African-American religious movement, which were traditionally known for advocate in favor of self-defense against racism.

Figure 5: Black Muslims Rally Harlem , New York, 1963 - Gordon Parks Archive



While the videoclip shows the figure 8 above, we have in the lyrics: "*They never been ready—yeah, I know, yeah, know, yeah.*" In the Ilocutionary act, it is implied that his enemies are not ready to confront him. The perlocutionary effect of this utterance is to warn: "Beware, I'm well prepared."

Representations of victimization

One frequent representation is the one of the black men who sees himself as a victim of some sort for the purpose of reach the sympathy and empathy of other people. One speech act found most recurrent is that of the lonely man who complains for being abandoned by everyone and still claims for help, as in the passage below:

Figure 6: Videoclip screenprint 6



In the image shown in the audiovisual material, it is possible to see a hand emerging from the water, which is the locutionary embodied speech act. As the illocutionary speech act, we may infer that someone is drowning, facing some kind of trouble, as well as is alone and is raising the hand above the water in hope of help, therefore the perlocutionary speech act is: someone please help me. Meantime, part of the lyrics being sung simultaneously was: *Ain't nobody prayin' for me*.

Having as locutionary act "Ain't nobody prayin' for me" the utterance implies in the illocutionary act that nobody cares about him, that he is alone; and it can be inferred in the perlocutionary act that he is indirectly asking for help or someone to pray for him showing that he is vulnerable, fragile, alone and needs help.

Another expressive example is the following:

Figure 7: Videoclip screenprint 7



In this image is possible to see a house burning and some people outside staring at it (the locutionary embodied speech act). As the ilocutionary act, we may infer that someone is homeless or even see the house as methaphor of the self which is now destroyed. As the perlocutionary act invite us to watch with sadness and resignation.

While that, we can see in the lyrics: *I'm willin' to die for this shit/I done cried for this shit, might take a life for this shit*. With this statement in the locutionary act, we may infer, in the ilocutionary act, that there is something very valuable to him (his career, which can also can be an allegory for his whole identity) and that he is willing to do anything to protect it. And in the perlocutionary act, he indirectly challenges others and implies that he may suicide or kill somebody.

Figure 8: Videoclip screenprint 8



In this picture we have boy in a heavy rain with his head down; profile. As the ilocutionary embodied speech act, we may infer that he is sad, alone and vulnerable as a child (This also may imply some sort of childhood trauma that affected him). In the perlocutionary act, he asks to be seen with sympathy. At this point in the lyrics, we have *I been stomped out in front of my mama*. Here in the ilocutionary act, he states that he's been humiliated in front of his mother, implying the idea that he has a trauma in his childhood that still affects him and in the perlocutionary act he wants us to be aware of that.

This mode of representation was found in eight speech acts in the lyrics and in eight embodied speech acts in the video.

Representations of strength and autonomy

Another recurrent speech act was the black man who does not show himself as vulnerable (emotionally, physically etc). Instead, he shows himself as strong, detached or intimidating to others. One example is the following:

In the lyrics he states: *"I don't give a fuck, I don't give a fuck/I don't give a, I don't give a, I don't give a fuck"*. With the statement "I don't give a fuck" in the locutionary act, it is implied, in the illocutionary act, that "he does not care" and it is possible to infer that he wants to show lack of emotional involvement. As a perlocutionary act, it seems to be implied that people should not go for him, for whatever one does for him, does not make difference.

Meantime, the video shows a sequence of images in high speed (about one second each) which contrasts with the speed in the representation before. These images contrast a bit with the previous ones representing violent scenes that are going to be seen with more details later in the video.

Figure 9: Videoclip screenprint 9



A man rising up and looking down at the water, as he seems like he just drowned someone (the person who is under the water was probably drowned by him) and above him, the sun, a group of men fighting while one of them records all on his cell phone; three children behind a fence, one of them holding a gun; a man covered in blood (probably he has been hurt). All these images depict violence with a certain detachment, none of the people depicted have expressions of shock or surprise, instead, they all have a resigned look. All the scenes have a violent background on them causing an effect of contrast between the previous images which were pacific.

This representation occurred in five speech acts in the lyrics and four embodied speech acts in the video.

