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Representations of Women in American Rap: A Systemic-  
Functional and Critical Discourse analysis

Dayana Paro

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Orientadora: Prof. Dra. Viviane Maria Heberle

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## ABSTRACT

Representation of women in American rap: A Systemic-  
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by

Dayana Paro

Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina

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Advisor: Prof. Dra. Viviane M. Heberle

Rap music is a musical genre that has become part of American popular culture since it constitutes a reflection of the culture from which it is performed. Themes like race, power, money, politics, drugs and sex are often approached in the lyrics, besides the peculiar way in which women are characterized. The objective of this study, thus, is to investigate textual and contextual representations of women in American rap music by analyzing a selection of five (5) songs from *Billboard's Year-End Top Rap Songs* that encompass the period from 2008 to 2012, based on Systemic Functional Grammar, Critical Discourse Analysis and Gender Studies. Developed from the analysis, three categories related to the representations of women in American rap music arose: a) Women's body

objectification; b) Mentioning to sexual practices; and c) Women's submission towards male fame and money. These categories are discussed and related to the detailed verbal analysis which provides textual evidence for the findings. Besides some discursive changes, it was noticed that the selected lyrics contribute to the reinforcement of the existing misogynist and sexist gendered discourse in rap music.

Key-words: Rap, Women, Systemic Functional Linguistics, Gender Studies, Critical Discourse Analysis.

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## RESUMO

Representações da Mulher em Rap Americano: Uma análise sistêmico-funcional e crítica.

Por

Dayana Paro

Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina

2013

Advisor: Prof. Dra. Viviane M. Heberle

Rap é um gênero musical que se tornou parte da cultura popular Norte-americana por constituir um reflexo da cultura da qual é protagonizada. Temas como raça, poder, dinheiro, política, drogas e sexo são frequentemente abordados em suas letras, além do modo peculiar no qual mulheres são caracterizadas. Deste modo, o objetivo deste trabalho é investigar as representações textuais e contextuais de mulheres presentes no rap Norte-americano através da análise de 5 (cinco) músicas selecionadas da *Billboard's Year-End Top Rap Songs* que abrangem o período de 2008 a 2012, baseada na gramática sistêmico-funcional, análise crítica do discurso e

estudos de gênero. A partir da análise realizada, emergiram três categorias relacionadas às representações de mulheres: a) Objetivação do corpo da mulher; b) Alusão a práticas sexuais; e c) Submissão da mulher frente à fama e dinheiro dos homens. Essas categorias são discutidas e relacionadas com a detalhada análise verbal que proporciona evidencia textual para as descobertas. Apesar de haver algumas mudanças discursivas, observa-se que as músicas selecionadas reforçam o já existente discurso sexista e misógino presente nas letras de rap Norte-americano.

Palavras-chave: Rap, Mulheres, Gramática Sistêmico-Funcional, Estudos de Gênero e Análise Crítica do Discurso.

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## **1. Introduction**

Rap music, which has become a musical genre known and practiced worldwide, is defined as “a musical form that makes use of rhyme, rhythmic speech, and street vernacular, which is recited or loosely chanted over a musical soundtrack” (Keyes, 2004, p.1). The objective of this study is to investigate textual and contextual representations of women in American rap music by analyzing a selection of songs based on the Systemic Functional Linguistics, Discourse Analysis and Gender Studies. I find it important to look into the written constructions and the discourse presented by them in order to unveil the messages that are being transmitted to the listeners considering the popularity inside the United States and the contemporary global status of this musical genre.

### **1.1 The History of Rap Music: A Brief Overview**

African American musicians as well as dramatists, poets and artists in general used their art as a way to provide strength to the movements that were happening during the 60s (Civil Rights movement, Black Power movement and opposition against the Vietnam War). After a long period marked by social and political anxiety, the counterculture

opened space to a period of escapism, and disco music took the scene; however, at the same time, some African American started to produce their own music (Oliveira, 2007). Thus, the Hip Hop movement, from which rap music has emerged, started to take place in America in the mid-70s in New York, influenced by African and Jamaican cultures (Perkins, 1995).

Afrika Bambaataa, a precursory figure of the genre, gives acknowledgment to the improvisational African elements of call-and-response form, a ritual of invocation to the gods and ancestors, as a constituent for this recited and free-style form of singing. Still, he compares the lexis created by the Africans in the course of slavery to the adaptations that rappers have made to the English language (jargons and linguistic variation) according to their culture (Perkins, 1995). In contrast to that, Grandmaster Caz, another personality from the Hip Hop culture, recognizes the influence of Jamaican reggae music on the genre, introduced in the New York borough of Bronx by Kool Herc, a musician from West Kingston that came to be known as one of the most important DJ's and enthusiastic of the Hip Hop movement and consequently, rap music. Nevertheless, both experts on the subject consider the *beat*, that is, "the structure around which the lyrics are developed, and samples of selected phrases from previously recorded music, jingles, solos, and so on play second fiddle"

(Perkins, 1995, p. 6) as being the basis of rap music. To produce a rap, the MC (Master of Ceremonies), first denomination given to rappers, used to combine the style of black music from the 40's and 50's and the current knowledge from the 70's to a chanted lyrical form, based on cultural and social experiences of everyday life. The act of dissing (to offend and depreciate each other) between MC's "battles" became a fundamental practice in rap that elevated the moral and recognition of practitioners. Furthermore, Perkins (1995) states that "the dis element in rap reinforces the macho tendency in African American male culture" (p. 10), since it opens space for the expression of toughness, competitiveness and lack of affect, common characteristics of male discourse (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992, cited in Wodak, 1997).

Culturally speaking, rap music has become a part of American popular society as it is a valuable setting for performance of identities in public spheres (Rose, 1994, Keyes, 2004), and reaches listeners from all social classes. Moreover, it is a reflection of the culture from which it is performed, exerting power of change over the thoughts and personalities of people. The genre has for decades inspired even the business of fashion and cinema, as example of the movie *Disordelies* (1987), starred by the Fat Boys, which has opened space for

others like Biz Markie, the Afros, and Digital Underground. Perkins (1995) states:

Rap has transformed American fashion with its sneakers, boots, loose-fitting clothes and “whacked” colors and design, Hip Hop practitioners of “writing” (graffiti) have sparked a renewed interest in street art. Rap has helped fuel the African American cinema resurgence in Hollywood, while several hip hop mavens command leading roles in films and television series (p. 1).

By the late 1980’s, rap music had reached a high level of popularity, becoming a business of money and influence in American society. Keys (2004) states that “it [rap] has been lauded by music critics as the most vital of new popular music forms in the music industry (1988a)”.

