Feminist Music in Brazil and its Effects on Women's Identity: Feminism, Sexuality, and Blackness

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ABSTRACT

In this study, I examine how feminism is constructed in Brazil by focusing on Brazilian musicians and consumers of their music. I also explore how Brazilian musicians use music to combat normative ideas in the country. Through analysis of popular Brazilian music (lyrics and music videos), and through ethnographic methods, I demonstrate that there is a conflict occurring within Brazil regarding embracing feminism, female sexuality, and blackness, as well as a fight for equal rights and citizenship.

INDEX WORDS: Brazil, music, feminism, sexuality, gender, blackness, racism, sexism, inequality, ethnography, anthropology, citizenship
FEMINIST MUSIC IN BRAZIL AND ITS EFFECTS ON WOMEN’S IDENTITY:
FEMINISM, SEXUALITY, AND BLACKNESS

by

ALEXIS POWERS

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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Feminist Music in Brazil and Its Effects on Women’s Identity:
Feminism, Sexuality, and Blackness

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DEDICATION

This moment would not be possible without the help of many of my family and friends. First and foremost I would like to thank my mother who has supported me endlessly in all of my endeavors, secondly I would like to thank my mentor, professor, and friend, Dr. Cassandra White for all of the knowledge she imparted upon me in my undergraduate degree and encouraging me to apply to the anthropology graduate degree during an incredibly difficult time in my life, and when I truly needed it. Without these two very special and powerful women I would not be where I am today.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ........................................................................................................ V

**LIST OF FIGURES** .................................................................................................................. VIII

**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS** ..................................................................................................... IX

1 INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................................... 1

1.1 Arriving in Rio ....................................................................................................................... 2

1.2 Deciding My Topic .................................................................................................................. 4

1.3 Theoretical Framework .......................................................................................................... 5

2 METHODS AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS ........................................ 9

2.1 Data Collection Methods .................................................................................................... 10

2.2 Recruitment Methods .......................................................................................................... 12

2.3 Obstacles ............................................................................................................................... 12

2.4 Ethical Considerations .......................................................................................................... 14

2.5 Positionality .......................................................................................................................... 15

2.6 Methodological Conclusions .............................................................................................. 17

3 BRAZIL’S COLONIAL LEGACY ........................................................................................... 19

4 GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND SEXISM .................................................................................. 28

4.1 Gender and Sexuality .......................................................................................................... 28

4.2 Sexism .................................................................................................................................. 33

5 BRAZILIAN FEMINISMS ........................................................................................................ 38
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Black Brazilian Feminism</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Feminism as a Dirty Word</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Can a Man be a Feminist?</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>MEDIA ANALYSIS</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Lay</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>MC Soffia</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Karol Conká</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>MC Carol</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Pabllo Vittar</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>Iza</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>Rap Plus Size</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>Anitta</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Why now?</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>How is Feminism Constructed in Brazil?</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>How is Feminism Portrayed in Brazilian Music?</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>How do Brazilian Musicians use their Music to Distrupt Normative Ideas?</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REFERENCES ........................................................................................................... 72
LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 5.1 SCREENSHOT FROM ANITTA’S VAI MALANDRA MUSIC VIDEO ........................................ 30
FIGURE 5.2 SCREENSHOT FROM ANITTA’S VAI MALANDRA MUSIC VIDEO ........................................ 32
FIGURE 6.1 ALBUM ARTWORK FOR LAY’S 129129 ........................................................................ 46
FIGURE 6.2 SCREENSHOT FROM KAROL CONKA’S LALA MUSIC VIDEO ........................................ 50
FIGURE 6.3 SCREENSHOT FROM KAROL CONKA’S LALA MUSIC VIDEO ........................................ 51
FIGURE 6.4 SCREENSHOT FROM KAROL CONKA’S LALA MUSIC VIDEO ........................................ 51
FIGURE 6.5 SCREENSHOT FROM PABLLO VITTAR’S SEU CRIME MUSIC VIDEO ................................. 54
FIGURE 6.6 SCREENSHOT FROM PABLLO VITTAR’S SEU CRIME MUSIC VIDEO ................................. 54
FIGURE 6.7 SCREENSHOT FROM PABLLO VITTAR’S BUZINA MUSIC VIDEO ........................................ 55
FIGURE 6.8 SCREENSHOT FROM PABLLO VITTAR’S BUZINA MUSIC VIDEO ........................................ 55
FIGURE 6.9 SCREENSHOT FROM PABLLO VITTAR’S SEU CRIME MUSIC VIDEO CONDOM AD ........... 57
FIGURE 6.10 SCREENSHOT FROM IZA’S ESSE BRILHO E MEU MUSIC VIDEO HAIR PRODUCT AD .... 58
FIGURE 6.11 SCREENSHOT FROM IZA’S ESSE BRILHO E MEU MUSIC VIDEO ........................................ 58
FIGURE 6.12 SCREENSHOT FROM IZA’S ESSE BRILHO E MEU MUSIC VIDEO ........................................ 59
FIGURE 6.13 SCREENSHOT FROM RAP PLUS SIZE’S O PANO RASGA MUSIC VIDEO ......................... 61
FIGURE 6.14 SCREENSHOT FROM RAP PLUS SIZE’S O PANO RASGA MUSIC VIDEO ......................... 61
FIGURE 6.15 SCREENSHOT FROM RAP PLUS SIZE’S O PANO RASGA MUSIC VIDEO ......................... 62
FIGURE 6.16 SCREENSHOT FROM RAP PLUS SIZE’S O PANO RASGA MUSIC VIDEO ......................... 62
FIGURE 6.17 SCREENSHOT FROM RAP PLUS SIZE’S O PANO RASGA MUSIC VIDEO ......................... 63
FIGURE 6.18 SCREENSHOT FROM ANITTA’S BOLA REBOLA MUSIC VIDEO ......................................... 64
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. ABIA - The Brazilian Interdisciplinary AIDS Association
2. IRB – The Institutional Review Board
3. MPB – Música Popular Brasileira, Brazilian Popular Music
1 INTRODUCTION

Music as a means of political expression is not a new phenomenon. For decades music has been used to combat inequality, such as in the 1900s for labor strikes, the 1960s in opposition of war, and it was especially powerful in regards to the Civil Rights Movement (Dreier and Flacks 2014, 99). The 1960s and 1970s in Brazil were the heyday of the Tropicalia movement led by Brazilian music artists Gilberto Gil and Caetano Veloso, specifically in opposition to an oppressive military regime (Dunn 2001, 8). Music has been particularly important to feminism starting with the use of popular songs, adapted soldier’s songs, and hymns by the Women’s Suffrage Movement, and in the mid 1990s to early 2000s third wave women’s rap was an important part of women’s sexual liberation in the United States, with artists like Missy Elliot and Lil’ Kim discussing female sexual pleasure quite regularly (Songs of Women’s Suffrage 2018; Chepp 2015, 548).

While there has been literature about feminism (Alvarez, 1990), sexuality (Parker, 2009), blackness (Roth-Gordon, 2017), and music (Dunn, 2001, Pardue, 2008) in Brazil separately there has yet to be literature that covers these themes’ interconnectedness, at least not with the focus of research being women. Derek Pardue comes close, but he focuses more on the male lived experience, and when discussing women he focuses on how women perform masculinity (2008). I aim to explore the following research questions: how is feminism constructed in Brazil, how is feminism portrayed in Brazilian music, and how do Brazilian musicians use music to combat normative ideas? In my research I have focused on learning more about the part popular Brazilian music plays in the construction of Brazilian women’s identities from the perspectives of both Brazilian women and men. My research aims to fill these gaps during a time of change within Brazilian music as female musicians are beginning to talk about each of these topics and
their intersections, all while under a political regime that is attempting to limit the agency of women and even going so far as vowing to remove the topic of feminism and the LGBT movement from school curriculum (Friedmann, 2019). My research questions emerged through nearly a decade of engagement with Brazilian culture and visits to the country, and in the summer of 2018 I had the opportunity to travel to Rio de Janeiro Brazil to begin my fieldwork for this research project.

1.1 Arriving in Rio

It was the third or fourth time I had unpacked and repacked my suitcase, and my anxiety was likely just as heavy as my luggage. I had only been to Rio de Janeiro in passing and the only thing I was being told by my family and friends was how dangerous Rio was, especially since the military occupation of the city had just begun. I can still hear the echoes of their advice, “don’t go into the favelas, they aren’t safe”, “don’t walk around by yourself”, “leave everything in your apartment, don’t take anything valuable on the street because you will get robbed.” I did not let these comments deter me from being excited about starting my research. The flight was long, and I did not sleep, but as I was greeted by the same disgusting Delta breakfast that always accompanies an overnight flight, I felt my heart flutter.

The familiar humidity hit me like a brick wall as I exited the plane, making the long walk to security and immigration uncomfortably sticky. The dark skinned faces of janitorial staff moving out of the way of fair skinned airline employees punctuated this walk. Once at the checkpoint I quickly made my way to the “estrangeiros” (foreigners i.e., not Brazilian) line. The surprise on the attendants face when I responded to her questions in Portuguese was one I had grown accustomed to. Once I reached the public area of the airport the masses descended upon me. 
incessant chirping of workers asking if I needed a cab, my luggage wrapped in protective plastic, or money exchanged whirred in my ears.

The ride to the apartment I would be staying at was not dissimilar to ones I had experienced before driving from the airport to the center of Belo Horizonte. Journeying to the center of the city always means going through the marginal areas. Debris littered the open sewer system while an unattended horse roamed around. The next few minutes were full of the same scenes of informally constructed houses, burn piles, and kids playing with kites or makeshift soccer balls. At one point these images gave way to high-rise apartment buildings, streets lined with bars, and people walking their well manicured dogs. The van turned a corner and the famous views of Ipanema Beach took my breath away, the landscape dotted with homeless people trying to find a space to be, and open-air vehicles full of soldiers with their guns, fingers poised, ready to shoot at a moment’s notice.

These were the realities that I had to understand for my research, and though I also completed my research in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, the only difference was the military occupation and beach access. In Belo Horizonte the walk through the airport was almost identical, I felt the same humidity, I saw the same dark skinned faces of janitorial staff, and experienced the same whirring in my ears as I exited the baggage claim. Again the ride into the city was almost identical, but instead of seeing a beautiful beach I only saw the city in a valley I was so familiar with. The engrained racism was still palpable, the patriarchal nature of Brazil was still evident, and the sensuality that Brazil seems to be famous for was still felt on both trips, albeit in different ways.
1.2 Deciding My Topic

I never anticipated having such an affinity for Brazil. During my childhood I never left the southeastern United States. My love of Brazil started from another love, the love of my partner who just happened to have family in Brazil. I traveled to the country for the first time when I was 17. It was my first time outside of the United States, my first time in a taxi, my first time on a plane; it was all quite overwhelming. The ride into the city was the first time I had really seen poverty up close. Once we arrived to my partner’s family’s home I was greeted by what I thought was the whole family. I was wrong. I tried to collect my bags but everyone else grabbed them for me and ushered me inside to even more people. I was awestruck. I felt like a pinball in a machine, bouncing from one family member to another to be hugged and kissed on either cheek before being sent to my partner’s grandmother who held my face in her hands and looked over me with a smile, welcoming me to the family. I felt at home. I knew there was something special about Brazil right at that moment and I never looked back. From then on I always wanted to learn more about the country.

As I sat filling out my application for graduate school at Georgia State University I tried to figure out what my research topic was going to be. I had several ideas floating around in my head but none of them were really sticking. I decided to take a break to clear my head and found myself on YouTube. By chance there happened to be a documentary in my suggested feed that was about changing beauty standards in Brazil. I couldn’t say no to that. In the documentary they interviewed a rapper from São Paulo named Lay, whom you will hear more about later, and she discussed what her music represented. From this one chance suggestion I was able to formulate a research topic that has developed into this thesis.
1.3 Theoretical Framework

In the following chapters I will begin with a brief theoretical explanation of the content of each chapter, but I will be using the theoretical concept of citizenship to frame my discussion and analysis. “Citizenship has a long history both as a legal concept and a political ideal” (Phelan 2001, 11). Citizenship is an ambiguous term and is at times hard to define; however, it remains a primary category of political membership (Phelan 2001, 11). While it may be hard to define Fraser and Gordon state that it is “a weighty, monumental, humanist word” that speaks “of respect, of rights, of dignity” (1998, 113). While citizenship is often understood as a legal status there are others whom argue that citizenship is also a cultural ideal of belonging to a community, shared language and common values (Nuijten 2013, 11). When I frame my research around the concept of citizenship, I am not only referring to citizenship of the nation state of Brazil, I am also referring to citizenship of individual groups within Brazil. Pocock states that people “believe that the individual denied decision in shaping her or his life is being denied treatment as a human, and that citizenship – meaning membership in some public and political frame of action – is necessary if we are to be granted decision and empowered to be human” (1998, 34). In the context of Brazil this is a particularly pertinent statement due to how exclusionary many of the country’s political and social practices have been. Shane Phelan states that exclusion of those seen as outside the polity or unfit for membership has been interwoven with the empowerment of citizenship (2001, 11). According to Phelan (2011, 12), “this dynamic of membership and exclusion has continually presented challenges to those who would become citizens, as they are forced to explain why their membership claims are more worthy than those of others.” The artists that I will be speaking about are doing something similar, attempting to explain why their membership claims are just as worthy as those of others.
The republican model of citizenship focuses on activity, ruling and being ruled in return (Phelan 2001, 12-13). The citizen is not just a subject of a nation and its laws, or simply a consumer of rights and privileges; they are an active member in the public deliberation and decision-making that produces law and policy (Phelan 2001,13). The music that many Brazilian artists create is then a form of public deliberation. Phelan argues that acknowledgement is essential to citizenship (2001, 14). While it is not a right in and of itself, it is the establishment of a political relation (2001, 14). Citizenship is the recognition that one has a right to be heard and that one should be acknowledged, “it is an emergence into publicity as an equal with other citizens” (Phelan 2001, 13-14). Political agency can be expressed in any number of ways, and as Nuijten asks “how do people engage with the established order and try to influence policies that affect their lives?” (2013, 11) The music I will be discussing is not just attempting to influence policies, but also practices that are woven into the social fabric of Brazilian society.