Representations of childhood

The representation of black children is very frequent both in the video and the lyrics. Images of children are often depicted in the video and the lyrics indirectly mentioning childhood traumas. This representation occurred in three speech acts in the lyrics and in six embodied speech acts in the video. One example is the following:

Figure 10: Videoclip screenprint 10



The image, which was shown before in the video, shows a group of three children behind a fence while one of them, a black boy, holds a gun and points it to someone/somewhere.

Implicit in the illocutionary act we can presume that there is a naturalization of violence. The perlocutionary effect is that of intimidation and threat. Meanwhile, in the lyrics: *"100K spread across the floor, 'cross the floor, yeah/ None of y'all fuckin' with the flow, yeah, the flow, yeah."* In the locutionary act is possible to presume that his success ("100k spread across the floor") proves that his enemies cannot stop with his talent (his flow). By saying that, he reaches the perlocutionary effect of intimidating others while making self-affirmation of himself.

Figure 11: Videoclip screenprint 11



In another moment, the video shows the image of a black boy lying in the grass playing with a June bug. This is the only image that depicts a child playing. The image has a relaxed atmosphere, and utopic feeling.

This is another reference to the work of Gordon Parks. The original *Boy With a Junebug* is part of a series of photographs by Parks portraying only children and nature contrasting with his other images showing conflicts and fights during the Civil Rights Era.

Figure 12: Boy With a June bug, Fort Scott, Kansas, 1963 - Gordon Parks Archive



Meanwhile, in the lyrics, an idea is repeated: "*Bitch, all my grandmas dead/ So ain't nobody prayin' for me, I'm on your head, ayy.*" Implicit in the illocutionary act, it can be implied the idea that he feels alone and his grandmothers are dead. The possible perlocutionary act is to conquer the sympathy of the listener.

4. CONCLUSIONS

It was possible to verify that the discourses in the video and the lyrics connect to each other all the time. Most of the embodied speech acts present on the video are in simultaneous harmony with the ones present in the song. This confirms the statement said by Butler (1997) that "the body can convey much more meaning than the spoken words" some representations in the speech acts present in the verbal text of the lyrics become clearer when analyzing the embodied speech acts containing in the video.

It was found that the representations of masculinity in the work *Element* by Kendrick Lamar are built in relations of contrasts. He represents himself as strong and vulnerable, as a child and an adult, as violent and as victimized.

The violence, which is the most recurrent representation, is a stereotype which is embraced. As Bell Hooks states in her book, some men "no longer challenge this dehumanizing stereotype, instead they claim it as a mark of distinction, as the edge that they have over white males." (HOOKS, 2004). Here, violence is portrayed as something learned and passed through generations when boys learn how to be violent

from a really young age. The performance of violent acts is embraced as form of self-defense, although it can end up being used in situations where black men are violent to each other (and this representation can also be interpreted as a critic to this).

In the representations of victimization found in the work, it can be found a lot of traces of vulnerability and emotion. Although Hooks states that "a black man blocks out all emotions that interfere with this "cool" pose." (HOOKS, 2004), we can see here that between the conflicts of the contrasts represented, he lets his emotions and vulnerability appear several times.

Finally, according to the objectives established for this study, it is possible to conclude that the linguistic features present both in the lyrics and the video contribute to construct discourses that both reinforce and subvert the concepts of black masculinity since they explore the contrasts. These contrasts bring to discussion the plurality of representations of masculinities showing that it is indeed a plural experience.

Another salient aspect verified was that there is a strong sense of tradition of representations of black masculinity, which can be realized when analyzing the speech acts representing black masculinity during childhood and still performed during adulthood. Tradition is also intensified when the work of Gordon Parks is referenced many times in Lamar's work. The work of Parks reflected the struggle of African-American during the Civil Rights era portraying scenes of violence and conflicts to achieve the rights of black people. By using the work of Parks as a reference, Lamar sends the message that the fight is still happening. The relation between the fight against racism in the Civil Rights era is reflected in the fight that is still happening in the American society nowadays. The importance of reflecting about black identities in a society that stills faces police brutality, and still needs movements such as Black Lives Matter, becomes vital.

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