Historically, race has been a leading theme on rap music and rappers have used it as a form of social protest, as exemplified by the Gangsta rap movement, started in the late 1980s at the South Central Los Angeles, Compton and Long Beach, from which emerged the pimp attitude and style (Perkins, 1995). At that time, the usual theme of violence and

street wars present in the lyrics was tied to political criticism regarding the way urban blacks were treated by the police. It used to praise “hustling, street crime, women abuse and the gun as social equalizer” (Perkins, 1995, p. 19). The organization Parents’ Music Resource Center (PMRC) asked for parental advisory of these lyrics and, as a consequence, witnessed the increasing commercial appeal of gangsta rap (Perkins, 1995). The negative result of this movement was the reinforcement of the stereotype of black men being criminal and violent (Perry, 2004).

The content of rap lyrics usually addresses issues related to American contemporary and popular culture. Besides race and the violent lifestyle of *gangstas* already mentioned, issues of power, money, politics, partying, drugs, and sex are often approached. In addition to that, the very limited, sexist, and degrading way that women are portrayed can be considered a significant part of the rap lyrics. Berry (1994) in “*Feminine or Masculine: The Conflicting Nature of Female Images in Rap Music*”, points out that the female body is many times presented as merely a product for male sexual satisfaction and “described as objects to be sexually used, physically and verbally abused” (p.187). Some American modern rap lyrics tend towards the abuse, the decreasing of status and the domination of young women in general, and

black women particularly, usually named “bitches”, “hoes” and “sluts”.

The history of women in Hip hop culture has been impacted by this erroneous depiction as they are constantly marginalized, lessened and mischaracterized of their roles in black cultural production (Rose, 1994). Until the present day, they have been struggling to conquer a position of power in the rap industry. Female rappers like Lil’ Kim and Nicki Minaj are contemporary examples of successful women in this sphere that once was led by Sha-Rock, Roxanne Shanté and Queen Latifah, among other few examples. Like male rappers, they stand up for their gender raising issues of empowerment of women, as Woods (2009) points out: “By delivering their lyrics in a low-pitched, aggressive manner typically associated with masculinity, using a multitude of vulgar language and discussing their own sexuality and their control over men in a manner that is similar to male rappers, these female rappers embody a ‘masculinized’ representation of femininity (p.168)”. Thus, in an attempt to equalize genders throughout independence, power and sexual control inside the rap industry, they end up reinforcing the sexualized nature of rap towards women. Weitzer & Kubrin (2009) state that the reasons that may explain this erroneous concept carried by male rappers must be rooted in an anthropological division of genders, and there is a suggestion

that rappers who make use of this misogynist and sexist kind of description are influenced by a pre-established pattern of gender relations, the music industry and social conditions, besides the overrated concept of how a “macho” man must behave in modern society.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

The objective of this study is to investigate textual and contextual representations of women in American rap music by analyzing a selection of songs, based on Systemic Functional Grammar (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004), more specifically the context of situation and the system of transitivity which analyses types of processes and participants found in the lyrics. Then, we will correlate the results with concepts drawn from Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2003) and Gender Studies (Wodak, 1997, Heberle, 1997, Cranny-Francis, 2003) in order to investigate the female gender representations in American contemporary society in relation to the Hip Hop and rap music sphere.

### 1.3 Justification of the Study

There are several studies on the field of rap music involving gender, identity, social context and musical content, such as Oliveira (2007) 's analysis of the construction of identities in the Brazilian urban and rap sphere; White (2010)'s, which deals with popular themes and sexuality in the rap subject; and Woods (2009) 's and Kirkemo (2007) 's, which discuss elements of identity and ideology in the rap discourse. Nevertheless, few of these studies make the connection between gender, grammar and the discourse analysis of songs which are present in the daily routine of the mainstream modern generation of adolescents and young adults of the American society. Thus, considering the popularity inside the United States and the contemporary global status of this musical genre, I find it important to look into the written constructions and the discourse presented by them in order to unveil the messages that are being transmitted to the listeners.

The theoretical framework for this study is taken from the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Gender Studies, which are theoretical and methodological tools for the NUPDiscurso research group from Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina. Some of the group's publications concerning these theories are: Heberle (1997)'s

investigation of textual and contextual editorials of women magazines'; Figueiredo (2000)'s analysis of gender representations and discourse of rape; Bezerra (2012)'s multimodal investigation of the representation of women in *Sex and the City*, and Abreu (2012)'s study on representations of femininity in *Turma da Monica Jovem* comic book.

#### 1.4 Method

The method applied is an interpretive analysis of the lexicogrammatical choices and social practices involved in a selection of five (5) lyrics from American modern rap songs, based on the verbalization of sexist behavior, misogyny, domination, objectification, and general prejudice against women. First, the lyrics were edited into five texts and then the study was conducted through a detailed systemic-functional analysis of the transitivity patterns found in the texts, analyzing the clause itself under the categorization of processes (verbs), participants (nominal groups, names, pronouns) and circumstances (propositional phrases, nominal and adverbial groups). The results of the lexicogrammatical analysis were then interpreted according to Critical Discourse Analysis and gender studies in order to investigate the sociocultural context and gender issues.

## 1.5 Criteria for the Selection of Data

I have selected a total of five (5) songs from *Billboard's Year-End Top Rap Songs* between the years 2008 and 2012, that is, I worked with the top rated song of each year according to *Billboard's* charts of American Rap. The positions on the charts depend upon sales, radio airplays, digital downloads and streaming activity of each year, that is, they are directly influenced by the target public. The songs are: "Lollipop", by Lil Wayne ft. Static Major (2008); "Best I Ever Had", by Drake (2009); "Nothin' on You", by B.o.B ft. Bruno Mars (2010); "Look at Me Now", by Chris Brown ft. Busta Rhymes and Lil Wayne (2011) and "The Motto", by Drake ft. Lil Wayne (2012). The reason for working with the top rated rap of each year is to obtain an encompassing overview of what has been done in terms of this musical genre in the past five years, a period of time that I believe portrays the sociocultural and economic changes that have been taking place in late modernity and affect all spheres of society. Concerning *Billboard*, it is the first publication about music in the world, existing since 1894. In 1995, *Billboard.com*, the online version of the magazine, was launched and receives approximately 10 million visitors per month. Thus, *Billboard's* song charts are seen as a reliable source of information about trends, news and

videos in music, providing information for fans, entrepreneurs, promoters, radios, and many others.<sup>1</sup>

## 1.6 Research Questions

I present the following research questions based on the objective of the research:

(RQ1) - What types of processes (from systemic functional linguistics) are most typically represented in the selected lyrics?

(RQ2) - What representations of women are verbally portrayed in American rap lyrics?

(RQ3) - What themes predominate in the selected lyrics?

The hypothesis is that women are portrayed through a misogynistic and sexist view which is related to a pre-established pattern of gender relations, being described by social practices and depictions that are exclusively related to sexual practices, power struggle and interest for money and social status, which reinforces the pre-existent concept of

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<sup>1</sup> Source: [www.billboard.com](http://www.billboard.com)

sexual objects. In linguistic and discursive terms, these depictions and representations are illustrated both explicitly and implicitly by words, jargons and discursive practices related to the hip hop culture, as well as to American popular culture.