In his 2008 book, *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil*, anthropologist James Holston discusses some of the intricacies of Brazilian citizenship. “Brazilian citizenship is typical, moreover, in the resilience of its regime of legalized privileges and legitimated inequalities. It has persisted under colonial, imperial, and republican rule, thriving under monarchy, dictatorship and democracy” (Holston 2008, 4). Historically Brazil has created citizenship that on paper is extremely inclusive. However, it has been extremely exclusive in practice, using social differences to distribute different treatment to different people (Holston 2008, 7). Thus, it “generates a gradation of rights among them, in which most rights are available only to particular kinds of citizens and exercised as the privilege of particular social categories” (Holston 2008, 7). Holston describes this as differentiated citizenship, one that uses social qualifications to organize its political, civil, and social dimensions as a way to regulate its
distribution of powers (2008, 7). This is essentially a way of distributing inequality and the 
Brazilian construction of citizenship equalizes some differences for national citizenship, 
however, it also legalizes some of those differences to legitimate the differently distributed 
rights. This in turn leads to these inequalities being perpetuated in other ways in Brazilian society 
(Holston 2008, 7).

Holston illustrates one of the ways in which this unequal distribution of rights has been 
felt in Brazil by telling a story of an encounter he had at a Brazilian bank. He explains that in 
Brazil all bills are paid at the bank, and you have to stand in line for hours, unless you have 
money at which point people have been known to hire errand boys (Holston 2008, 16). As he 
stood in line he recognized a manicurist who worked in a shop close to where he lived, soon after 
a well dressed teenage boy came in and cut to the front of the line (Holston 2008, 17). At this 
point the manicurist exclaimed that he could not cut in line, and to go to the back, which most of 
the line supported (Holston 2008, 17). The obviously upper class white man who was closer to 
the front of the line turned to her and simply said “I authorize it” (Holston 2008, 17). The 
manicurist then said, “This is a public space and I have my rights. Here you don’t authorize 
 anything. You don’t rule. You only rule in your kitchen and over your wife” (Holston 2008, 17).
The man turned around and the teenager went to the back of the line.

Holston states that the manicurist’s “demand for respect and equality; assertion of rights 
in public and to the public; and realignment of class, gender, and race in the calculations of 
public standing are evidence” of “a new formulation” of citizenship. This is evident in my 
research; however, this music represents a new wave of demanding respect and equality that was 
once reserved for public inequalities. My research shows this new demand for equality is 
venturing into private spaces, through public insurgency like commercial music and social
media. This is complicated by the fact the minorities can only change things if a substantial number of the majority feels the changes are justified (Phelan 2001, 139). This push for change, for things like sexual pleasure equality, by Brazilian music artists is especially difficult given that Brazilians have historically experienced a strong sense of outrage for betrayed values, especially familial values and religious values (Holston 2008, 18). This means that citizenship depends on how willing the majority is to acknowledge that the minority are even citizens, and that citizenship is dependent upon the interplay of actors and those they are acting towards (Phelan 2001, 139).

In this chapter I have introduced my topic and explained why it is important as well as stating my research questions and provided an explanation of the overarching theoretical framework I will be using. In the following chapters I will not be following more traditional formulations of theses as I will not have a singular chapter dedicated to a literature, instead I will be weaving relevant literature about individual aspects of how my topic of research is understood in Brazil throughout my chapters. In the 2nd chapter I will detail my methods as well as explain my ethical considerations and concerns. In the 3rd chapter I will be explaining Brazil’s colonial legacy and how that has affected how women’s identities have been constructed as well as the racial constructions and inequalities that it has left in place. In the 4th chapter I will discuss the history of sexuality and gender in Brazil and how that plays a role in the construction of women’s identities as well as the music that is being produced in Brazil. In the 5th chapter I will discuss a brief history of Brazilian feminism and the different Brazilian feminisms that there are currently. The 6th chapter will be a media analysis of lyrics and images from music videos, and the 7th chapter will be my conclusions.
2 METHODS AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Due to the complicated nature of Brazil’s history, I carefully considered my options for qualitative data collection to emphasize the voices of those who participated to shine through. I collected ethnographic data through qualitative methods. In this section I will detail my methods of data collection including, semi-structured interviews, visual analysis of music videos, participant observation and lyrical analysis of songs. I will also discuss my recruitment methods, ethical considerations, and how my positionality has affected this project.

When I began my research I was fully focused on the lived experience of women, and how that is illustrated by feminist rap in Brazil, because of this I only wanted to interview Brazilian women. As I started doing interviews and delved more into my topic I realized that by constraining myself to only women I was not getting a full picture, and that by interviewing men I would be providing a very important counterpoint to my interview data with women. What interviewing men offered was the contrasting narrative of how feminism is viewed and embodied in Brazil through the male gaze. As my research progressed, I recognized that I was unnecessarily analyzing only rap. There are many other music artists in Brazil who address feminism, sexuality, and Blackness who are not rappers, and there are various music genres that also engage with these topics. The aspect of wanting to include all people who identify as women in my research has not changed, I feel as though women’s voices, narratives, and experiences are an important characteristic of my work. I am employing the term “women” but I do not explicitly mean people who are considered biological or cis-gender women, I mean to encompass all people who self-identify as women.
2.1 Data Collection Methods

The majority of data that I have collected regarding this project is in the form of semi-structured interviews, or interviews that require an interview guide to be followed in a specific order (Bernard 2011, 157-158). For all interviews I obtained informed consent as required by the Institutional Review Board. All participants consented to the interview as well as had the option to consent to recording of the interview. Due to the fact that I conducted much of my research in Brazil, my research documents were also translated into Portuguese, and the majority of interviews were conducted in Portuguese. Along with interviews I drew on close to 10 years of experience visiting Brazil. During my trips to Brazil, although I was focused on this research topic only during the last two, I was a participant observer in different aspects of Brazilian culture, which helped to shape some of my research questions for this project.

All interviews were conducted with Brazilian citizens. These 6 in-depth interviews ranged from roughly 30 minutes to 2 hours. Two interviews were completed in the United States and 4 were completed in Brazil. 1 interview completed in the United States was with a Brazilian citizen on vacation, and the other was with a Brazilian citizen with resident status in the United States. The participant with United States resident status grew up in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil before moving to the United States. This participant lived in the United States for some time before moving back to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and then back to the United States while obtaining residency. Of the interviews in Brazil, 1 was completed in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and 3 were completed in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Of my 6 participants, 4 self-identified as women, 2 self-identifying as Branca or white, 1 self-identifying as Pardo or what can be understood as brown or mixed, and 1 self-identifying as Negra, or Black. 2 self-identified as men, 1 self-identifying as Branco or white, and 1 self-identifying as Negro or Black. Participants ranged in age from 18 to
34. I had two distinct interview guides, one for music consumers, and one for music creators, though unfortunately only one of those who participated is a music creator.

When talking with the creators, I asked if they feel their music empowers people. When talking with consumers, I asked how music empowers them. My interview questions covered general background information such as age, geographic location, gender identity, socioeconomic status, education level, and sexual preference. I also asked more specific questions about how the participants experienced life, if they encountered discrimination, such as racism or sexism, what problems they felt Brazil was facing at the moment, and if they considered themselves to be feminists. I asked music consumers about specific music artists in Brazil and if they were familiar with those artists. If they were, I asked how their music made them feel. I asked music creators about when and why they began to create music, their influences, important elements of their music, and if they felt their music was in protest or resistance to anything. A particularly direct question I asked of both groups was whether or not there was a taboo surrounding female sexual pleasure in Brazil, since that was a popular theme in many of the musics that I was focusing on.

My decision to use interviewing as a method of data collection is solely based on the idea that I wanted participants to be able to tell their own stories. Throughout Brazil’s history, Black Brazilians, indigenous Brazilians and women have been silenced by those in power. The historical erasure of these people, their stories, and their opinions is something I wanted to directly combat. I also completed lyrical and music video analysis.

This erasure is also why I decided to employ two other forms of data collection, visual analysis of music videos and lyrical analysis of songs. Sometimes these issues of societal inequalities are not widely accepted as topics of public discussion in Brazil. Through lyrical and
visual analysis one can see the social commentary the artists are highlighting. The topics the artists decide to highlight are often forms of societal inequality.

2.2 Recruitment Methods

My initial recruitment methods did not generate any responses. I prepared a flyer that I left with one organization in Rio de Janeiro, ABIA, or the Brazilian Interdisciplinary AIDS Association. I chose ABIA because I began my research during a field school with the Anthropology Department at Georgia State University, and they were an organization that the field school partnered with. I also chose ABIA because they are an organization that focuses on sexuality, feminism and racism in Brazil. ABIA also provided me with site permission for my IRB application. I left my recruitment flyers at ABIA’s physical location, but ultimately did not receive any participants from those materials. The flyer detailed the requirements for eligibility, and included both Portuguese and English translations. I also carried these flyers with me in case I met anyone whom I would like to offer to participate. The decision to include no more than 20 people in the study was due to the fact that the level of detail in the interviews would not allow for quality analysis of more than 20 people. In reality the sample size is much smaller because my visits to Brazil were so brief during this study, and during the first visit I also was engaged in activities related to the study abroad program in which I was participating. Ultimately most of my interviews came about through opportunistic or convenience sampling. I do feel it is important to recognize that I have previously established personal relationships with 4 out of my 6 participants.

2.3 Obstacles

One of the biggest issues I anticipated having was the Institutional Review Board process. Luckily I was able to get my IRB application submitted and approved in a little under a
month. The process ran smoothly and I was not asked to do many revisions. This was largely due to the fact that I worked on my application prior to submission for close to two months. Prior to submission I completed and collected all of the documents and protocols required for approval.

One of my biggest obstacles was also my biggest accomplishment, and that would be working on my Portuguese language skills to the point where I was comfortable conducting interviews. When crafting my recruitment and interview materials I went through a rigorous process of translation that was time consuming and quite frankly exhausting. Once in Brazil I had to begin learning the slang and colloquialisms that are not taught in a formal language classroom setting. Whereas I knew some of the slang in Belo Horizonte, from previous personal trips, in Rio de Janeiro I was thrust into a world of entirely new words, phrases and meanings. Luckily everyone I encountered was more than happy to clarify anything I did not quite understand. This knowledge of Portuguese was very helpful, but because I spoke Portuguese well, and without much of an American accent, my informants seemed to have a level of comfort that often caused them to speak incredibly quickly, which at times made it hard for me to understand.

As I mentioned earlier I have longstanding relationships with 4 participants, and this did create some issues. I underestimated how difficult it would be talking about sex and sexuality with people whom I know very well, especially given the conservative leanings in Brazil. It was difficult to get these informants to really discuss these topics without them using euphemisms or dancing around the question. Eventually as the interview went along these topics became easier for my informants to discuss.

The use of a convenience sampling has led to some disproportionate representation in my data. My sample is largely made up of white, middle class Brazilians. When I continue this
research I feel it is extremely important to recruit more Black Brazilians and more Brazilians from lower socioeconomic classes because the music that I am analyzing is mostly discussing themes such as racism and sexism that more detrimentally impact these populations. Recruiting some upper socioeconomic class Brazilians would provide interesting contrasts as well.