## **2. Review of Literature**

The theoretical background for this study is provided by: (1) Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Eggins, 2004); (2) Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1992; 2003); and (3) Gender Studies (Wodak, 1997; Heberle, 1997; Cranny-Francis et al, 2003).

### **2.1 Systemic Functional Linguistics**

Initially, it is important to understand the concept of text. Halliday & Hasan (1976) state that “the term text refers to any instance of language, in any medium, that makes sense to someone who knows the language” (as cited in Halliday & Matthiessen, p.3). In other words, text is any kind of message, either transmitted in spoken or written forms, which features coherence – as a means of being inserted in a particular context – and cohesion – the way the intratextual elements of the message are tied together, unified – with a specific communicative purpose in society, implanted in a system of social exchange (Eggins, 2004). Thus, people use text to create sense and meaning between the participants that are inserted in the communication process.

The theory of language proposed by Halliday (1978) states that “language is semiotic in the sense that it involves a set of meaningful choices along an amount of finite options” (as cited in Abreu, 2008, p. 12). Thus, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) has been described as “a functional-semantic approach to language which explores both how people use language in different contexts and how language is structured for use as a semiotic system” (Eggins, 2004, p.20). In other words, through the investigation of grammatical choices, SFL describes and interprets aspects about the context in which it is inserted.

Concerning context, Halliday (1978) suggests that there are three aspects in any circumstance that have linguistic consequences, that is, of all the things happening in a situation of language use, only these three elements have an implication on the type of language that will be created: field, tenor and mode (Eggins, 2004, p.90). Field is correlated with the activity that is taking place in the text, that is, what the text is all about and what is the purpose of the text; Tenor makes reference to the agentive or societal roles (who is speaking and who is being spoken to), power and status (equal or hierarchic) and social distance (familiar or distant) in the text; while Mode investigates the type of interaction (monologic or dialogic), medium (spoken or written) and channel (graphic, phonic,

visual) of the text (Butt et al, 2000, p. 189). This kind of investigation allows us to determine aspects of social representations in a text. Furthermore, these elements are linked to the strands of meaning that occur in the text: the Ideational (Experiential and Logical), Interpersonal and Textual, which are linked, respectively, to the systems of transitivity, mood and modality and theme and rheme. For this study, I will only focus on the transitivity system since it allows us to see who the participants are and the actions they are involved in.

As mentioned above, language is a semiotic structure that has different levels (sound system, writing system and grammar). These levels, or strata, are divided in: semantics, lexicogrammar, phonology and phonetics. In the semantics, meaning is constructed by the metafunctions (ideational, interpersonal and textual); then, the lexicogrammar is the transformation of meaning into wording (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 25). In this study, I am working on both levels of lexicogrammar and semantics in order to analyze the proposed texts.

Analysis of the transitivity system looks at text at the level of the clause, pointing out participants, processes and circumstances and it allows us to identify who acts on whom, and in which circumstances in each clause. So, the clause is

understood as a configuration that represents some process (doing or happening, saying or sensing, being or having) with participants and circumstances (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p.29). In addition, processes the actions, states, the construal of experience are represented by verbs; participants (the ones involved in the process) by nominal groups, names and pronouns; and circumstances (what is associated with the process) by propositional phrases, adjuncts and adverbial groups.

Moreover, by analyzing the transitivity system we can interpret the world of experience through a set of process types. Each of them offers a particular system to provide an area of experience as a figure of a specific form. The grammar considers two broad types of processes: the ones connected to the external world (what goes on in the sphere that surrounds us) and the ones connected to the world of consciousness (our “inner” world – perception, feelings, imagination) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 170). These processes are classified as material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal and existential. Material processes are categorized as processes of “doing-and-happening”, and are adopted in activities and actions that are considered “real”. The participants presented in this process are: Actor (the one who makes the change) and Goal, Range or Beneficiary (the ones to which the process is extended).

Mental processes are those of “sensing” that take place in our inner consciousness, either an experience that occurs inside our consciousness or acts on it, and its participants are Senser (a human) or Phenomenon (what is felt, wanted, perceived). Relational clauses characterize or identify, and relate to the processes of “being” – how “being” is interpreted during the course of the time, and how “being” is seen when it comes to processes and participants. Thus, the verbs that are most commonly found in these clauses are *be* and *have*. The participants presented are: Token (expression), Value (content), Attribute (a class ascribed or attributed) and Carrier (the entity to which it is credited the attribute). Behavioral processes concern human physiological performance (breath, smile, dream, laugh). They are positioned in between material and mental processes, and the participant is the Behavior (the one who is behaving). Verbal clauses are processes of saying that act in any instance of exchange of meaning. The participants are the Sayer (the one who utters or puts out a sign), Receiver (the one to whom the saying is directed) and Verbiage (the function that corresponds to what is said). Existential processes refer to something exists or happens. The participant is the Existent (the entity or event which is being said to exist) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

The aspects related to SFL provide the descriptive analysis of data, while the following sections about Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Gender Studies provide a sociocultural background for the analysis.

## 2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) allows us to investigate texts based on the view of their social effects, focusing on the process of meaning-making (Fairclough, 2003). Here, my interest is to investigate if the representations of women presented in the lyrics are connected to the sociocultural practices inserted in the context of the contemporary American Hip Hop society. In this work, I am considering rap singers as social agents since they portray social practices by means of the lyrics, their music and behavior.

Meaning-making is the power that social agents have to give new meanings to the words, and it “depends upon not only what is explicit in a text but also what is implicit – what is assumed” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 11). In this case, we are concerned with the image rap singers give to women. In this sense, it is significant to consider that “texts as elements of social events have causal effects – i.e. they bring about

changes. Most immediately, texts can bring about changes in our knowledge (we can learn things from them), our beliefs, our attitudes, values and so forth” (Fairclough, 2003, p.8).

In order to understand what discourse is, first we need to take account of the elements that constitute a text; it is established by social structures, social practices and social agents (Archer 1995, Sayer 2000, cited in Fairclough, 2003, p22). Social agents are the ones who “build” a text, that is, they make connections between the elements of a text, relating words and sentences to meaning. A language is a social structure, while texts are presented in most of the social events of everyday life. Social practices, then, are the ones which mediate social structures and social events. In other words, “social practices articulate discourse (hence language) together with other non-discoursal social elements (Fairclough, 2003, p. 25).

Fairclough (2003) states that:

Discourse figures in three main ways in social practice: ways of acting, ways of representing and ways of being. One way of acting and interacting is through speaking or writing, so discourse figures first “as part of the action” (...) Secondly, discourse figures in the representations which are always part

of “social practices” (...) Thirdly, discourse figures alongside bodily behavior in constituting particular ways of being, particular social or personal identities(p.26).

Discourse is thus constituted by the association between the text and the event, the concrete and abstract world, and people that participate in it. In this context, while the American rap lyrics will provide a textual description of social practices, the broader sociocultural context will offer an interpretation and explanation for them.