A potential obstacle to completing this research is the current political instability in Brazil and the rise in popularity of a far-right presidential candidate, Jair Bolsonaro, whom many see as inciting racist, sexist, homophobic acts of violence. The current political climate in Brazil is changing rapidly, which I will discuss more in depth later on. This current presidential election has created immense tension within the country. The newly elected Jair Bolsonaro and his supporters have actively campaigned with disparaging remarks about feminists and I am acutely aware that this will have a massive impact on my future research. With Bolsonaro’s election, his presidency could change women’s willingness to talk to me, and it has already changed some of the popular ideas about gender roles in Brazil. Bolsonaro’s election could affect the access of future social science research in Brazil as he has stated his “red rivals” will “go overseas, or go to jail,” “these red outlaws will be banished from our homeland. It will be a cleanup the likes of which has never been seen in Brazilian history” (Phillips 2018).

2.4 Ethical Considerations

The current political climate illuminates many of the ethical considerations I have. The amount of violence that is being perpetrated in Brazil because of this election is jarring, and Bolsonaro’s conservative values have only exacerbated and given credence to the engrained racism and sexism that Brazil still carries. Since my research focuses on the populations of women, and especially women of color I have to recognize the potential for danger among participants, and must take care to protect the confidentiality of those participants. I also must
recognize that historically women, and women of color have been marginalized groups. In Linda Alcoff’s 1991 work *The Problem of Speaking for Others* she details two ethical dilemmas that most of my methodological considerations stem from.

“The recognition that there is a problem in speaking for others has arisen from two sources. First, there is a growing recognition that where one speaks from affects the meaning and truth of what one says, and thus that one cannot assume an ability to transcend one's location. In other words, a speaker's location (which I take here to refer to their social location, or social identity) has an epistemically significant impact on that speaker's claims and can serve either to authorize or disauthorize one's speech… The second source involves a recognition that, not only is location epistemically salient, but certain privileged locations are discursively dangerous. In particular, the practice of privileged persons speaking for or on behalf of less privileged person actually resulted (in many cases) in increasing or reinforcing oppression of the group spoken for.” 6-7

These ethical considerations are incredibly important because of Brazil’s past, present and future experiences with racism, sexism, colonialism, and religious fundamentalism among other things and are not universal across the country. Therefore, it is an ethical choice not to speak for others particularly given my position as a white American academic. Though it is hard to do so, I have tried to use the participants recorded interviews to maintain the integrity of their words with direct quotations. When providing longer paraphrased passages of their stories I have done so while listening to their recordings.

2.5 Positionality

One of the most important things I have had to consider is my position as an ethnographer. I come from a place of privilege. I am a white, middle class American, in higher education, conducting research. “Virtually, no human interaction occurs outside of a shared social context. Meaning-making is one of the most fundamental social processes impacting our communal lives; as an embodied social phenomenon, it affects our very bodies as well as the perceived “reality” of the different human groups marked oppressively by “undesirable”
attributes” (Acevedo et al. 2015, 33). These aspects of my privilege amount to being understood in Brazil as someone with authority, especially when working with participants from Favela communities, or low income areas whom often do not have much access to quality education. When considering the colonial legacy in Brazil, and the fact that Brazil was one of the last countries to abolish slavery in May of 1888, my presence as a white American among Brazilians leads to interesting dynamics (Conrad 1997, 451). When interviewing middle class white Brazilians, my position as a white woman also helped to foster conversation and gave a sense of comfort and ease, because I was just like them. Alternatively, I have to account for the fact that many of the people who commit the everyday acts of racism towards black Brazilians are people who look very similar to me. In post-colonial Brazil, whiteness is still deeply associated with power and with cultural and symbolic capital.

Affectively my situatedness was reflected in many of the interviews, and was more specifically seen in regards to the recording equipment. My first participant was incredibly uneasy about using the recorder and said that seeing the recorder made her feel uncomfortable and worried that she wouldn’t be able to say things the way she wanted. I explained that the recording would only be used by me, and exclusively to make sure that I was using her words as accurately as possible. This is just one example of the ways in which I try to navigate the complexity of power between the ethnographer and participant.

As I mentioned earlier, my biggest accomplishment throughout this process was gaining a greater understanding of Brazilian Portuguese, however, it is important to note that the type of Portuguese I speak positions me in a very specific way. I cannot count the amount of times I have been told “Você fala português verdade” you speak true Portuguese, or “você fala bem português” you speak really well. On one hand this indexes me as someone who truly cares
about the language and the country and as such makes people more excited to talk to me. On the other hand, it also gives me a certain level of power because I do not speak in the same ways that some of my informants do, which reinforces the structures of inequality that I am trying to address. When conducting my interviews or recruitment I was and continue to be aware of whom I was speaking with. There are several linguistic differences that I noticed as a non-native speaker of Portuguese. I tended to use complete words, which native speakers would often abbreviate, or combine with other words. For example, where I would say “O que é isso?” – what is this? – a native speaker would say “Que isso?”, “não é” – isn’t it – would get shortened to “né”. By speaking with complete words or without slang, I was indexed as someone of education and was perceived to have a certain status.

2.6 Methodological Conclusions

In this section I have addressed my research and methodology by detailing my methods of data collection including, semi-structured interviews, visual analysis of music videos, and lyrical analysis of songs, and by discussing my recruitment methods, ethical considerations, and how my positionality affected this project. A pertinent factor in my study is that my research is informed by the deeply complex cultural history of Brazil. When you think about Brazil, what are some things that come to mind? More than likely the first thing you will think of is the big statue of Christ in Rio de Janeiro. After thinking of the big Christ, you might think of beautiful beaches, Carnaval, beautiful women with big butts, or the striking image of Favela communities built into the hillside. What do all of these things have in common? They are things. Throughout history Brazil, and Brazilians have been objectified, and Brazilian women in everyday discourse are especially objectified. This phenomenon is why I have chosen my research, because in popular culture, Brazil seems to be a place to go, not a place that exists. Even within the country
there is a practice of not talking about inequalities like racism since it is understood that not talking about racism means you are not racist (Roth-Gordon 2017, 186). By focusing on the lived experience I am attempting to bring a sense of humanity and personhood back to Brazilian women that I tend to see ignored especially in the context of scholarship on Brazilian Hip-Hop and music. I implore that people should be able to tell their own stories. I do not want my position and opinion to bastardize someone’s lived experience. In this research I attempt to relay stories in a meaningful way, and to do so in a way that connects with long withstanding forms of institutional violence, racism, and sexism that Brazil has put on the blinders for and continues to do so. Artistic expression is a normative way of expressing deep seeded issues, which are invisibly and unconsciously practiced everyday, through the voice of the creator. In the context of my research this is incredibly important because it allows me in my position as the researcher, whom holds the agency of those participating in the highest regards, to attempt to be as objective as possible. Since lived experience is always going to be informed and affected by institutionalized power dynamics, I am acutely aware there is no objective research nor is there unbiased information. While I may be able to see general trends within my research I still have a responsibility to the individuals I am working with to respectfully disseminate their stories and opinions, as that remains my most important public practice of personal ethics.
3 BRAZIL’S COLONIAL LEGACY

Over 50 percent of Brazilians are of African ancestry, which is the largest African descent population outside of Nigeria (Skidmore 2010, 5). This is due to the large importation of African people to Brazil for slavery (Skidmore 2010, 5). Of this population only 5-6 percent self identify as black or Preto (Skidmore 2010, 5), but for my research I use the term Negra/o, which also means black, because that is how the participants identified. Just over 40 percent of Brazilians self identify as Pardo or brown, and less than one percent identify as Amarelo, which literally means yellow but is what the Brazilian census introduced in 1940 to refer to Asian descent, and less than one percent self identify as Índio or indigenous (Skidmore 2010, 5-6). Just over 50 percent self identify as Branco or white (Skidmore 2010, 6).

In Brazil race is determined by appearance; this concept of racial construction paired with the mixing of indigenous Brazilians, African slaves and Portuguese colonists, means that there is a “plethora of fluid and ambiguous” racial categories (Goldstein 2013, 5). These categories are further complicated by the fact that in Brazil where one can place themselves and where others place them on the color spectrum shifts depending upon who is speaking to whom, and is also dependent upon other contextual information such as “class perceptible in language, social manners, and style of dress” (Goldstein 2013, 5-6). Anthropologist Donna Goldstein notes in her 2013 book Laughter out of Place: Race, Class, Violence, and Sexuality in a Rio Shantytown that the whitening ideology of miscegenation during the turn of the century was so strong both socially and psychologically that it is extremely difficult for Black Brazilians to organize around the question of racial identity (6). “Afro-Brazilians are wary of taking pride in and declaring their blackness. Blackness was – and still is – associated with slavery, dirty work, and ugliness. Only highly politicized people can speak openly about their race without feeling the shame attached to
blackness” (Goldstein 2013, 6). My research shows that this feeling of shame is not quite as common as in the past, as two participants who were not highly politicized people talked about being proud of being black.

Brazil has an extremely complicated past which is full of discrimination. Brazil was one of the last countries to abolish slavery on May 13, 1888 (Conrad 1997, 481), and this is incredibly important because this long practice of slavery contributed to the racial hierarchies that are still present in modern Brazilian society. In her 2017 book, Race and the Brazilian Body: Blackness, Whiteness, and Everyday Language in Rio de Janeiro, anthropologist Jennifer Roth-Gordon gives some examples of what she calls a “comfortable racial contradiction” (1-41) In 2013 a Brazilian journalist, Pedro Henrique Amorim was sent to jail over confronting the largest media outlet in Brazil, Rede Globo, about their denial that racism exists in Brazil; Amorim argued he was only using his freedom of speech to disagree with Heraldo Pereira’s implicit suggestion that any black person could work hard and become rich and famous in Brazil (Roth-Gordon 2017, 1). Amorim was charged with racism against another individual because he described Pereira as black with a white soul (Roth-Gordon 2017, 2). Roth-Gordon elaborates that a few decades ago this expression was widely used and would have been considered a compliment by some people since this acknowledged Pereira’s acquisition of white characteristics such as higher education, speaking standard Portuguese and being behaviorally refined, all which would have helped override the negative associations of his dark skin color and typically black features (2017, 2). Another expression used in Brazil for someone who is refined and exhibits the right social class but is not fair-skinned is “socially white” (Roth-Gordon 2017, 2). There are many examples recently of this racism showing full force in Brazil.
For instance, a dark-skinned girl posted a picture of her and her light-skinned boyfriend on Facebook and was inundated with racist comments alluding to plantation life, asking where the boy had purchased his slave (Roth-Gordon 2017, 3). Losing soccer fans screamed at a rival team’s dark-skinned goalkeeper that he was a monkey (Roth-Gordon 2017, 3). Similarly a banana was thrown at Brazilian soccer player Dani Alves while playing in Europe, and his response spurred an anti-racist social media movement when he picked up the banana, peeled and ate it, his teammate Neymar even used the opportunity to launch a hashtag, #somostodosmacacos, or we are all monkeys (Roth-Gordon 2017, 3). While visiting Brazil I have seen this racism many times, something as simple as walking on the other side of the street if a dark-skinned person is walking as well, or the fact that much of the menial labor and domestic care such as house cleaning is done by dark-skinned women.

As previously stated, Brazil has a long history with racism, which stems from a sordid colonial legacy. On April 22, 1500 Pedro Alvares Cabral landed in what is now Porto Seguro in the state of Bahia (Skidmore 2010, 9). Pero Vaz de Caminha, the scribe of the group, sent a letter back to the King describing Brazil as “a realm where human and environmental resources were there for the taking,” that the native women were “comely, naked and without shame,” and that the soil was “endlessly fertile” (Skidmore 2010, 10-11). It is unknown when the first enslaved Africans disembarked in Brazil. However the earliest shipment recorded was in 1538 (Rout 1976, 73). In 1539, King João IV of Portugal declared that each planter could import up to 120 slaves (Rout 1976, 73). The Portuguese had already been introduced to Africans as “useful and comparatively inexpensive labor”, and by the middle of the 16th century were already the major supplier of enslaved Africans for colonial Spanish America (Rout 1976, 73). After the Portuguese realized that the indigenous people of Brazil were not suited to labor in the sugarcane
fields and sugar mills of Bahia and Pernambuco, they turned to the “proven workman, the sub-Saharan African” (Rout 1976, 73). Once this perception of the ideal laborer, cheap and hardworking, was cemented, enslaved Africans were increasingly used in different occupations thus increasing in numbers (Rout 1976, 73). Due to these factors, at the end of the colonial period enslaved Africans became a nationwide essential to the economy (Rout 1976, 73).

A story that seems to be recognized as a turning point in Brazilian history is that of a runaway prince (Roth-Gordon 2017, 7). In 1808 a prince fled Portugal with more than 15,000 members of the Portuguese court, he was the first royal to ever set foot in Brazil (Roth-Gordon 2017, 7). The difference in lifestyle was astounding for them, and as such they attempted to bring Rio “up to European standards, that included sidewalks, botanical gardens, a national library, a school of medicine, and the country’s first bank” (Roth-Gordon 2017, 7). There were palpable differences between these new arrivals and those already residing. At the time of their arrival one in one hundred inhabitants were literate, one in three inhabitants were enslaved, and for every white person there were 16 non-white people (Roth-Gordon 2017, 7). These are differences that are eerily similar to current inequalities in Brazil.

Roth-Gordon (2017) provides a stunning example of the present day effects of this colonial legacy with a political cartoon originally published in the Folha de São Paulo entitled “Feriado: Dia da Consciência Negra” (Holiday: Black Consciousness Day) by cartoonist Angeli (8). The image depicts row after row of white bodies taking in the sun on one of Rio’s famous beaches, and in the foreground of the image “four dark-skinned beach vendors carrying heavy loads” trying to entice the sunbather’s to purchase the drinks and other wares that they sell to make a living (Roth-Gordon 2017, 8). Hopefully at this point it is obvious that Brazil was built
by the hard work of enslaved peoples, the majority of which were black, for the benefit of the white upper class.

This system of inequality is something that has been evident to me when I visit Brazil, but where I found it most obvious was in Rio de Janeiro. One of the scheduled activities during the field school in which I began my research was a walking tour of one of the Favela communities in the city. We were staying in one of the wealthiest neighborhoods and we walked around 2 blocks to reach our destination. In a matter of minutes we went from walking through throngs of well dressed upper class Brazilians, most of them fairer skinned, to lower class Brazilians selling gum and headphones from tables, and carts of building materials being lugged around by mostly darker skinned people. It felt like 2 different worlds.

Once our tour guides arrived we were escorted into an elevator that took us up to the community. After exiting the elevator we ascended some stairs and entered a large observation tower were we could see the entire city. The view was breathtaking. Riding the elevator up to the community I could only think about how all of the residents were completely isolated from the rest of the city. Out of sight out of mind? Once we really entered the community you could see that most of the residents were black. You could also see the lack of government infrastructure as well. As we walked around I could see trash that littered the streets and smell some of the stagnant pools of water. Masses of wires that looked like giant hornets nests adorned poles and corners of buildings where people were tapping into the municipal electrical system. It was obvious this was a place the government did not care too much about. The community on the other hand was incredibly proud of the programs they had developed for themselves. They had begun to implement recycling programs and had a music program, boxing classes, and dance classes. The list goes on. The sense of community connectedness that they seemed to create was
stunning. They were proud of how they were bettering their community, because they were doing it themselves in spite of the lack of help from the government.

Both participants who identified as Black (Larissa and Felipe) discussed the frustration they felt in public places with an ever-present policing gaze. They both recounted being followed around in the supermarket because the staff was anticipating them stealing something. Felipe also talked about how he was received differently if he was with a group of white people. When he was walking on the streets alone, people would roll up the windows in their cars. This is something I have seen first hand. It is not uncommon for people to be selling small bags of candy or towels, really anything, at stoplights. Typically they are people with darker skin. The driver, whether it is in a taxi or when I am riding with friends will roll up the window to not deal with the person. This is also the case when black people are walking along the streets past cars because they are perceived as beggars which Felipe explicitly stated.

Larissa, 36, grew up in a favela community in the Zona Leste of São Paulo where her parents were involved in drug trafficking. When she was 12 crack broke out in São Paulo and took over the population. Along with many people in São Paulo, her father became addicted to crack. “And when he was addicted it was the worst for us, because that’s when the fighting started with him and my mother, all the time.” She cited his crack addiction as the reason he fell into debt with some people. Eventually her father was arrested and was imprisoned for 5 years. While her father was in prison her mother was murdered, Larissa was 13. When she was 15 her father was released from prison and 2 months after his release he was also murdered. “So I did not die in the favela I grew up in, I was afraid they were going to kill me and everything pointed to that they were. Not because I owed anything, but because they thought that I would take revenge, that I would do something, I don’t know. So I left with nothing from where I lived,
leaving everything behind.” After she left she lived on the streets of São Paulo for a while, and became involved with drug trafficking, but in a determined moment she decided she did not want to be involved anymore. One night two people who shared a space close to where she slept got into a fight about crack. She was awakened when one of the people returned and set the other on fire. She said when she woke up she saw a “human torch running from here to there” and that was when she decided to leave. She left with someone else who said they were going to Curitiba and that his mother lived there, owned a restaurant and would help her. So they walked to Curitiba Brazil. He had disappeared somewhere along the way, and once she arrived in Curitiba she began looking for the restaurant. Once she found it she tried to talk to the hostess, but because she looked like a beggar no one would acknowledge her. She decided she would go back to São Paulo. She took the train to Santos, a costal city in São Paulo state, and from there walked the beach roads all the way to Rio de Janeiro and has been there ever since.

Felipe, 18, was born and raised in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais Brazil. He spoke fondly of his family in his heart, which he distinguished from his blood family. He said this distinction is important because if he had his blood family he would not be who he is today. With his blood family he could have entered a life of crime and could have done many bad things. He said the people he knew were people that would always help him, his family, his friends, his girlfriend; they were very good things in his life. When he was in school there was a presentation about not using drugs and staying out of trouble. Once he saw this program he wanted to be part of the military police. His 6th year of school he said was the worst year of his life because he had to leave one school and enter another where he did not know anyone. He almost ruined everything that year, and it was tense because he started hanging out with people who were vulgar and fought with other people. However, he said he gained maturity from the experience, started
distancing himself from these people, and surrounded himself with people who really liked him, studied and passed that year. His 7th and 8th year of school he kept out of trouble, and his 9th year he gained a lot of independence and started dating his girlfriend. “It was a very good year” he said.

During our interview Felipe told me a story about meeting one of his favorite MPB (Música Popular Brasileira) artists who was recording on the street where he lived. Felipe said he wanted to see him and so he got close to him. Other kids, who were white, surrounded him and he hugged all of them, but when Felipe got close the artist’s security stopped him. The security guard told Felipe he would not be attending to him. Felipe said “This, for me is discrimination … If he did not pay attention to any of the kids there, ok, but he only didn’t pay attention to me … Why? I never did anything to him. He didn’t know me. He saw me.” He saw Felipe, but he did not acknowledge him.

I use these stories and excerpts from interviews to illustrate the legacy of colonialism and racism that still permeates Brazilian society today. This chapter shows how the history of Brazil, specifically in terms of slavery is an integral part of current constructions of identity, even more specifically racial identity, in Brazil and illustrates how Brazil has, and continues to consider Black Brazilians second-class citizens. Since colonization Brazil has held white people in higher regards, and allowed for inequalities affecting non-white Brazilians not to be acknowledged. These inequalities can be seen in many different ways. Many Black and Brown Brazilians live in low-income and informal housing communities, and on the beaches of Rio de Janeiro, those working at the beach are often much darker than those just enjoying the beach. From what Larissa and Felipe had to say, it is obvious that these inequalities are things they feel and are
affected by on a daily basis. The legacy of colonialism in Brazil also plays a role in how sexuality and gender are constructed.
4 GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND SEXISM

4.1 Gender and Sexuality

Starting with the Portuguese colonists, and later the rest of the world, Brazil and its people have been sexualized from the beginning of their history. In anthropologist Richard Parker’s 2009 book *Bodies, Pleasures, and Passions: Sexual Culture in Contemporary Brazil* he discusses the myths of origins of what came to be understood as Brazilian sensuality. Parker begins with the words of Portuguese explorers and how they interpreted the Brazilian natives, mostly focusing on women with “gracious shameful parts” and women who would swell their partner’s shameful parts to excessive size with the venom of animals as well as the amount of sex the Brazilian natives would have (11-12). Brazilian Carnaval has also come to embody this sensuality and sexuality. When one thinks of Brazilian Carnaval, the images of parades, women and some men in various states of undress, and never ending amounts of alcohol probably come to mind. Parker states that Brazilian Carnaval “has become a metaphor for Brazil itself—or at the very least, for those qualities that are taken as most essentially Brazilian, as the truest expression of Brazilianness” (2009, 183).

It is a story that they use as yet another frame of reference that allows them to manipulate, rearrange, and even reinvent the contours of their own sexual universe. Even more than the myths of origin, the carnaval has clearly been offered up, as well, as a story that they tell to outsiders—a story about Brazil’s peculiarly seductive charms, its exotic sensuality, its tropical pleasures, its erotic diversity and openness. It suggests, to Brazilians and outsiders alike, that here beneath the equator life might best be understood and appreciated as a work in progress, that reality is complex and multiple, and that nothing is ever quite what it appears to be. Even what appears the most absolute can always be transformed, it would seem, in a world where sin ceases to exist and anything is possible. (Parker 2009,183)

Gender and Sexuality are extremely interconnected in Brazil, and the same hypersexualization that Parker notes while talking about carnivalization and the origin myths of Brazilian sensuality can be seen in the current constructions of sexuality in
Brazil. Anthropologist Jessica Gregg discusses this at length in her 2003 work *Virtually Virgins: Sexual Strategies and Cervical Cancer in Recife, Brazil*. She states that there is an “overarching, dominant, cultural ideology of gender and sexuality” that many Brazilians use to understand their own experiences (27). What is most important to this ideology is that there is an expectation that Brazilian women should be extremely sexual, but also controlled because of that hypersexuality (27). The idea that women’s sexuality must be controlled, and especially controlled by men, has created an “honor and shame complex” that equates a woman’s status with her sexual purity, or lack thereof (Gregg 2003, 30). This also suggests that women who are sexually active can be two things: a wife and mother or a prostitute (Gregg 2003, 30). In this complex it is men’s honor that is gained in large part from controlling women’s sexual purity, and when a man loses control over a woman’s sexuality “his honor is sullied, and his masculinity questioned” (Gregg 2003, 30). This construction is potentially why women who control their own sexuality, like many of the artists I am discussing, are so threatening to Brazilian society, because their sexual liberty devalues men. This system of construction seemingly states that women are defined in terms of their sexual behavior (Gregg 2003, 30).

Gregg states that the mix of sensuality and control of said sensuality was just as apparent to her in her fieldwork as it was in the literature and that individuals were clear that girls needed to maintain their virginity before marriage and that they needed to be faithful to their husbands (2003, 34). Her participants also made it abundantly clear that men were not held to the same expectations, but would enforce them in women (Gregg 2003, 34). A man being unfaithful was just expected, so much so that it became an inherent part of being a man, and if one was faithful that masculinity would be
questioned; a man should be expected to sleep with other women if they pursued him (Gregg 2003, 35). How Brazilians construct female sensuality suggests a direct link between gender and sexuality, where women are highly sexual and need to be controlled; however this is from a decidedly androcentric point of view (Gregg 2003, 38). My research shows that Brazilian female sexuality is still very strong, but not all women are complying with being controlled. Their sexuality is their own.

Anitta, a wildly popular Brazilian music artist, whom I will discuss more in my analysis chapter, has embraced a kind of hyper sexuality that contests/subverts reactionary, traditional Catholic and modern Evangelical moral expectations for women in Brazil, which were cemented during the inquisition as a “pedagogy of fear” that allowed Catholic morality to take moral precedence over colonial and individual moralities (Gregg 2003, 31). Nicole Froio discusses this sexualization in a contemporary context in a 2018 article about Brazilian pop star Anitta, and her music video for *Vai Malandra* (Go Bad Guy). The song is literally “all about shaking her ass”, and the music video reflects that (Froio 2018, 83).

*Figure 5.1 Screenshot from Anitta’s Vai Malandra Music Video*
“Anitta collaborated with an American rapper in a bid to break into North America’s music scene and, in the process, shined a light on the exoticization of Latin American bodies” (Froio 2018, 83). “Conversations around Vai Malandra focused on Anitta’s agency as a Brazilian mixed-race woman; the appropriation of Blackness; and the blurred lines between sexuality and objectification”, again which are strong themes in much of Brazilian feminist music today (Froio 2018, 83). Froio cites Ivana Bentes, whom stated “The ass (and women’s bodies) can move from objectification to subjectification!” in an essay for Mídia NINJA (2018, 83). “Anitta’s lively ass, with its cellulite and no Photoshop, is a subject, not an object” (Froio 2018, 83). Froio cites Juliana Borges, a researcher at the Foundation School of Sociology and Politics in São Paulo, about pondering how Brown and Black working-class bodies are sexualized, “If the video is an objectification, we are saying that subversion is not possible and we are putting working-class women, once again, in a role of passivity,” (2018, 83). Parker also discusses this role of passivity in the construction of the Brazilian gender hierarchy.

Women, and femininity are traditionally tied to the more passive roles in non-western contexts, where men and masculinity are tied to active roles. This idea of passive and active is also tied to sexual intercourse where the act of “giving” oneself to another person is seen as passive and therefore feminine (Parker 2009, 46-48). Froio further discusses the history of Brazilian women, especially Black and Brown Brazilian women, as being used as a marketing scheme for American tourism. “Since the 1960s, travel advertisements have promoted Brazilian women’s bodies as commodities for Western tourists” (2018, 83). She noted that “Brazilian women’s ‘easiness’ is naturalized as part of a tropical disposition that, while taking on specific dynamics when displayed on stage, is generally part of a larger discourse objectifying non-
Western female sexuality,” (2018, 83). This sexualization of Black and Brown Brazilian women is something that has been present since the beginning of Brazilian history.