The concept of ideology and representations will be explored here, as well. Fairclough (2003, p.9) states that “ideologies are representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation”. Concerning texts, we can consider that they transmit “messages” of distinct ideologies, offering consciousness of main aspects of the world regarding social, cultural and economical issues, for instance. Thus, texts constitute a tool of power since they provide different kinds of knowledge to people. In terms of representations, Hall (1997) states that representation is:

A process through which members of a culture use systems of signification to produce meanings [...] objects, people, events in the world [which] do not have a stable, final or true meaning by themselves. We, in society, are the ones who attribute meanings to things and to the world surrounding us. Meanings, consequently, will always change, from time to time and from culture to culture (cited in Abreu, 2012, p. 26).

The concept of representation, thus, is directly related to ideologies since it brings significance to things and social practices, automatically exerting influence in relations of power and social control. While analyzing discourse, we are able to explore issues of ideologies and representations as conveyed by the social agents. In this paper I will be analyzing representations focused on agents and social practices in order to look at the way male rappers represent women through song texts within their sociocultural context, and thus, unveil ideologies in relation to gender issues. In the next section, I introduce the concept of gender and relate it with language and rap.

### 2.3 Gender, Language and Rap

It is important to look at some definitions and studies related to gender, language and rap since my work is linked to representations of women in a specific genre of text. Here, I am approaching gender taking into consideration the sociocultural context of the participants, as well as the socio-economic status, age and discourses.

There is a difference between “gender” and “sex”. Giddens (1999) “defines ‘sex’ as biological or anatomical differences between men and women, whereas ‘gender’ concerns the physiological, social and cultural differences between males and females” (cited in Wodak, 1997, p. 3). In other words, sex is strictly connected to the biological determination of the individual while gender relates to its social construction considering the context of race, ethnicity, social class and so forth. Cranny-Francis et al (2003) add that “gender is the culturally variable elaboration of sex” (p.4). Thus, we can assume that gender is a characteristic shaped on a daily basis, and not naturally acquired.

Cranny-Francis et al (2003) add that the social context of gender tends to promote the male supremacy over female in society: “Gender operates a set of hierarchically arranged roles in modern society which makes the masculine half of the

equation positive and the feminine negative” (p.2). Regarding the connection that involves gender and language, Ainsworth (2012) notes that scholars on the subject (Holmes, 2006; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003; Bucholtz, 1999) have detected that the use of language and its interactional style act as a strategic social practice for the construction of gender identity. In this sense, Cameron (2006) states that “certain linguistic practices are coded as ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ and their deployment is one of the ways in which gender is performed by individuals” (cited in Ainsworth, 2012, p.182). In addition, Cameron (1988) says that investigations on women’s and men’s speech emphasize the awareness that men and women are heterogeneous social groups and that many of the differences are due to variation between the sexes (Heberle, 1997, p. 22).

Further, Sunderland (2012) points out the increase of focus on gender in written texts and associated visuals like magazines, textbooks and advertisements and claims that “this is to see gender as being as much about the *representation/construction* of women, men, girls and boys, as about their linguistic (and other) *behavior*”(p. 106). Thus, the interest in gender issues reproduces the need for reconceptualization and deconstruction of values and beliefs of groups of women and men (Heberle, 2000).

Since I am approaching themes of sexism, misogyny and relations of power in gender relations, I consider important to introduce the concept of patriarchy discussed by Cranny-Francis et al (2003) which “indicate a social system in which maleness and masculinity confer a privileged position of power and authority; where man is the Self to which woman is the Other”(p.14), directly linked to the issue of male hegemony which refers to the “widespread domination of men in the social, economic and cultural spheres”(p.16).

Taking these means into account, I should consider what happens with language and gender relations in the realm of the sociocultural context of rap music. Power, in a general context, has been one of the leading themes in this genre, particularly in relation to women. Haugen (2003) states that “There is a well-known perception that much of the discourse that takes place in this genre [rap] imposes upon certain women categories of status that are taken to be lower than the statuses that the men themselves take” (p. 429). The Hip Hop and rap scene, from its artistic realm until the backstage of the industry, has been controlled and integrated almost in its total by men. Women have participated and contributed to new styles and techniques, as well as writers, performances and producers, but it is undeniable that men still take the control of the scene

(Phillips, Reddick-Morgan, Stephens, 2005). In relation to language and discourse, it is argued that:

A masculinist discursive strand is clearly identifiable in both rap music and its parent culture, Hip Hop. The numerical preponderance of men, combined with pre-existing masculinist scripts and sexist practices in virtually all occupational and commercial realms as well as the society at large, has ensured the greater visibility of men's prerogatives and perspectives relative to women's in both rap music and Hip Hop (Phillips, Reddick-Morgan, Stephens, 2005, p. 254).

It is significant to point out that although there is a prevalence of male and sexist discourse in rap music, it is not fair to generalize and state that the genre as a whole portrays discriminatory and misogynistic images of women since rap has been a scene of polemics and contradictions in relation to several subjects.

After revising the theoretical context of this study, the next section provides the data analysis.

### 3. Data Analysis

This section contextualizes and provides the results of the analysis of the selected songs based on the principles of the Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) and Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 2003).

#### 3.1 Describing *Field*

In order to answer “what is going on” in the songs and contextualize what events and participants take place, I take the support of the variable *Field* of the Context of Situation, as proposed in SFL.

The song *Lollipop* (rated as number one in 2008’s *Billboard’s Year-End Top Rap Songs*), by Lil Wayne ft. Static Major, presents the young African American rapper describing a contemporary situation of sexual involvement with a girl, whose identity is not mentioned, and who apparently has a boyfriend, but keeps looking for him; he describes their sexual encounters, enhancing the girl’s body and social practices.

The song *Best I Ever Had* (rated as number one 2009’s *Billboard’s Year-End Top Rap Songs*), by Drake, young African American, refers to a contemporary situation where the rapper declares his love to a girl, whose identity is not mentioned. He

makes allusion mostly to common situations and suggests sexual practices, but is not explicit about them.

The song *Nothin' on You* (rated as number one 2010's *Billboard's Year-End Top Rap Songs*), by B.o.B. ft. Bruno Mars presents a young African American speaking directly to a former girlfriend, whose identity is not mentioned, in an attempt to restore the relationship while describing his emotional state.

The song *Look at Me Now* (rated as number one 2011's *Billboard's Year-End Top Rap Songs*), by Chris Brown Feat. Busta Rhymes and Lil Wayne, young African Americans, is directed to other rappers and describes relations of power and competition in the rap sphere through social practices that are also related to women.

The song *The Motto* (rated as number one 2012's *Billboard's Year-End Top Rap Songs*), by Drake ft. Lil Wayne portrays two African Americans describing routine situations and practices of their sociocultural context; the issues are related to work, parties, power and relationship with women and friends.