As Parker discussed with the myths of origin, the first images of indigenous Brazilians to Portuguese colonists were of a sexual nature, the same is true of female African slaves. The sexual interactions with African slaves were not described as exploitation but as natural contact between Brazilian males and “affectionate, and submissive” African women (Gregg 2003, 28), who were considered excellent sexual substitutes for white Portuguese women who did not arrive until later (Gregg 2003, 32). In contemporary Brazil this miscegenation is venerated, and fetishized, in the form of the *mulata*, or the dark skinned Brazilian woman of mixed ancestry (Gregg 2003, 29). Being a *mulata* is considered sexually perfect, dark enough to represent extreme sexuality, but white enough to remove the “threatening” and “vaguely repulsive” aspects of that extreme sexuality, making her irresistible (Gregg 2003, 29). However this veneration has led to an understanding that the *mulata* is only sexual, and is so on demand (Gregg 2003, 29). “White for marrying, *mulata* for fucking, and Black for working” (Gregg 2003, 29).

![Figure 5.2 Screenshot from Anitta’s Vai Malandra Music Video](image)

“While this “tropical disposition” is part of the mythology of hypersexual Brazilian women, this stereotype is also built using the figure of the mixed-race Brazilian woman—who is
a symbol of both miscegenation and the whitening of a racialized other” (Froio 2018, 83). Froio posits that these tropes are exactly what Anitta is attempting to subvert in her *Vai Malandra* video, through wearing box braids and filming the video in the favela community of Vidigal (2018, 83). *Vai Malandra* invited Westerners to rethink their assumptions about Black and Brown women in Brazil (Froio 2018, 83). “Anitta chooses to twerk for her own pleasure because dancing to funk is a way for Brazilian women to enjoy and celebrate their own bodies. She’s not passively standing in the back to twerk; this is her song, her body, and she looks straight into the camera to make sure everyone knows that” (Froio 2018, 83).

### 4.2 Sexism

Brazil’s history of sexism is tied to a few things, one being the strong presence of the Catholic Church and their oppositions to issues such as sexuality, contraception, and abortion as well as Brazil’s sordid political history, including a military dictatorship, a military regime, and how it destabilized the country for almost 100 years, leaving little room for the development of the feminist movement (Skidmore 2010, Sardenberg and Costa 2015).

Domestic violence and rape are huge issues in Brazil right now with a woman being raped once every 11.6 minutes according to a 2016 publication (Sardenberg and Costa 2015, Brazilian Forum for Public Safety 2018). Wife, or female companion abuse was, and is, a serious problem among all social classes with the police and courts traditionally refusing to recognize this violence as criminal behavior (Skidmore 2010, 196). Charges would be routinely dismissed even if there were indeed a murder because judges would accept a plea of murder in defense of honor, claiming the wife was or intended to be unfaithful (Skidmore 2010, 196). This long history of domestic violence led to the passage of the Maria da Penhna Law in 2006, which criminalized
domestic violence, increased the maximum sentence and eliminated the alternative sentences for domestic violence cases (Sardenberg and Costa 2015).

Sardenberg and Costa state the strength of patriarchal values in Brazil have led to many challenges (2015). These values have prevented changes in legislation regarding sexual and reproductive rights, namely preventing the decimalization of abortion, as well as legislation regarding domestic violence (2015). Not only have these values hindered legislative change but they also have prevented women from entering decision-making spaces and positions in formal power structures (Sardenberg and Costa 2015). Women held only ten percent of elected positions in Brazil in 2015 (Sardenberg and Costa 2015).

It is important to note that in Brazil, many of the nursery rhymes that are taught to children serve to reinforce the ideals of heteronormativity that Brazil holds to so strongly. Steffan and Krob state that Brazilian songs reproduce the sexist and patriarchal Brazilian context, as well as making the different roles of men and women clear (2015, 2128). These songs perpetuate ideas that girls need to take care of household chores and their bodies, and that it is more beautiful to get married and have children (2015, 2128). The songs encourage always being dependent and subjugated by their husbands, and many included allusions to violence (2015, 2128). “Women are well represented as fragile, while men, on the contrary, are represented as having strength and power” (Steffan and Krob 2015, 2128). Music, as a form of culture that is constantly present in Brazil, reproduces these inequalities and the idea women are objects of beauty and sex and who do not need to have their wishes respected, or acknowledged (Steffan and Krob 2015, 2128). Some songs alluded to violence against women in children's songs in a more implicit way than in adult songs (Steffan and Krob 2015, 2128). “It thus becomes urgent to
deconstruct these gender roles and these oppressive images that are encouraged in children” (Steffan and Krob 2015, 2128).

Steffan and Krob state that gender inequalities are the product of different historical forms of organization among human beings, which gradually become institutionalized in the form of gender roles; these inequalities also make women more susceptible to violence and its consequences” (2015, 2123). Brazil is a patriarchal society where women are traditionally subordinate to men and youth are subordinate to older men (Steffan and Krob 2015, 2123). This means that men have dictated and determined most of the social norms (Steffan and Krob 2015, 2123). In the case of Brazil, when someone, most often women, deviates from this pattern of social conduct, violence is often seen as justified, whether physical or psychological, to correct behavior, which in turn bolsters the men’s authority (Steffan and Krob 2015, 2124).

All of the female participants discussed Brazil being a patriarchal society and the discrimination that stems from that. Bruna, 33, was born and raised in Belo Horizonte Brazil in the State of Minas Gerais. She described her life very plainly. “I work. I’m starting college now. I have a son who will be 6 years old, that’s it, that’s my life.” Bruna was also the only lesbian participant, and she also happens to present in a fairly masculine way. When I asked her if she had ever experienced any discrimination because of her gender identity she said she only experienced one instance. She told me about going to use the women’s restroom in a bar, and the owner aggressively approached her because she was going into the woman’s restroom. After the confrontation she left the bar and never went back. She also told me about how sometimes men react to her in a certain way. She was at another bar and the bartender began to ask her questions. “Do you like women? Oh you’ve just never had a man who could really satisfy you, you should have sex with me and then you’ll see.”
Camila, 26, grew up in a small city, Conceição do Castelo, in the interior of the state of Espirito Santo, Brazil. When she was 10 years old her family moved to the coastal city of Guarpari, also in Espirito Santo. She said her family was always middle class. “When I was younger things were a little more reasonable, things were not very hard, but we were never rich.” She now lives in Belo Horizonte, Brazil with her boyfriend and his mother. Camila gave me quite a few examples of how being a woman effects her life and instances of machismo she has witnessed. She first told me about padrão, or the “societal standard” in Brazil, in which she used the example of heterosexual relationships. If you are in a heterosexual relationship in Brazil you are following the padrão. She also gave the example of driving. She said it was common that if you were in the car with someone and the person in front of you was driving badly, the expectation was that it was a woman driving. Camila was also particularly passionate about her lack of access to shoes, because she has larger feet. She can never buy the cute styles for women because they are never big enough for her so she always has to buy men’s tennis shoes. “Somewhere someone said women have small feet and men have big feet.” She told me she thinks all styles should come in all sizes.

In this chapter one can begin to see how interconnected the topics of feminism, sexuality and blackness really are. From the origin myths that Parker discusses it is evident that sexuality has been an integral part of understanding Brazilian society by both Brazilians and non-Brazilians, especially regarding Carnaval. However a defining characteristic of this understanding of Brazilian sexuality is racial identity that is rooted in colonial practices of slavery. Women in Brazil are understood to be hypersexual to the point of needing to be controlled, but it is Black women that are largely considered to be the most sexual and it is the mulatta that is considered sexual perfection and a veneration of miscegenation. In Brazilian
society women are generally considered passive and are expected to be subservient to the men who are supposed to control the woman’s sexuality. This lack of agency is taught to women from a young age as demonstrated by Steffan and Krob, and can be seen currently by a lack of representation in politics, as well as in anecdotal evidence from those participating in my research. Anitta’s *Vai Malandra* video begins to show how Brazilian music artists are combating normative ideas within Brazilian society and illuminates some of the differences between second wave and third wave feminism that many of those participating in my research alluded to but never explicitly stated. I will discuss these differences further in the next chapter.
5 BRAZILIAN FEMINISMS

In the context of this research a discussion of second wave versus third way feminism, is relevant since many of those participating in this research seemed to allude to those differences in their interviews. However it is important to note that much of the literature surrounding the discussion of waves of feminism is based in the United States. There have been time periods that have been discussed as devoid of feminist activism due to several reasons (Molony and Nelson 2017, 2). In the United States, the period immediately after women won the right to vote until the 1960s was viewed as devoid of feminist activism and dominated by conservative beliefs steeped in rigidly dichotomous gender roles, and the period that followed the second wave of feminism, the 1980s and the era of Reagan, has also been described as an era of conservative backlash against feminism and devoid of activism (Molony and Nelson 2017, 2).

Second wave feminism has come to be understood as the early 1960s and 1970s (Molony and Nelson 2017, 2). The term second wave was adopted to distance feminists of the time from first wave feminists, which they perceived as those early feminists fighting for women’s suffrage (Molony and Nelson 2017, 2). The second wave of feminism has been described as a resurgence of activism that broadened the notion of equality to include a re-examination of men’s and women’s social roles (Laughlin and Castledine 2011, 2). The second wave of feminism ends in the mid-1980s amid criticism, most notably from women of color and lesbians, that privileged, white, heterosexual women determined its goals, ideologies, and strategies (Laughlin and Castledine 2011, 2).

Younger feminists coined the term third wave in the early 1990s in critique of the previous waves (Molony and Nelson 2017, 2). They aimed to go beyond binary notions of gender and more towards consideration of multiple identities like age, class, race, and sexuality,
which many scholars now see as third wave feminists’ adoption of the concept of intersectionality (Molony and Nelson 2017, 2). Third wave feminism has also been associated with greater emphasis on femininity, both in terms of reclaiming femininity and subverting femininity, as well as understanding and practicing feminism through a lens of diversity, with a sharper focus on social justice issues and inclusionary practices involving men and Trans individuals (Evans 2016, 414).

When feminism emerged in Brazil in the mid-1960s it played two roles, fighting for the reestablishment of democracy, and fighting to include gender equality as a theme central to that democracy (Sardenberg and Costa 2015). The 1980s saw a rise of women’s issues being included in public policy with creations such as the Program of Integral Assistance to Women’s Health, Police Stations for Battered Women, and The National Council for Women’s Rights, but the National Council for Women’s Rights was dismantled in the 1990s (Sardenberg and Costa 2015). However the experience of white Brazilian women in feminism is incredibly different from those of black Brazilian women in feminism.

5.1 Black Brazilian Feminism

Sonia E. Alvarez states very clearly “given the rigidity of class structures and the severity of income disparities and power imbalances in Brazil, we must also pay specific attention to the ways in which class and race are constitutive of gender interests” (1990, 26), meaning one cannot separate race and class from one’s identity as a woman. As Alvarez writes “a woman is not Brazilian and Black and working-class and female; she is a Brazilian working-class Black woman” (1990, 26).

Between the years of 1969 and 1975 the number of women attending Brazilian universities quintupled (Alvarez 1990, 51). Between 1971 and 1975 the number of Brazilian women seeking
master’s degrees increased by 336.8 percent, and the number of women seeking Ph.D.s during
the same time period increased by 400 percent (Alvarez 1990, 51). By 1980 there were more
Brazilian women enrolled in universities than Brazilian men (Alvarez 1990, 51). While these
numbers are worth noting, it is of even more importance to examine that less than one percent of
all Black women in Brazil have acquired a university level education in contrast to 4.2 percent of
white Brazilian women (Alvarez 1990, 52). White middle-class women have greater access to
education than both Black women and men (Alvarez 1990, 52).

These numbers are illustrative of the elitist nature of the higher education system in Brazil.
Even though admission into the federal and state university system is based on merit, it is the
poor and working class Brazilians who are effectively excluded from getting an education, as
“family income remains a determining variable in all educational groups beyond the elementary
level” (Alvarez 1990, 52). This led to a change in the demographics of occupations with women
gaining work in higher prestige positions such as engineers, architects, doctors, dentists,
economists, university professors, and lawyers (Alvarez 1990, 52).

This aforementioned change led to Black women being underrepresented among the new
female professionals (Alvarez 1990, 52). Alvarez states, “only 2 percent of all Black women in
the labor force are in high prestige occupations, whereas 69 percent work as unskilled laborers”
and they earn on average “68 percent less than Black men working similar occupational
categories” (1990, 52). At the same time that the educational and occupational opportunities
were expanding for middle-class white women, the service sector was also expanding and
became the primary source of employment for poor and working-class women, most of whom
are Black (Alvarez 1990, 52-53). These middle-class women will then hire a day worker to do
bulk cleaning, sending out laundry, or purchase processed foods, all tasks reminiscent of the type of labor that enslaved peoples once performed (Alvarez 1990, 53).