Thus, we have an overview of the central themes of the songs. Most of them (*Lollipop*, *Best I Ever Had* and *Nothin' on You*) are directed to a specific girl whose identity is not

mentioned, and we find examples of gender relations in all of the songs.

### 3.2 Verbal Analysis: Transitivity

From the analysis of the transitivity system (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) I could investigate and identify the representations of women and who are the Actors presented in the clauses. Concerning processes, I found instances of the six types. Material and Mental processes were the most common ones with a number of 141 and 51 occurrences, respectively. Relational processes appeared in 42 times and Verbal, 24. Behavioral and Existential had only 1 occurrence each, and since these occurrences are not directly related to activities towards women, they will not be discussed.

Material processes, the ones of “doing-and-happening”, are mostly performed by the rappers (men) relating to different kinds of daily activities, people and towards the external world. Some examples are: “*I **make** her feel right*– (Lollipop)”; “*I’m **working** I’ll be there soon as I **make** it home* – (Best I Ever Had)”; “***Tryna chase skirts, living** in the summer sun* – (Nothin’ on You); “*From the bottom I **climb***”– (Look at Me Now); and “*And if a leaf **fall, put** some weed in that bitch*” – (The Motto).

Many of them, however, are used to describe sexual practices with women. In addition, even when women are the Actors, the practices are usually towards men and related to sex. Examples:

<b>I</b>	<b>make</b>	<b>her</b>	<b>bring</b>	<b>that</b> <b>ass</b>	<b>back</b>
Actor	Process: Material	Goal/Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance

*Lollipop (2008)*

<b>Clubbing</b>	<b>hard,</b>	<b>fuckin</b>	<b>wome</b>	<b>ain't much</b>	<b>to do</b>
Process: Material	Circumstan ce	Proces s: Materi al	Goal	Circumstan ce	Proces s: Materi al

*The Motto (2012)*

<b>She</b>	<b>made</b>	<b>me</b>	<b>beg</b>	<b>for it</b>	<b>she</b>	<b>give</b>	<b>it</b>
				<b>until</b>		<b>(it)</b>	<b>up</b>
Act or	Proce ss: Mater ial	Go al	Proce ss: Verba l	Verbia ge	Act or	Proce ss: Mater ial	Circumst ance

*Best I Ever Had (2009)*

<b>She</b>	<b>accidentally</b>	<b>slip and</b>	<b>fall</b>	<b>on my</b>
				<b>dick</b>
Actor	Circumstance	Process: Material	Process: Material	Goal

*Look At Me Now (201*

<b>She</b>	<b>wax</b>	<b>it all off</b>
Actor	Process: Material	Circumstance

*Look At Me Now (2011)*

### 3.2.2. Mental Process

Mental processes are those of “sensing and perceiving” and take place in our inner consciousness, like “*Shawty wanna lick me*” (Lollipop); “*I want this forever*” (Best I Ever Had); “*I’m always hearing your name*” (Nothin’ on You); “*Niggas know I’m the best*” (Look at Me Now); and “*I can almost guarantee she know the deal*” (The Motto).

Most of the examples in my data when women are Senser are directly linked to emotional, sentimental and sexual practices towards the rappers, contributing to the reinforcement of the status of male power and women’s subjugation.

<b>Shawty (girl)</b>	<b>wanna</b>	<b>a thug</b>
Senser	Process: Mental	Phenomenon

*Lollipop (2008)*

<b>She</b>	<b>need</b>	<b>a refund</b>	<b>need</b>	<b>to bring</b>	<b>that nigga back</b>
Senser	Process: Material	Phenomenon	Process: Mental	Process: Material	Phenomenon

*Lollipop (2008)*

<b>Ladies</b>	<b>love</b>	<b>me</b>
Senser	Process: Mental	Phenomenon

*Look At Me Now (2011)*

<b>She</b>	<b>know</b>	<b>e v e n if</b>	<b>I am</b>	<b>fucking</b>	<b>w i t h  h e r</b>	<b>I don't really</b>	<b>need</b>	<b>her</b>
Senser	Process: Mental		Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Sense	Process: Mental	Phenomenon

*The Motto (2012)*

<b>All these</b>	<b>bitches</b>	<b>wanna</b>	<b>chill</b>
	Senser	Process: Mental	Phenomenon

*The Motto (2012)*

When men are Senser, there are processes related to self-empowerment, sex relations and women's body objectification:

<b>I</b>	<b>ain't never</b>	<b>seen</b>	<b>an ass like hers</b>
Senser		Process: Mental	Senser

*Lollipop (2008)*

<b>I</b>	<b>love</b>	<b>to touch</b>	<b>her lovely lady lumps</b>
Senser	Process: Mental	Process: Material	Phenomenon

*Lollipop (2008)*

<b>She</b>	<b>bring</b>	<b>that ass back</b>	<b>because</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>like</b>	<b>that</b>
Actor	Process: Material	Goal		Senser	Process: Mental	Phenomenon

*Lollipop (2008)*

<b>Look</b>	<b>at me now,</b>	<b>bitch</b>
Process: Mental	Phenomenon	Senser

*Look At Me Now (2011)*

Some of the mental processes describe men's feelings and emotions in a more appreciative and constructive means in relation to women, although they occur in only two songs:

<b>You (are)</b>	<b>are</b>	<b>all</b>	<b>I ever</b>	<b>wanted</b>
Carrier	Process: Relational	Phenomenon	Senser	Process: Mental

*Best I Ever Had (2009)*

<b>Nigga</b>	<b>thinking</b>	<b>he</b>	<b>met</b>	<b>you</b>	<b>in the past life</b>
Senser	Process: Mental	Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Circumstance

*Best I Ever Had (2009)*

<b>You</b>	<b>make</b>	<b>me</b>	<b>wanna</b>	<b>sing</b>
Actor	Process: Material	Senser	Process: Mental	Process: Material

*Nothin' on You (2010)*

<b>I've</b>	<b>been</b>	<b>around and</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>never</b>	<b>seen</b>	<b>another one</b>
Actor	Process: Material	Circumsta nce	Sens er		Process : Mental	Phenome non

*Nothin' on You (2010)*

### 3.2.3. Relational Processes

Relational processes are the ones that characterize or identify, such as “*Drop it like is hot*” (Lollipop); “*This one is for you*” (Best I Ever Had); “*You’re the one to blame*” (Nothin’ on You); “*I get what you get in ten years, in two*

*days*”(Look at Me Now); and “*I’m in the building*” (The Motto).