While Black women have always been important agents in the larger Black movements, including religious movements and social organizations, as well as being founders of the predominantly white second-wave feminist movement, the 1980s gave rise to the growth of specifically Black feminist organizations (Alvarez 1990, 232). During the early 1980s Black women began to realize that within the male-dominated Black movement and the white-dominated feminist movement their needs were not being adequately articulated (Alvarez 1990, 232). They decided racism within the women’s movement and sexism within the Black movement required the creation of a movement distinctly for Black women (Alvarez 1990, 232).

Some Black women who remained sympathetic to the political assertions of the feminist movement still kept themselves removed from the movement because of its inattention or blatant ignorance to the levels of oppression Black women were facing in terms of class and gender (Alvarez 1990, 232-233).

By the late 1980s the Black women’s movement had become incredibly diverse (Alvarez 1990, 232). Rejection of the feminist label was common among women active in the Black women’s movement, because of a variety of factors, such as: losing key allies of Black men within the movement who saw gender as a “secondary contradiction” who believed feminism was a bourgeois, white women’s issue (Alvarez 1990, 233). Others believed race took precedence and chose to work side by side with Black men to end racial oppression, “and for many, the racism operative within Brazilian feminist groups had irreparably damaged feminism’s credibility” (Alvarez 1990, 233). Many Black women found that early feminist groups were unwelcoming and at times hostile to Black women’s insistence that feminism should address
how the rampant racism in Brazilian society affects constructions of gender (Alvarez 1990, 232). It is this insistence that one form of oppression was no more important than another and that race, class, and gender all inseparably shape the lives of Black women that distinguished their struggle from both Black men and white women (Alvarez 1990, 234). It is also this diversity of perspective that sometimes caused white feminists to deny them a place within the movement and to be dismissive of their claims (Alvarez 1990, 234).

5.2 Feminism as a Dirty Word

Brazil was in the throes of a presidential election while I was completing my fieldwork, and one of the candidates had particularly negative views of feminism that he integrated into his campaign. It was as though feminism had become a dirty word. A 2018 BBC article cites a Brazilian woman saying, “Feminism is political, and it's sexist, it's worse than machismo” during Jair Bolsonaro’s campaign (Watson 2018). The same woman states, “Feminism supports feminine superiority. Feminists treat men like dirt, as if they have to be submissive. Take the political left for example - men on the left are always submissive, they treat women as better than them” (Watson 2018). This opinion is something one participant, Larissa, also expressed

“Eu não tenho muita bagagem pra falar sobre as feministas, mas as poucas vezes em que eu podia participar, e ouvi lós falar, eu discordei daquelas falavam porque o que eu percebi e o que elas forçam um movimento separatista. Homens para lá, e mulheres para cá” translation: I don’t have much to say about feminists, but the few times I have been able to participate and hear what they say, I don’t agree with what they say because I think they force a movement that separates, men there, women here.

Other women said they saw no reason for feminism today, “men and women are equal in Brazil. These feminist women screaming and taking off their clothes – it’s very backwards. Bolsonaro
isn’t taking any rights away from women. These women who are naked in the streets screaming – they don’t represent me” (Kaiser 2018). Another woman said “A real feminist is a woman who gets up early, works hard and fights for her independence, not these women who whine and have barely worked a day in their lives” (Kaiser 2018). When I asked Vitoria how she perceived feminists she said, “Eu tenho um pouco medo porque as vezes as feministas e um pouco radical” (“I have a little fear because sometimes feminists are a little radical”). Vitoria, 22, was born and raised in the interior of the state of São Paulo. She now lives in the city of São Paulo where she attends medical school. She said she considers herself middle class because she can afford to get an expensive degree and she has everything she wants. Vitoria said she does not consider herself a feminist because she perceives them as radical, and that she prefers to see people as people, not as men or women. This notion of radicalism is something that Bolsonaro, his family, and his campaign focused on.

During campaign demonstrations, Bolsonaro’s son, Eduardo, stated, “rightwing women are prettier than leftwing women. They don’t show their breasts in the streets, nor do they defecate in the streets. Rightwing women are more hygienic” (Kaiser 2018). This idea that feminists are unhygienic is something I saw quite often discussed on Facebook and Whatsapp as those were the platforms that Bolsonaro’s campaign was really won as he had little marketing elsewhere (Kaiser 2018).

5.3 Can a Man be a Feminist?

Rodrigo, 26, grew up in Rio de Janiero, Brazil and the United States. He moved to the United States when he was 5 years old until he was around 8 years old when he moved back to Brazil. He then moved back to the United States when he was 13 and moved back the Brazil to complete his high school and college education. He currently lives in Tucker, Georgia, and
works as an administrative assistant. During our interview I asked him if he identified as a feminist, and he had somewhat of a hard time answering that question. I could tell he felt a little uneasy. “Feminist, uhm… like what would that mean?” I asked, “Well, how do you define it?” He said that he heard some feminists say that a man can’t really be a feminist. I asked him what his definition of a feminist was, “I don’t know. I would say, of course I’m against violence and oppression and stuff. I don’t know if a man can be a feminist, because I’m not female, but I don’t know. Maybe yes. Generally yes.”

This chapter continues to show the interconnectedness of feminism and blackness. It is evident from the literature that Black women were often excluded from feminist spaces in Brazil and as such were not able to advocate for their rights to greater representation in positions of higher power, greater access to education, and a voice in the feminist movement. These exclusions are remnants of the legitimation of legal inequalities (the gradation of rights that Holston mentioned) that stemmed from the previously engrained racial ideology of Brazil. Feminism in Brazil began during what would be considered the second wave of feminism, which was critiqued as being overwhelmingly heteronormative white women, and the literature on Brazilian feminism as well as evidence from Lasrissa, supports this critique. The artists that I will discuss in the following chapter seem to align more with third wave feminism in their focus on social justice, intersectionality, and reclamation/subversion of femininity.
6 MEDIA ANALYSIS

There is an idea within Brazilian hip-hop that femininity is a subaltern voice, or a position of reaction if active at all; however, the Brazilian feminist rap and music movements are turning that idea on its head (Pardue 2010, 438). Derek Pardue states “in the case of Brazil, anxiety around gender does not make hip hoppers timid but rather drives them to perform masculinities embedded with ideologies of power and even social change” (2010, 435). Although some artists recognize and utilize traditional notions of masculinity and power they regularly assert that these two cultural constructs are not mutually exclusive. Furthermore they often pair masculine elements of performance with distinctly feminine topics to dismantle the cultural standard of patriarchy within Brazil.

The songs and videos I have chosen to analyze are both from popular Brazilian artists and less popular Brazilian artists. When I chose the artists, it was because they all had significant amounts of media attention for the themes their music discusses. Artists like Anitta, Pabllo Vittar, and Iza were chosen because they consistently have music that is listed on Brazilian top music charts, and others like Lay, MC Carol, and Karol Conká were chosen because they are vocal about the message of their music, though they are not as popular. However all the music and videos were chosen because they were relevant to the topics my research is discussing.

6.1 Lay

In Lay’s 2016 song “Busca” (“Search”) she mentions the gender inequality that many Brazilian women face with the line “Foda-se os padrões, muitos sem peitos ganhando milhões” or “fuck the standards many without breasts earning millions”. This line is directly addressing the specific phenomena of pay inequality in Brazil, where in 2008 women on average made 84% of men’s salaries, while women whom had over 12 years of schooling made 58% of men’s salaries
(Canuto 2013). Women are a common theme in many of Lay’s lyrics, such as talking about her girl gang in her song “Ghetto Woman” or alluding to menstruation in her song “Mar Vermelho” meaning Red Sea. Perhaps Lay’s most visible act of feminism is the album artwork for 129129.

![Figure 6.1 Album Artwork for Lay’s 129129](image)

Lay has taken a stereotypically feminine object, high heels, and created a stylized representation of the internal female sex organs, following a Trans exclusionary trend in American feminism essentializing internal female sexual organs as part of womanhood. This is juxtaposed to her style of rap that is more associated with masculinity; all while her lyrics are also rooted in the female lived experience. It is recognized that the stereotypical female ideal in Brazil is a “passive, submissive being” (Skidmore 2010). Lay is anything but. In a 2016 interview she talks about her aggression. “From the very beginning, people said my EP was "aggressive", because we live in a time where if you speak freely about your reality, about what you really feel, that makes you aggressive” (Lay, quoted in Whitehouse 2016). In a 2017 interview with Trace she states “I’d love it if all women discovered what is to be feminist, and how to be feminist…from inside out, getting rid of the shackles, being free to ourselves from the inside” (Lay, quoted in Kimberly MD 2017). In that same interview Lay was asked if it was important to dedicate a day,
month, or year to women, and her response touches on the severe amounts of domestic violence that occurs in Brazil.

Every day we, women, are disrespected, devalued, abused, lynched, murdered – by men AND women. Every day we, women, fight, kill dragons, face lions, and deal with angels and demons to keep ourselves alive, in flesh and spirit. There are billions of women around the world without a name, a voice, a platform. I’ve grown up on this, and I think one month is not enough, one year is not enough, even one century is not enough. Every second, minute and hour should be dedicated to we, WOMEN, who bear the weight of the world on our shoulders. - Lay Moretti, quoted in Kimberly MD

This quote shows her passion for empowering women, specifically being a voice for the voiceless, and her beliefs that women are strong beings, reiterating the common themes of her music. In a 2016 interview Lay described her music as “a shock to the face of Brazilian patriarchal society” and said "this black and disenfranchised woman, feeling, screaming about how she lives, what she needs to confront, how she deals with it. Always evolving. Always asserting that she's in the process of construction and deconstruction" (Lay, quoted in Whitehouse 2016). Again this quote shows how Lay feels her music is part of creating social change by bringing attention to the atrocities that happen to Brazilian women every day. It is apparent that through her music Lay wants to teach women that they are powerful, and should demand the respect that they deserve from society.

6.2 MC Soffia

MC Soffia’s music deals more specifically with her experiences as a young, teenage, black girl. In a 2015 interview MC Soffia recounts a story of her childhood where one of her kindergarten classmates told her she was black because she fell into a tin of paint (Sidahmed 2016). After being relentlessly teased she told her mother she wanted to be white (Sidahmed 2016). Her mother was outraged and began taking her to hip hop concerts so that she could get in touch with her roots and gain a connection with her African heritage (Sidahmed 2016). This pride of
heritage is central to her music. Black women have had a long legacy of being hyper sexualized (Chepp 2015, 546) and MC Soffia discusses this in her song “Menina Pretinha” which translates to Little Black Girl. The opening line deals directly with this sexualization of black women as well as the patriarchal Brazilian society. “Menina pretinha, exótica não é Linda. Você não é bonitinha. Você é uma rainha” (“Little black girl, exotic is not beautiful. You are not a cute little thing. You are a queen”). MC Soffia is speaking to girls her own age and telling them they are not cute, they are queens, they are powerful. Later in the song she goes on to say “sou negra e tenho orgulho da minha cor” (“I’m black and I’m proud of my color”). In the same song she states her position, even as a child, in resistance to societal standards “Sou criança, sou negra, também sou resistência” (“I am a child, I am black, I am also resistance”). MC Soffia’s song “Minha Rapunzel Tem Dread”, “My Rapunzel has Dreads”, speaks directly to the sustainability of the feminist movement telling people to create a princess that looks like you, and that they don’t need a prince to be saved.

In a fairy tale, Rapunzel plays her braids. In my story, she has dreads and is African
Now I will tell my tale to you. How all stories begin with was once
Once upon a time a Rastafari princess was born in the kingdom of Sheba
In my story who said the witch is evil? United girls can change everything.
Enemy here will not roll. Oh yeah, it's not going to happen.
In my story Rapunzel has dread. She is black and she is Rastafari.
You do not need a prince to save yourself. She is empowered and can conquer all.
Her dread hair had strength and power. His African beauty had nothing to say.
This story I made up because I did not see a princess like this.
They only showed me one, that's not possible for me.
Princess Ethiopia, that name I baptized.
Country that enjoys everything I researched. I'm very happy to see the story happen. Create a princess that looks like you. – Excerpt of Lyrics from Minha Rapunzel Tem Dread, MC Soffia

MC Soffia is also confronting the negative associations that Brazil has with certain African religions that are common in some areas of Brazil because of their history with slavery, with the
In my story, who said the witch is evil?” In MC Soffia’s song Barbie Black she speaks directly to the current beauty standards in Brazil that find light skinned, thin, blonde women the most attractive. “Eu sou a Barbie Black. A boneca mais bonita daqui” (“I am a Black Barbie. The most beautiful doll here”). “Eu sou a Barbie Black E nenhuma se compara a mim” (“I am a Black Barbie and no one compares to me”). “Sou poderosa, sou uma diva Barbie preta, Barbie Linda, sou sim” (“I am powerful, I am a Diva, Black Barbie, beautiful Barbie, yes I am”). In a 2016 interview MC Soffia spoke of her upcoming Olympic performance and an issue she hoped to shed light on, a 2003 law that was not being enforced requiring African culture to be included in school curricula (Sidahmed 2016). In the interview she is quoted saying “When people do talk about Africans in Brazil, it’s about them being slaves, not about how much we have contributed to making Brazil what it is today. That just encourages white kids to treat us bad” (MC Soffia, quoted in Sidahmed 2016). “The law which was passed is older than I am, but even now hardly any schools obey it. If they did the children would grow up seeing black people differently, and that could bring racism in Brazil to an end” (MC Soffia, quoted in Sidahmed 2016). It is obvious that a main goal of MC Soffia’s music is to enact social change for Afro-Brazilians, and I would argue even more specifically Afro-Brazilian women and girls.