Not all of the songs present relational processes related to women. When they do, I found references focused on features of personality and physical aspects; some of them compare the girl to other ones in an attempt to enhance her moral. Most of them are constructed in a sense of praise and equality while only one in a sense of degrading:

<b>Lil Mama</b>	<b>had</b>	<b>a swag</b>	<b>like mine</b>
Carrier	Process: Relational	Attribute	

*Lollipop (2008)*

<b>She</b>	<b>ain’t never</b>	<b>had</b>	<b>a move</b>	<b>like mine</b>
Carrier		Process: Relational	Attribute	

*Lollipop (2008)*

<b>You</b>	<b>be</b>	<b>up on everything</b>	<b>other hoes ain’t never on it</b>
Carrier	Process: Material	Attribute	

*Best I Ever Had (2009)*

<b>You</b>	<b>(are)</b>	<b>the</b> <b>best</b>	<b>I ever</b>	<b>Had</b>
Carrier	Process:Relational	Attribute	Carrier	Process:Relational

*Best I Ever Had (2009)*

<b>They</b>	<b>got</b>	<b>nothing on you,</b>	<b>baby</b>
Token	Process: Relational	Value	Vocative

*Nothin' On You (2010)*

<b>Baby</b>	<b>you</b>	<b>are</b>	<b>the whole</b> <b>package</b>
Vocative	Carrier	Process: Relational	Attribute

*Nothin' On You (2010)*

<b>Your</b> <b>girlfriend</b>	<b>is</b>	<b>a freak</b>	<b>like</b> <i>Cirque du</i> <i>Soleil</i>
Carrier	Process: Relational	Attribute	

*Look At Me Now (2011)*

When identifying themselves, men usually use features of empowerment over women and other men, enhancing their possessions and wealth:

<b>(I)</b>	<b>Got</b>	<b>a bitch that</b>	<b>play</b>	<b>in movies in my Jacuzzi</b>
Token	Process: Relational	Value	Process: Material	Circumstance

*Look At Me Now (2011)*

<b>I</b>	<b>am</b>	<b>the fucking man</b>
Carrier	Process: Relational	Attribute

*The Motto (2012)*

<b>(I)</b>	<b>got</b>	<b>a condo</b>	<b>up in Biscayne</b>
Token	Process: Relational	Value	Circumstance

*The Motto (2012)*

Also, there are some instances where men back down on their role of command and intentionally provide some control over women:

<b>I</b>	<b>Be</b>	<b>over there</b>
Carrier	Process: Relational	Attribute

*Best I Ever Had (2009)*

<b>You</b>	<b>don't even</b>	<b>have</b>	<b>to ask</b>	<b>twice</b>
Carrier		Process: Relational	Process: Verbal	Verbiage

*Best I Ever Had (2009)*

<b>You</b>	<b>could</b>	<b>have</b>	<b>my heart</b>
Carrier		Process: Relational	Attribute

*Best I Ever Had (2009)*

### 3.2.4. Verbal Processes

Verbal processes are related to “saying” in any instance of exchange of meaning. Some examples found were: “*Shawty said the nigga that she with ain't shit*” (Lollipop); “*And I say the same thing*” (Best I Ever Had); “*And I don't wanna sound redundant*” (Nothin’ on You); “*I ain't really mean to say "on my dick"*” (Look at Me Now); and “*Nigga, money talks*” (The Motto).

Most of the processes found in the lyrics are performed by men, the main “Sayer”. When manifested towards women, the verbal processes have the status of “demand”:

<b>I</b>	<b>told</b>	<b>her</b>	<b>back it up</b>
Sayer	Process: Verbal	Receiver	Verbiage

*Lollipop (2008)*

<b>Who</b>	<b>told</b>	<b>you</b>	<b>to put</b>	<b>them jeans on?</b>
	Process: Verbal	Receiver	Process: Material	Circumstance

*Best I Ever Had (2009)*

<b>You</b>	<b>are</b>	<b>my Wonder Woman</b>	<b>call</b>	<b>me</b>	<b>Mr. Fantastic</b>
Carrier	Process: Relational	Attribute	Process: Verbal	Receiver	Verbiage

*Nothin' On You (2010)*

Further, I found only one occurrence (repeated in a sequence of three times) where women portray the Sayer:

<b>Shawty</b>	<b>said</b>	<b>the nigga that</b>	<b>she</b>	<b>(is) with</b>	<b>ain't</b>	<b>shit</b>
Sayer	Process : Verbal	Verbiage	Carrier	Process : Relational	Process : Relational	Attribute

*Lollipop (2008)*

In addition, there are clauses where the rapper shows approval and appreciation regarding women, being deliberately “subjugated “by them:

<b>I</b>	<b>say</b>	<b>you</b>	<b>(are)</b>	<b>the fucking best</b>
Sayer	Process: Verbal	Carrier/Receiver	Process: Relational	Attribute

*Best I Ever Had (2009)*

<b>She</b>	<b>made</b>	<b>me</b>	<b>beg</b>	<b>for it</b>
Actor	Process: Material	Sayer	Process: Verbal	Verbiage

*Best I Ever Had (2009)*

<b>You don't</b>	<b>have</b>	<b>to ask</b>	<b>twice</b>
Carrier/Sayer	Process: Relational	Process: Verbal	Verbiage

*Best I Ever Had (2009)*

### 3.3 Discussing the findings on processes

From the analysis of the processes in the selected lyrics discussed above, in general, Material processes are related to sexual practices and everyday activities and have the rappers as the main Actor, stating their position of power over women. When women perform the role of Actor, the events are usually connected to sexual practices towards men, situating women in a place of sexual objectification. Mental processes, on the other hand, show occurrences of perception and affective processes; when women are the Senser, most examples are related to emotions towards men and desire for sexual relations. When

men are the Sayer, I found processes that promote a culture of physical characteristics (*butt* and *ass*), resulting in a practice of body objectification. Nevertheless, two of the five songs (*Best I Ever Had* and *Nothin' On You*) show instances of neutral and positive emotions towards women. Relational processes are mostly used to define women's identities and personality, both in a sense of appreciation and degradation. Relational processes are also used by men to identify themselves as the ones who have material and financial possessions and recognition within the rap sphere, which configures a practice of empowerment. Concerning Verbal processes, results show that men are the main Sayer, which characterizes a position of command. In addition, there are processes that exemplify appreciation towards women and change the role of men from commander to subjugated – nevertheless, these process are directly and intentionally linked to sexual practices.

### 3.4 Representation of the participants

Since I am approaching issues of Representational meanings (Fairclough, 2003) it is necessary to explore the way participants are referred to inside the texts. At this point, I am looking at references towards women in order to determine such representations. For this purpose I will be investigating

the following variables mentioned by Fairclough (2003) and proposed by Van Leeuwen (1996) regarding the representation of social actors: Noun/Pronoun, Specific/Generic and Activated/Passivated. I consider them to be the most illustrative variables regarding my objective in this study.

Noun and Pronoun: Most of references towards women using pronouns along the texts are made through the use of 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronouns, promoting a distant relationship between the participants:

*“**She** lick me like a lollipop” (Lollipop, 2008)*

*“Cause **she** hold me down every time I hit **her** up” (Best I Ever Had, 2009)*

*“I tongue kiss **her** other tongue” (The Motto, 2012)*

The pronoun of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person endorses a direct relationship and takes place most in the songs *Best I Ever Had* and *Nothin’ on You* since the central theme of the lyrics are to praise the girl and to repair a relationship, respectively:

*“Baby **you** my everything, **you** all I ever wanted” (Best I Ever Had, 2009)*

*“I know **you** feel where I’m coming from” (Nothin’ on You, 2010)*

Also, the use of 1<sup>st</sup> plural pronoun *we* promotes a closer relation in the specific context of the songs, and were found occurrences related to women only in two songs mentioned above:

*“**We** could do it real big, bigger than you ever done it” (Best I Ever Had, 2009)*

*“Cause **we** don't wanna be a tv episode” (Nothin’ on You)*

The occurrences of the pronoun *we* registered towards men in the others songs suggest the close relation between men in the rap sphere, a characteristic of friendship and loyalty within the group:

*“And **we** struggling and hustling and sending in and getting in” (Look At Me Now, 2011)*

*“Like **we** sitting on the bench, nigga, **we** don't really play” (The Motto, 2012)*

Regarding nouns positive and negative references used in relation to women were found. The term *shawty* is very

common in the rap context and is designated to refer to an attractive girl, thus, suggesting a positive allusion and promoting care and endearment. It occurred in one song:

“*Shawty want a thug*” and “*Shawty said the nigga that she with ain't shit*” (Lollipop, 2008)

Another instance that follows the pattern above is *lil mama*, found in one of the songs:

“*Lil mama had a swag like mine*” (Lollipop, 2008)

In addition, I listed the occurrence of the following words that represent women in a positive or neutral sense: *ladies* (1), *skirts* (1), *Wonder Woman* (1) and *thang* (1).

In relation to negative references, I found only three different words: *bitch*, which appeared in three different songs, *chick*, one song and *hoes*, one song. The word *bitch* is commonly applied in relation to women within the rap context and carries a damaging connotation:

“*When my album drop bitches will buy it for the picture*” (Best I Ever Had, 2009)

“Got a **bitch** that play in movies in my Jacuzzi, pussy juicy”  
(*Look at Me Now*, 2011)

“Better cuff your **chick** if you with her I can get her” (*Look at Me Now*, 2011)

“Cause the pimping ice cold, all these **bitches** wanna chill”  
(*The Motto*, 2012)

The word *hoes* suggests promiscuity; it comes from the term *whore* and is associated with prostitutes:

“You be up on everything other **hoes** ain’t never on it” (*Best I Ever Had*, 2009)

Thus, regarding pronouns I found that, in general, women are situated in a distant relationship with men throughout the use of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronoun *she* and *her*; the choices of nouns show a more neutral an allusion to women (here, I am not considering the context in which the nouns were used, but only the meaning of the references).

Specific and generic variables investigate whether the participants are mentioned in a generalized form or through distinct names. All of the occurrences that make reference to

women as participants are generic, suggesting undefined personality and lack of influence:

*“You know a lot of **girls** be thinking my songs are about them”*  
(*Best I Ever Had*, 2009)

*“Beautiful **girls** all over the world”* (*Nothin’ On You*, 2010)

*“**Ladies** love me”* (*Look at Me Now*, 2011)

*“Clubbing hard, fucking **women**, ain't much to do”* (*The Motto*, 2012)

The only song that mentions a specific name of a female participant is *The Motto* (2012) in the clause “Oh my god, Becky, look at her butt”. However, it is important to state that the name is in the vocative form, besides the fact that the sentence originates from another song named *Baby Got Back* (1992), by Sir Mix-a-Lot, which had been considered very sexist due to the explicit objectification of woman’s body.

In contrast to that, men have their specific names mentioned as participants in the songs *Look at Me Now* and *The Motto*.

Activated and passivated variables investigate whether the participant is an Actor, Affected or Beneficiary. These categories help us to see who is the main Actor, that is, who carries the control and power of change and who is influenced by the processes. First, the occurrence of men as Actor is considerably superior to women. Moreover, when women are Actor the processes are usually related to sexual practices or objectification:

*“She **lick** me like a lollipop” (Lollipop, 2008)*

*“She **made** me beg for it, ‘till she **give** it up” (Best I Ever Had, 2009)*

*“She **wax** it all off” (Look at Me Now, 2011)*

*“Now she **want** a photo” (The Motto, 2012)*

Considering all variables proposed in this study, I found that: women are mostly mentioned as 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular participants and generic terms rather than specific names. When cited by nouns, the occurrences were neutral and positive rather negative and they portray the role of Affected or Beneficiary participants more than Actor, affirming the condition of men as bearer of control and influence.

### 3.5 Discursive and Sociocultural Practices

In this section I discuss and exemplify the main themes related to women that are approached in the selected lyrics. Those are: a) Women's body objectification; b) Mentioning of sexual practices, and c) Women's submission towards fame and money.

#### 3.5.1. Women's body objectification

A characteristic that is present in four of the five analyzed songs is the presence of women's body objectification, that is, references that reduce the image of women to parts of her body, a very current theme on contemporary rap songs. Chiu (2005) states that "when women's bodies and physique are constantly mentioned...it can give the impression that a woman's body, weight and shape are among the most important things about a woman" (cited in White, 2010, p.60). Some of the examples of this feature are:

*"But man, I ain't never seen an **ass** like hers / That **pussy** in my mouth had me lost for words / So I told her back it up like burp, burp / And made that **ass** jump like jerp, jerp"* (Lollipop, 2008)

“*My shirt ain’t got no stripes, but I can make your **pussy** whistle*” (*Best I Ever Had*, 2009)

“*Got a bitch that play in movies in my Jacuzzi, **pussy juicy***” (*Look at Me Now*, 2011)

“*Almost drowned in her **pussy** so I swam to her **butt***” (*The Motto*, 2012)

As seen, words like *pussy*, *ass* and *butt* many times represent the personification of a woman, promoting her body’s objectification. The only song that did not present instances of that is *Nothin’ on You* (2010), probably because of the lyrical content’s purpose of enhancing features of emotions and personality.

### 3.5.2. Mentioning of sexual practices

Contents related to sexual practices are common in rap songs. Kubrin (2005) states that “The street code presents promiscuity as a virtue, and sex is an important symbol of local social status. In the process, women become sexually objectified” (cited in White, 2010, p.58). Throughout the analysis of these

behaviors, I have tried to examine what the sexual behavior reveals about the social actors.

In the song *Lollipop* (2008), the rapper uses the sentence “*She lick me like a lollipop*” to infer he is getting oral sex from the girl. Then, in “*That pussy in my mouth had me lost for words*” we have the change of roles: now, he is giving the girl oral sex.