6.3 Karol Conká

Karol Conká’s story is very similar to MC Soffia’s, though she is in her late twenties. In a 2014 article she is quoted "When I was a child I wanted to be white, because I thought it would be cooler and easier. Brazil is a really racist place - and it's hidden, but discovering Lauryn Hill and Erykah Badu helped me to feel stronger as a black woman and an artist" (Karol Conká, quoted in Adeleye 2014). In that same article the author says “the simple act of infusing Afro-Brazilian flavours from Bahia is an act of rebellion” and that Conká’s lyrical style of self-empowerment
being simultaneously discussed with having a good time creates an understated activism that has struck a chord with Brazil’s LGBT community, something that is rare for hip hop (Adeleye 2014). Similarly to Lay Conkà says she is “representing women who couldn’t reach their goals” (Karol Conká, quoted in Adeleye 2014).

One of Conká’s most popular songs is “Lala”. Lala is about the act of cunnilingus and female power. The first line in the song is translated to “wretched pampered boy who now cries, just because I told you to kneel” “Moleque mimado bolado que agora chora. Só porque eu mandei ajoelhar”, and goes on to say things like “you hardly know the difference from a clitoris to an ovary”, “mal sabe a diferença de um clitóris pra um ovário”.

“Equal pleasure rights more understanding,” and “curl up, put your lips to the flower break this...
taboo this is no favor”, “Curvem-se, encostem os lábios na flor. Quebra esse tabu, isso não é nenhum favor.”

These lyrics paired with the imagery in the video of men licking flowers and the faces of kittens with their tongues out being superimposed onto the mouths of men, makes it obvious what Conká is discussing. She is directly addressing the inequity of sexual pleasure between men and women in Brazil.

The video for Lala was even censored on YouTube, because some deemed it inappropriate (Radic 2017). In a 2017 interview when asked about this censorship Conká responded with:
I don’t consider the video deserving of censorship, and I know that it has been censored due to the great number of people offended by it, that reported the video as inappropriate. It just proves how women’s pleasure is still a taboo. Here in Brazil, we listen to many songs sung by men that talk about the male’s organ, that put women in a submissive role, but when a woman talks about it, the subject becomes polemic, as if women’s pleasure were nonexistent. I wasn’t surprised by the censorship. It was already expected from a society without information - Conká, quoted in Radic 2017.

Conká discusses how her music is not just about empowering other women, but continuing to empower herself, and drawing strength from her family and their experiences.

The fact that I was born a woman always makes me want to talk about it. I grew up with my grandmother talking about the empowerment of women. She always taught me that a woman must struggle to assert her power in society. The music for me is like a kind of resistance against many forms of prejudice that I have suffered in life for being black, female and poor. So, my lyrics are full of self-esteem messages and are also a way to say something and be heard. – Conká, quoted in Hipólito 2015

From the quote above it is obvious that Conká wants to encourage other women to be empowered to assert their place in society, to demand to be acknowledged, as well as to demand the acknowledgment of the inequalities they face every day.

6.4 MC Carol

Karol Conká also works with another artist MC Carol who holds very similar values, and discusses similar topics such as cunnilingus and female sexual pleasure. In a 2017 interview MC Carol was asked “You consider yourself a feminist and many of your lyrics talk about women’s empowerment. What do you still want to say to girls who listen to you?” and her response was “Be independent, always. Fight for the freedom of being whomever you want. Do not give satisfaction to anyone. And if you choose to be married or have children, do it because you want to and not because you think it’s your only way” (MC Carol, quoted in Melissa 2017). Karol Conká was featured on MC Carol’s song “100% Feminista” - 100% Feminist. The opening lines of this song are:
I witnessed all this, within my family Woman with black eye, beaten every day. I was about 5 years old but I already understood. What woman picks up, if she does not make food. Woman oppressed, voiceless, obedient. When I grow up, I'll be different.” MC Carol goes on to say “I represent Aqualtune, I represent Carolina. I represent Dandara [Dandara dos Palmares, a woman warrior in the Palmares slave rebellion] and Xica da Silva [a woman born a slave that gained wealth and power], I'm a woman, I'm black, my hair is hard. Strong, authoritarian and sometimes fragile, I assume. My fragility does not diminish my strength. I'm fucking boss, I'm not going to do the dishes. I am an independent woman, I do not accept oppression. Lower your voice, lower your hand. – MC Carol 100% Feminista

So not only is MC Carol addressing societal inequalities of race, but also the ever-present issue of domestic violence in Brazil. MC Carol posted on Instagram that her ex-husband had assaulted her with a machete and that when she called the police they did not really take any action. She also announced her candidacy for office in the State of Rio de Janeiro to be an advocate for women and favela communities. This announcement came shortly after she released a song in commemoration of Marielle Franco, a female LGBTQ politician and activist in Rio de Janeiro, who was assassinated.

6.5 Pabllo Vittar

Pabllo Vittar is one of, if not the most, popular drag queens in Brazil, with 8.2 million followers on Instagram. She exploded into the Brazilian music scene in 2014, and has been a Brazilian LGBTQ icon ever since. When she began her career Brazil was an extremely dangerous place to be LGBTQ, but there was still a sense of hope because gay marriage had recently been legalized in 2013 and the government had set up new LGBTQ crisis centers and new public health programs had been created for Trans people (Codinha, 2018). However in 2017 a federal judge overruled an 18-year-old ban on gay conversion therapy, allowing psychologists to treat homosexuality as a disease (Codinha 2018). Vittar responded to this ruling on her twitter simply saying “we are not ill” (Phillips 2017).
In 2017 there were 445 LGBTQ deaths in Brazil, a 30% increase from 2016 (Cowie 2018). 387 of these deaths were murders and 58 were suicides (Cowie 2018). “Luiz Mott, an anthropologist and president of Grupo Gay de Bahia, said the rising violence owed much to the prominence of ultraconservative politicians, many of whom are linked to the country’s powerful evangelical caucus in congress” (Cowie 2018). Vittar still fights for who she is despite this high level of violence saying, “I like to be a girl, I like to be a boy” (Phillips 2017). She also says her fans “tell [her] a lot about their daily struggle to go out on the street being gay, being drag. I want to give them strength so they can continue being who they are.”

![Figure 6.5 Screenshot from Pabillo Vittar’s Seu Crime Music Video](image)

This is clear in all of her videos, which regularly showcase LGBTQ people, like the images above and below of members of the LGBTQ community kissing in a public space.

![Figure 6.6 Screenshot from Pabillo Vittar’s Seu Crime Music Video](image)
In her most recent video “Buzina”, (“Horn”), she is an alien that lands on a foreign planet. Towards the middle of the video she is vogueing with the aliens that live on the planet she landed on. The hair and makeup in this video is particularly interesting as she wears one eye of pink makeup and one eye of blue makeup while alternating pink and blue wigs.

Figure 6.7 Screenshot from Pabllo Vittar’s Buzina Music Video

Figure 6.8 Screenshot from Pabllo Vittar’s Buzina Music Video
She chose these colors during a time when the Minister of Human Rights in Brazil, Damares Alves, remarked during her swearing in ceremony that, “a new era has started in Brazil” and that "boys wear blue and girls wear pink” (Folha de São Paulo 2019). Later Alves made an emotional speech saying there will be no more “ideological indoctrination” of children and teenagers, and that “girls will be princesses and boys will be princes” (Folha de São Paulo 2019). Vittar’s choice seems to be a very purposeful act of defiance to these statements.

Vittar’s sexuality and sensuality are integral parts of her music. In most of her music videos she is wearing revealing clothing and is seen with a male love interest. Her song Corpo Sensual or Hot Body, is literally about the appeal of her body, owning her sexiness, and not being ashamed of her sensuality and sexuality.

Pabllo Vittar – Corpo Sensual

1 Mandando ver.
2 No vício da batida querendo se envolver.
3 No estilo diferente que prende e dá prazer.
4 Eu sei que logo sente, te faz enlouquecer.
5 Faço ferver..
6 Vai passar mal!
7 Viro sua mente com meu corpo sensual.
8 Minha boca é quente, vem.
9 Não tem igual.
10 Tá todo carente no pedido informal.
11 Vai passar mal!

2 Addicted to the beat, wanting to get involved.
3 In a different style that captures and gives pleasure.
4 I know you’ll feel it soon, it drives you crazy
5 I make things boil
6 You’ll lose your mind.
7 I’ll turn your head with my sexy body.
8 My mouth is hot, come on.
9 There is nothing like it.
10 You’re all needy, in informal request.
11 You’ll lose your mind.
While Vittar may not identify as a woman all the time, her unabashed sexuality and defiance to societal norms of femininity being passive makes her just as much a part of the feminist music movement as others I have mentioned. Yet still while combating societal norms, one can see certain norms being reinforced as well. In Vittar’s *Seu Crime* (Your Crime) video there is an ad for a condom company in Brazil. During my research I have seen many ads included in music videos, especially for beauty products, and food products like gum, but I have not seen many ads for condoms, and I have not seen any ads for condoms in the music videos of exclusively women-identifying artists, which still shows that in many cases women are not allowed to be as sexual as men.

![Screenshot from Pabllo Vittar’s Seu Crime Music Video Condom Ad](image)

*Figure 6.9 Screenshot from Pabllo Vittar’s Seu Crime Music Video Condom Ad*

6.6 Iza

Iza rose to fame in a similar way to Pabllo Vittar. She began posting covers of popular songs to her self named YouTube channel and soon caught the attention of Warner Music who signed her in 2016. Iza’s “*Esse Brilho e Meu*” (This Shine is Mine) video also contains an ad, however it is an ad for a hair product.
Strange enough the packaging for the product only shows white women, when Iza herself is a black woman. The video is also mostly pink reinforcing societal norms of femininity. The lyrics of the song, and Iza’s wardrobe is where this video beings to deviate from societal norms.
When you look at Iza’s wardrobe in this video you can see she is wearing a harness. Harnesses are commonly used in bondage and as part of the BDSM community. What makes this harness even more interesting is that it could be used as a strap on dildo harness. Wearing a strap on dildo harness again is combatting the idea of feminine passivity, as she could potentially don a fake penis to then “comer” or take someone in an act of sexual intercourse (Parker 2009, 46). To “comer” is an act of domination (Parker 2009, 46). In Iza’s song “Te Pegar” (Catch You) she even discusses the act of domination. She sings “eu vou te pegar, te dominar te dominar’ which means, I am going to get you, to dominate you, to dominate you. Iza seems to walk this line of domination and submission in the “Esse Brilho e Meu” video in particular since she wears certain accessories that are common within the BDSM community like a collar, as seen in the image below.

![Screenshot from Iza’s Esse Brilho E Meu Music Video](image)

She wears a collar in quite a few of her videos, and this is important because in the BDSM community a collar often signifies ownership of a submissive which points back to the idea that women are passive, or submissive within Brazilian society. Iza is simultaneously representing dominance and submission, strength and passivity.
In a 2018 interview with VICE Iza was asked if it was possible to equalize representation in the pop music market, her response was –

Of course it is possible. Am I not here? In fact, we are there; several of us are there. The whole world is there, you know, if they are calling it is really important to talk about the things that matter. Just as it is to talk about sex, boy, about partying, all the things I say on my album. But it is because of the way I felt as a girl, when I was much younger; that I think it is important to talk about these things that touch my heart and that this is also important for other people. (Costa and Falcão)

The title of the song itself “Esse Brilho e Meu” “This Shine is Mine” is a double entendre. As the video is effectively a commercial for a hair product, the title could be interpreted as the shine of my hair is mine, or it could mean my brilliance is mine. If we take it to represent the second interpretation this seems to show ownership of her “glow” or internal brilliance. As she says in the song “esse brilho é meu e ninguém vai tirar’ or (this shine is mine and no one will take it).

6.7 Rap Plus Size

Rap Plus Size is the name of the Brazilian duo consisting of Sara Donato and Issa Paz. The group began with the intention of denouncing sexism and fat phobia in Brazil with their music (Caldeira 2019). Recently Issa Paz came out publicly as Trans Non-Binary and that has become an integral part of their brand, so much so that they developed a new logo that included the symbol for Transfeminism (Caldeira 2019).
Figure 6.13 Screenshot from Rap Plus Size’s O Pano Rasga Music Video

The duo’s video entitled “O Pano Rasga” (The Cloth Tears) is about kidnapping a man who has sexually assaulted women. This is a strong act of defiance to female passivity as it is understood by Brazilian society, and is directly drawing attention to the lack of justice for women who have been sexually assaulted. In the image below you can see that in the video there is premeditation for the kidnapping. There are photos of the man, as well as screenshots of whatsapp conversations and a quote from a young women saying she thought he was going to kill her. While the video is fictional, there are women in Brazil who experience very similar circumstances. This video is a way of highlighting these issues and fighting for women’s rights to justice, and to be acknowledged by the court system, police, and other governmental systems in Brazil.

Figure 6.14 Screenshot from Rap Plus Size’s O Pano Rasga Music Video
As the video goes on it begins to cut to different people, one of them being the woman in the pictures above and below. She is wearing somewhat revealing clothing, and has an illustration of a vagina affixed to the same area in which her vagina is. She is also wearing sunglasses that say, “FUCK” on the lenses. When the people who participated in my research talked about feminists I imagine these are the women they were thinking of, the radical ones, who are loud, and curse, and take to the streets with their tops off. These are also the women who are actively changing their behavior to subvert the idea of passive femininity.
The woman in the image above is wearing cat ears, which is alluding to the fact that attractive women in Brazil are often called “gata” or cat, while placing an outstretched middle finger on her tongue directly facing the camera. On these cat ears is written “não sou, sua gata” I am not your cat. She is facing the audience, Brazilian society, head on and telling them to fuck off, I’m not your girl. I am my own, my body is my own, and I will do with it what I please.

6.8 Anitta

Earlier I mentioned Anitta’s “Vai Malandra” video, which is one of her most popular songs. Anitta rose to fame, like many others, after posting a video to YouTube. She signed with Furacão 2000 in 2010, and then later signed with Warner records in 2013 (Askew 2018). Anitta quickly grew to national fame, and has participated in academic talks at Harvard and is regularly interviewed by the media. This is partly due to the fact that she speaks 3 languages, Portuguese, Spanish, and English and is consistently collaborating with Latino artists like J Balvin and Becky G. She also regularly releases videos with her new songs, as she says that without a video in Brazil no one will pay the song any attention (Askew 2018).
When you watch Anitta’s “Bola Rebola” video you might say how is this feminist? It is a whole bunch of guys just looking at her while she twerks and is sexy. Yes, the video is exactly that, what is also important to note is how involved Anitta is in every single step of the process of her videos. She chooses the shots, she chooses the costumes and she chooses the people she works with. Anitta is actively choosing to show this much of her body and to embrace her sensuality, and the lyrics of the song reflect that. She says “do what I want, no matter what you say…wind up my waist so they know that I don’t play. If you ain’t movin, then you’re standin’ in my way”.

Anitta is alluding to the fact that she does not care about societal standards; she is going to do what she wants regardless of what people think. If she wants to wear nipple pasties and dance around in public she is going to do that, even if some people may scoff and think it is inappropriate. In the line “wind up my waist so they know that I don’t play,” she seems to be discussing using her sensuality to show that she is no one to be messed with, that she draws strength from her sensuality, not a sense of shame and embarrassment. The following line seems to simply say that she will not tolerate anyone standing in the way of her goals.
This chapter again shows how interconnected feminism, sexuality, and blackness truly are. These are not examples from academic literature; these are examples from Brazilian music artists that bring attention to societal inequalities that have to do with sexuality, blackness, and feminist principles in Brazil. As discussed previously, most of these artists would likely identify with the characteristics of third wave feminism since they challenge traditional Brazilian gender norms, and draw attention to the intersectionality of gender, race, and class. These artists also seem to be addressing the inequalities that Brazilian society legitimates, especially in the cases of MC Soffía, Rap Plus Size, and Karol Conká. However some of the people participating in this research did not feel that this music represented feminism at all, and that it was just derogatory and pejorative towards women, which again could be understood as a difference of how feminism is constructed in Brazil, especially in regards to second and third wave feminism.
7 CONCLUSIONS

I began this research thinking that all of the people I talked to would know the artists I was focusing on, and that feminism would be something they had an opinion about. I was wrong. The word feminism was one that I found people shying away from and not wanting to align themselves with, likely due to the way feminists are felt to be extreme by many in Brazil. What my research has shown is that there is a distinct change happening in Brazil. Some women are fighting for their rights to sexual pleasure, their rights to live their lives as they please, and black women especially are fighting for their rights to exist and be heard.

7.1 Why now?

The current incendiary, military sympathizing, far-right President with dictorial leanings, Jair Bolsonaro is part of the reason. In the past Bolsonaro has used language that is racist, sexist, and homophobic. However this election of an extreme candidate is not just something we have seen in Brazil, Bolsonaro’s elections is part of a global trend of electing people with more “traditional” values.

In April of 2017 Bolsonaro discussed visiting a Quilombo, which is the term for the settlements that previously enslaved Africans established after slavery was abolished, however now these informal settlements are more commonly referred to as Favela communities. Bolsonaro said “I visited a quilombo and the least heavy afro-descendant weighed seven arrobas. They do nothing! They are not even good for procreation,” arroba is a term for weight and 7 arrobas is roughly 231 pounds (Lehman 2018). Bolsonaro in the same interview stated, “I have five children. Four are men, and in a moment of weakness the fifth came out a girl” (Lehman 2018). In March of 2011 he was asked what he would do if his son fell in love with a Black woman. His response was that his sons were too educated to engage in promiscuity, insinuating
Black women are only capable of promiscuity (Lehman 2018). In 2014 in a heated argument with a female congresswoman Bolsonaro said he “would not rape” her because she “did not deserve it” and later clarified that he would not rape her because she was ugly and not his type (Lehman 2018). In a December 2011 interview with Playboy magazine he said he “would be incapable of loving a homosexual son” and that “I would prefer my son to die in an accident than show up with a mustachioed man” (Lehman 2018).

This hateful rhetoric has led to an increase of violence in Brazil during the elections, and after. After the first round of elections, which Bolsonaro almost won outright with 46.03 percent of the vote, “more than 70 attacks were recorded against LGBT people, against women, against any opponents of extreme rightwing candidates or against journalists” (Chomsky et al. 2018). The night of the first turn a capoeira master and antiracist activist educator, Moa do Katendê, was stabbed to death by a Bolsonaro supporter after he declared that he voted for leftwing candidate Fernando Haddad (Chomsky et al. 2018). In the south of the country, a 22-year-old woman was attacked on the street (Chomsky et al. 2018). His political visions also follow this vein of violence.

Bolsonaro is running his campaign with the promises of Law and Order, protection of Family Values, and bettering the economy. Bolsonaro blames the astronomical rise in murders (63,880 people were murdered in 2017 prompting the government to send the Army to Rio de Janeiro) on politicians and their emphasis of human rights, citing that this has prevented security forces from pursuing gangs (Nugent 2018). Bolsonaro also aims to allow the police to kill even more than they already do telling TIME in August “Nobody wants to let a cop kill, but I want to give him carte blanche not to die” yet he also plans to implement more relaxed gun laws in an attempt to protect the citizens from violence, and lower the age of incarceration to 16 (Nugent
When one analyzes these potential policies together it is easy to see how they would be of detriment to poor, and working-class Black Brazilians. Advocates for the LGBTQ community have warned that Bolsonaro would only reverse policies and organizations aimed to benefit this marginal population, and on October 11, 2018 Bolsonaro signed an agreement with the Catholic Voter’s Association asserting that he would defend the “true sense of marriage, as a union between men and women” and combat the myth of gender ideology (Nugent 2018).

It is easy to see that Brazil has an extremely multi-faceted history, and even today colonial legacies, scars of militarism, nearly a century of dictatorship, and the general strength of the values of the Catholic Church are very much factors of the construction of Brazilian society. It is because of these practices, and especially during this time of a president ready to return to traditional gender roles, law and order, and potentially a military dictatorship, that my research is important. The artists I focus on are using their place within Brazilian society to speak out against an administration that is threatening their rights and citizenship in a number of ways.

7.2 How is Feminism Constructed in Brazil?

The overarching perception that I understood from my interviews was that feminists were radical, aggressive, and thought that women were better than men. In popular culture, like memes, feminists are portrayed as sexually deviant, disease ridden, unhygienic women who abort babies. Some participants would explicitly state that they felt there was a difference between feminists and women who really supported the feminist movement. The difference was that feminists were people who were loud and took to the streets, took their tops off and thought that women were better than men. Women who really supported the feminist movement did not need to be loud or take their clothes off or take to the streets; they simply wanted equality. This showed me that supporting the feminist movement was acceptable to those who participated in
my research, however self-identifying as a feminist seemed to be judged and looked down upon, and is just too much.

Larissa was the only participant who did not feel as though she was a feminist or supported the feminist movement. She said she did not support the feminist movement because it forgot about the rights of Black women and did not align with her values. Larissa told me there was a pyramid in Brazil, and Black women were on the bottom of that pyramid. She told me that the women in feminism do not know that it was a Black woman who started the feminist movement in Brazil and that when the white women raised the flag in search of their rights, they were against the rights of Black workers, they forgot the rights of Black women. Larissa also told me that she believed that the importance of family is the base of everything and that was not something the feminist movement supported. She did not elaborate on that and I have to assume that the feminist movement supporting reproductive choice, like abortion, may be the reason she said that. “I’m not a feminist because I believe in the family, and the feminist movement does not represent me while I am a Black woman.”

7.3 How is Feminism Portrayed in Brazilian Music?

Not all of the artists I focus on explicitly state their music is feminist, however I am constantly learning new ways in which feminism is portrayed in Brazilian music. For instance, recently I was riding in the car listening to National Public Radio and they were doing a story about Marília Mendonça, a Brazilian sertanejo (Brazilian country music that has long been dominated by men) singer, and how she has created a new subgenre of sertanejo called feminejo (Reeves 2018). Mendonça says she is telling real stories about her life and the lives of other women around her, stories about things like cheating and women who no longer tolerate a lazy partner so they kick him out (Reeves 2018). She says she did not set out to make music with a social
message but that “hearing music… women start to take positions” (Mendonça, quoted in Reeves 2018). She also says that she believes her music is a feminism of attitude rather than the traditional feminism of marching with signs, “I never went to protest in the streets”, “my life is my protest” (Mendonça, quoted in Reeves 2018). Mendonça’s views are exactly what I encountered in my interviews, and this makes sense seeing as Mendonça is one of Brazil’s most popular female artists currently.

Anitta may not be quite as understated as Mendonça but she still approaches feminism in a commercial way that makes it easy to consume. She uses the stereotypical understand of female sexuality in Brazil to make music that is wildly popular, while still combatting those ideals in a more implicit way. However when you look at Rap Plus Size and the video for their song “O Pano Rasga” you can see the same aggressiveness and radicalism that many of the participants cited in their interviews. I would argue that this goes back to ideas of class, and how appropriateness for white women and Black women in Brazil are different. Mendonça and her peers are largely white Brazilian women, while the artists that I focused on in my analysis are not. The directness of which Black and Brown Brazilian artists talk about sex is more expected, as the construction of Brazilian sexuality expects Black and Brown Brazilian women to be even more sexual that white Brazilian women.

7.4 **How do Brazilian Musicians use their Music to Distrupt Normative Ideas?**

The ways in which Brazilian musicians use their music to disrupt normative ideas to me is quite clear, and is done in a multitude of ways. They speak directly about female sexual pleasure, which I was consistently told in my interviews that sex was not something people really talked about in Brazil. When you listen to Brazilian music, and especially *Funk* (a genre of Brazilian music that is often played at parties and nightclubs) you can see the difference. There is a song
called “Eita Buh” (“Damn Pussy”), by MC Gustta that literally only talks about a woman’s vagina: “Eita buceta bonita, eita buceta gostosa, eita buceta cheirosa, buceta maravilhosa” which translates to (“damn beautiful pussy, damn hot pussy, damn pussy smells good, marvelous pussy”). But because men in Brazil are expected to be openly sexual, there is no uproar claiming that this song needs to be censored like Karol Conká’s Lala, which presents visuals that are different than what is considered normal or appropriate.

These artists are talking about inequalities like domestic violence, the pay gap between men and women, and the continual racism that Brazil struggles with. These artists are continually asking about and bringing attention to policies and practices in Brazil that are dangerous to women and marginal groups. They are simply asking for equality, and demanding that these inequalities be acknowledged. They are demanding rights to sexual pleasure, for the right to be included in political policies, and governmental practices. They are demanding the right to live their lives and to act, dress, and speak as they please. They are demanding their rights to safety and to not be in fear of their own lives. They are demanding the right to be heard, and taken seriously. They are asking to just be considered and acknowledged as citizens who have rights.
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