In the verse “*Now get up after you back it up don’t stop*” we can infer that he wants the girl to leave after the sexual encounter, suggesting his disinterest for romantic intimacy and asserting his control over the event. Once more, he talks about the change of roles in the sequence “*I get her on top, she drop it like it’s hot / And when I’m at the bottom, she Hillary Rodham*”, asserting a struggle for power in the sexual practice: he both likes to be in command and exert his power over the girl. To state the change of roles, the rapper does an interesting mention to *Hillary Rodham*, a personality from the politics of the United States, first known as Bill Clinton’s wife.

The song’s last verse is “*call me so I can make it juicy for ya*” where he exerts his control over the situation. Other examples of power in the realm of sexual relations were found at the song (*Best I Ever Had*, 2009), although it is more implicit by the meaning than explicit by words:

“*She made me beg for it, ‘till she give it up*” (*Best I Ever Had*, 2009)

“*Get it from the back and make your fucking bra strap pop*” (*Best I Ever Had*, 2009)

There is the suggestion of sexual encounter in the verse “*Better cuff your chick if you with her, I can get her and she accidentally slip and fall on my dick*” in the song *Look at Me Now* (2011), when the rapper proposes he is “too good” for a girl to resist him. In the song *The Motto* (2012), the rapper mentions oral sex in “*Still getting brain from a thang, ain't shit changed*”, and says that, in spite of his being famous now, he still keeps having sexual relations with girls “from the hood”. In the verse “*She know even if I'm fuckin' with her, I don't really need her*” once more, the girl is imposed to the man’s will, asserting the role of object.

### 3.5.3. Women’s submission towards fame and money

A topic presented in the songs is the suggestion that men have the condition to offer material goods and entertainment that girls cannot afford. It is acknowledged the importance of social status and material wealth in the rap sociocultural context. Kubrin (2005) says that “the street code

calls for the bold display of the latest status symbol clothing and accessories” (cited in White, 2010, p.61). Thus, material status acts like a tool for men to attract women.

In the song *Lollipop* (2008) we find the verse “*Shawty want a thug / Bottles in the club*” where the word *bottles* implies the girl wants the man to pay for her drinks, usually expensive ones. In the song *Best I Ever Had* (2009), the rapper implies he can provide the girl things that she and other girls never had before in “*We could do it real big, bigger than you ever done it / You be up on everything other hoes ain’t never on it*”. Although it is implicit in “*bigger than you ever done it*” and “*You be up on everything*” we can suppose that he means expensive material goods the girl could never afford by herself. Finally, he says “*I can spend whatever on it*” and “*the money ain’t the issue*” where the words *spend* and *money* reinforces his condition of provider. In the song *The Motto* (2012) the rapper says “*Some Spanish girls love me like I’m on Aventura*” probably referring to the Aventura Mall, a shopping center located in Miami, FL, suggesting throughout the double entre that women are attracted to what his money can provide to them. Further, he says “*Now she want a photo*”, indicating that the girl is a groupie, that is, is interested in his fame.

### 3.6 Discussing the findings on Discursive and Sociocultural Practices

Thus, through the analysis of discursive and sociocultural practices, I could find that a) women were put in a place of objectification and subservience in relation to men; b) women have their bodies presented as instrument for sexual satisfaction and; c) for being subjugated to such behaviors mentioned above, women are many times compensated with material goods given by men.

### 3.7 Research Questions

In relation to the research questions presented in the first section, I conclude that:

(RQ1) - What types of processes are most typically represented in the selected lyrics?

The number of occurrences of processes showed that Material processes are the predominant ones within the lyrics. In a total of 222 occurrences, 92 of the processes are somehow related to women, either playing the role of Actor or not. Mental processes were the second most utilized, with a number of 89 occurrences, where 42 are related to women. Then,

Relational processes appeared 74 times, where 30 related to women. There were few occurrences of Verbal, Behavioral and Existential processes.

(RQ2) - What representations of women are verbally portrayed in American rap lyrics?

Women are mostly verbally portrayed throughout the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular pronoun *she* and generic forms of presentation like *girls* and *women*, a kind of behavior which promotes a distant relationship from men; concerning nouns, I noticed more positive and neutral occurrences like *ladies* (1), *chick* (1), *skirts* (1), *Wonder Woman* (1) and *thang* (1) than negative ones like *bitches* (3) and *hoes* (1). Finally, women represent the role of Beneficiary or Affected more than Actor, affirming a passive condition in relation to men.

(RQ3) - What themes predominate in the selected lyrics?

Regarding the main themes presented towards women, I found the issues of body objectification, description and mentioning of sexual practices and the female submission under male power provided by fame and money, bringing the notion that women can be “compensated” with expensive

material goods and entertainment. Moreover, I believe these representations are strictly related to the sociocultural practices of the contemporary American Hip Hop and rap context since popular music like rap constitute a reproduction, whereas limited, of cultural values and ideologies carried by their practitioners. Kubrin (2005) argues that “Many of the violent (and patriarchal, materialistic, sexist, etc.) ways of thinking that are glorified in gangsta rap are a reflection of the prevailing values created and sustained in the larger society” (cited in White, 2010, p. 72).

In the next section, I present the final remarks and conclusions about this research.

#### 4. Final Remarks

The last section of this research comprehends a) a brief overview of what has been done and the main finding, and b) identification of some limitations and suggestions for further research.

The objective of this work was to analyze textual and contextual representations of women in American rap music in a selection of five contemporary songs based on the *Billboard's Year-End Top Rap Songs* between the years 2008 and 2012. For this purpose, I looked into the variable *Field* of the context of situation and the process and participants from the transitivity system of the Systemic Functional Grammar (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Then, the representations of women were investigated through the variables proposed by Van Leeuwen (1996) and mentioned by Fairclough (2003). Finally, the main themes resulted from the analysis of the discursive and sociocultural practices presented in the lyrics, and emerged from the ideologies and beliefs regarding gender issues carried by the male rappers. In the detailed verbal analysis I found that material, mental and relational processes were the most current in the lyrics, representing actions, emotions and states of being and possessions. In the selected lyrics women are represented in a generic form mostly by *girls* and *women* and 3<sup>rd</sup> person

singular pronouns like *she* and *her*; and play a role of Beneficiary and Affected more than Actor. In addition, the main themes were a) Body objectification; b) Mentioning of sexual practices and c) Women's submission towards men's fame and money, themes that reinforce the pre-established existence of misogyny and sexism in the American rap songs. All these findings contributed to the answering of the following research questions: a) What types of processes are most typically represented in the selected lyrics; b) What representations of women are verbally portrayed in American rap lyrics; and c) What themes predominate in the selected lyrics.

#### 4.1 Limitations and Suggestions

Due to time restraints, it was not possible to investigate a larger number of lyrics to carry on a more detailed overview of this musical genre. Moreover, the investigation was restricted to the lexicogrammar and semantics level, focused on representational meanings in order to discover how women are represented in this sociocultural context. In addition, I worked only with songs performed by male rappers, in order to check on their ideologies regarding gender issues.

A further suggestion would be to carry out a research that investigates representations (of women or men) portrayed by female rappers lyrics in order to take a comparative look at them.